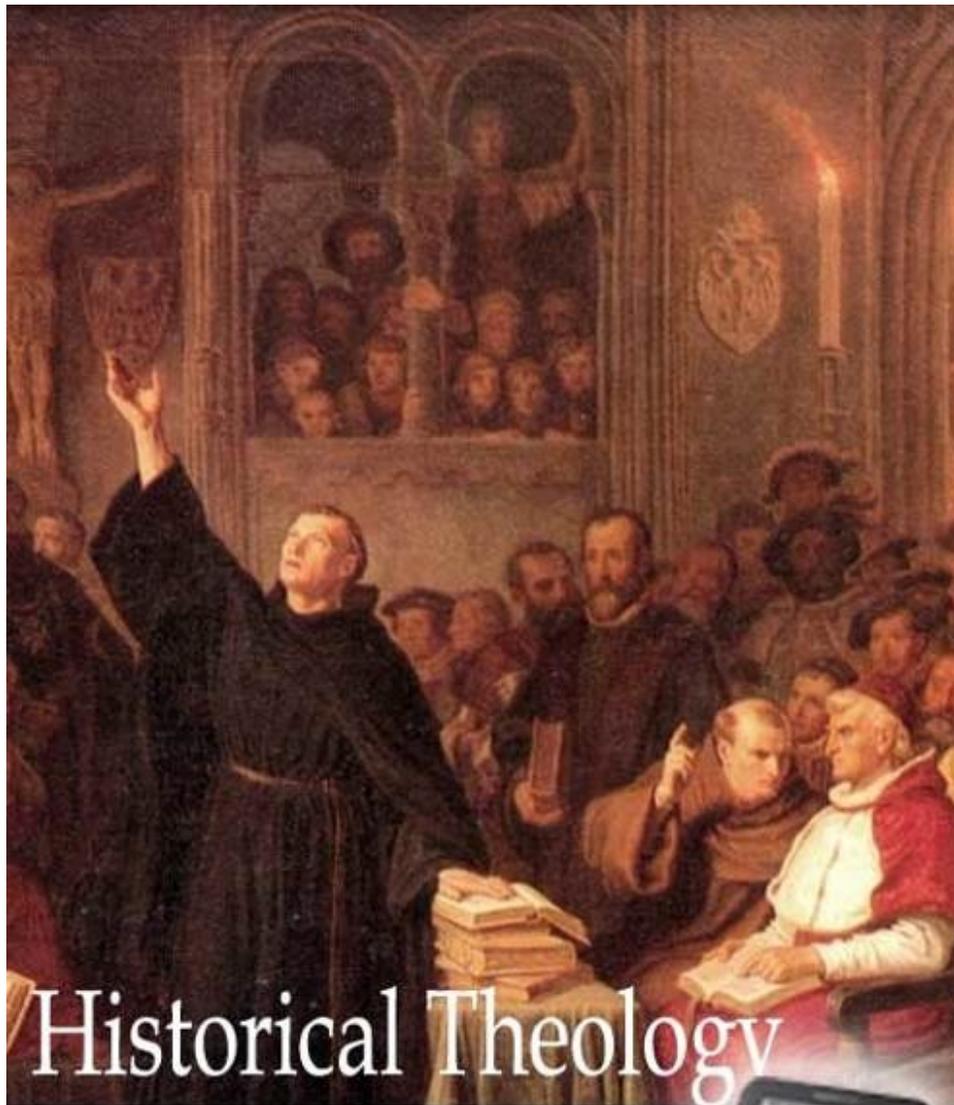


Historical Theology

William Cunningham





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Introduction

The History of the Church comprehends the whole record of God's supernatural communications to men, and of His dealings with His people, and with the societies which they constituted, or of which they formed a part, ever since man fell, and God began His great work of saving sinners, —of calling them out of their natural condition, —and preparing them for the enjoyment of Himself. The most radical and fundamental idea of the church is that it is the company or society of those who are called by God to a knowledge of supernatural truth, and an acquaintance with the way of salvation. They are the church; and the history of the church is the history of God's dealings with them, and of their conduct under His dealings with them. God Himself has recorded in the Old Testament the history of His church for much the largest portion of the time during which it has yet existed; and the record which He has there given of the history of the church, constitutes a very large portion of the authentic and infallible materials which He has provided for communicating to us certain knowledge as to what we are to believe concerning Him, and as to what duty He requires of us.

We are expressly assured, with more immediate reference to the Old Testament, that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. We are assured that all these things were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the world have come.

The series of God's dealings with the human race since the fall has been commonly ranked under three great divisions, usually called (Economies, or dispensations— viz., the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. These different dispensations have been characterized at once by features of identity and diversity. The character of God, and the great principles of His moral government, the revelation of which has been one great object of all His dealings with men, have of course been at all times the same in themselves, though the knowledge of them has been communicated to men at sundry times and in divers manners. The way in which fallen men

were to be saved, has been at all times the same, as it was necessarily and unchangeably determined in its substance, or fundamental provisions and arrangements, by the attributes of God, and the principles of His moral government. Of course, God's great designs with respect to the fallen race of man have been at all times the same, conducted upon the same principles, and directed to the same objects. The chief differences observable in God's successive dispensations towards the human race, are to be found in the fullness and completeness of the revelation which, at different times, He gave of His character and plans, and especially of the method of salvation; and in the more temporary objects which at different periods He combined with His one grand terminating purpose. The declaration of God when pronouncing sentence upon the serpent immediately after the fall — 'He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel'— has been commonly spoken of as the protevangelium, — the first proclamation of the Gospel, the first intimation of the method of salvation. And what an imperfect revelation was this of what it most concerns fallen man to know, compared with the declaration that Jesus Christ died for our sins, —viewed in connection with all the materials we possess for enabling us to understand fully what this latter statement implies, i.e., to understand who and what Jesus Christ was, and what is involved in His dying for our sins!

The patriarchal period, or dispensation, extends from the fall to the giving of the law through Moses; and it derives its name from the series of remarkable men, the heads of families and tribes, who form so striking a feature in its history, and with whom God carried on intercourse of a very remarkable kind in making known His will and accomplishing His purposes. During this primitive period, God— i.e. (as can be established by satisfactory evidence), God the Son, who was afterwards to take flesh, and to tabernacle among men— occasionally held personal intercourse with His chosen servants, made successively fuller discoveries of His character and purposes, and in various ways taught men many important lessons.

This dispensation admits of an obvious division into three principal periods. The first of these extends from the fall to the deluge, which was the result of the first great experimental exhibition of the depravity of

human nature, of the true character and naturally insuperable tendencies of fallen man; while, at the same time, it also presented striking manifestations of God's sovereignty in carrying into effect His purposes of mercy.

The second division of this period extends from the deluge to what is commonly known as the calling of Abraham, or God's commanding him to leave his native country, Mesopotamia, and proceed to Canaan, which was afterwards to be given to his descendants. This event, too, illustrated God's sovereign purpose of mercy according to election. It was accompanied with a much fuller development than had been previously vouchsafed, of God's plans and purposes with respect to the salvation of men; so that the apostle could refer to what God had said and done in connection with Abraham, as throwing light upon some of the most important and peculiar principles of the Christian revelation. The calling of Abraham was likewise the commencement of an astonishing series of transactions in the history of a chosen people, descended from him; which have most materially influenced the history of the world down to the present day.

The third division of this period extends from the calling of Abraham to the giving of the law. It includes the history of God's dealings with the father of the faithful and his immediate descendants, and affords some very striking illustrations of God's having the hearts of all men in His hand, of His subordinating the most important events in the general history of the world to His own special designs with regard to His church and people, and of His making all things, great and small, work together for good to those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose.

The giving of the law was a very important era in the history of God's dealings with men. It introduced what may be properly regarded as a new and different dispensation, characterized by a fuller revelation of God's attributes and government, a fuller discovery of the way of salvation, and of God's plans and purposes regarding it; and all this in combination with extensive and detailed provision for effecting some important purposes of a more temporary description. An occasion when God had so much intercourse with man, and in circumstances so remarkable, must have

been intended to serve very important ends, and must be well worthy of being thoroughly investigated. The Mosaic dispensation, regarded as a great department in the history of the church, likewise divides itself naturally into three periods,, marked by the giving of the law as the introduction of the new state of things, the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy (or, according to an arrangement which some authors prefer as affording a suitable resting-place, the building of the temple), and the Babylonish captivity.

Perhaps, however, the most important feature in this dispensation next to the giving of the law and the setting up of the Mosaic economy, is the mission of the prophets, and the records which have been transmitted to us of the way in which this mission was executed. The history of the series of prophets, and the records of their revelations, exhibit an increasingly fuller development of God's eternal counsel of sovereignty and mercy; and especially they throw much light upon the true nature of a supernatural communication from God to men, and upon the way and manner in which the reality and certainty of a truly supernatural communication may be tested and established. These are indeed the most important facts to be kept in view in surveying the whole history of the Old Testament church, both in the patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations: viz., first, the evidence afforded by them, or in connection with them, of the reality and the certainty of an actual supernatural communication made by God to men, and especially of the divine mission of our Lord and His apostles; and secondly, the light thrown upon the true nature and import of the substance of the divine communication thus supernaturally made. The two most important questions that can call forth men's interest, or exercise their faculties, are these: first, Has God given to men a supernatural revelation of His will? and secondly, If so, what is the substance of the information which this revelation conveys to us? All other subjects of investigation are subordinate to these. The patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations ought to be studied chiefly in these aspects; and with a view to these objects, and when studied in this way, they will be found full of instruction and full of interest.

Because, however, of the paramount importance of the two general questions which have just been stated, and of the necessity of making a

selection from a wide field, I do not intend to enter upon any portion of the history of the church recorded in the Old Testament, and preceding the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh. I intend to confine myself to the Christian dispensation, —to the history of the Christian Church, more strictly so called, or the visible society established on earth by our Saviour and His apostles, enjoying the completed revelation of His will, and professing to be guided by it. And my reason for selecting this department of the history is, because it affords the largest amount of materials bearing upon theology properly so called, and fitted to furnish assistance in forming clear, correct, and enlarged conceptions of the whole substance of what God has supernaturally communicated to us. The manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and the completion of the series of God's supernatural revelations to men through the instrumentality of His immediate followers, form the crown and centre of the whole scheme of God's dealings with mankind, with a reference to which everything else, whether prior or posterior to that great era, ought to be contemplated. God having, in the mission of His Son, and in the inspiration of His apostles and immediate followers, as these have been put on record under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, completed the supernatural revelation of His will to men, the grand object of all men who rightly understand their condition and responsibilities, must be to acquire such a knowledge of this revelation as may guide them to salvation and eternal blessedness; and the great end of the gospel ministry is just to aid them in acquiring this knowledge, and in applying it to effect this result. This object, of course, is most directly promoted, and most fully and effectually secured, by the actual study of the revelation which God has given us, and by seeking, from an investigation of the meaning of the statements which it contains, to form definite, accurate, and orderly conceptions of the topics of which it treats. But in dealing with the history of the church, I am persuaded that that department of it which affords the most ample materials for assisting in the understanding of the system of Christian theology, is just the history of the church since the completed revelation of God's will was put into its hands, and especially the history of the principal discussions which have taken place in regard to its meaning and import. The history of the way in which the church has used this revelation, and of the discussions which have taken place concerning its meaning, are fitted, when rightly used

and applied, to afford us important assistance in forming a correct estimate of what it is really adapted and intended to communicate and to effect. I mean, therefore, to attempt to survey the most important discussions on doctrinal subjects which have taken place in the church since God's full and completed revelation was bestowed upon it, for the purpose of making use of the materials which this survey may afford in aiding to ascertain where the truth, the scriptural truth, in the leading controversies which have been carried on really lay; and to discover how the truth upon the particular subject controverted may be most accurately stated and most successfully defended, and how the opposite error may be most conclusively and effectively refuted. With this view, I mean, after adverting to the discussions which have taken place as to the nature and definition of the church itself, to give some notice of what is commonly called the Council of Jerusalem, as recorded in the book of the Acts, at which the first controversy that arose in the church was taken up and disposed of; and then to proceed to consider the chief controversies which arose and divided the church after the inspired apostles were removed, and the chief subjects of a doctrinal kind which have given rise to controversial discussions in more modern times.

The period of the history of the church from the apostolic age till the present day is usually considered under three great divisions— the ancient, the mediaeval, and the modern.

The first of these— the ancient— extends from the apostolic age till the early part of the seventh century, —an era marked by the full establishment of the Pope's supremacy over the Western Church, and the origin of Mohammedanism, and regarded by many as the commencement of the fully developed reign of Antichrist. This period admits of an obvious and important division into the period before, and the period after, the establishment of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine; or, what is very nearly synchronous, the first (Ecumenical Council that met at Nice in the year 325.

The second, or mediaeval period, reaches from the early part of the seventh century till the Reformation, in the beginning of the sixteenth, — a period of about 900 years. The most important features of this period, so far as our objects as above described are concerned, are the growing

corruption of the church in doctrine as well as in character; the full development of the mystery of iniquity, especially the formal establishment of idolatry by the second Council of Nice, —the scholastic theology, —the canon law, —and the efforts made antecedently to Luther and Zwingle, so far as they rested upon a scriptural basis, to oppose Popery and to reform the church.

The third and last, or the modern period, extends from the commencement of the Reformation till the present day.

The most valuable object which the student of historical and polemic theology can aim at is to endeavour to trace, by a survey of controversial discussions, how far God's completed revelation of His will was rightly used by the church for guiding to a correct knowledge and application of divine truth, and how far it was misapplied and perverted. With reference to this object, there can be no doubt that much the most important period in the history of the church is the Reformation from Popery, and the period intervening between that great era and the present day. And the reason of this is, that at and since the Reformation, every topic in Christian theology, and indeed every branch of theological literature, has been discussed and cultivated with much greater ability and learning, or at least in a much more rational, systematic, and satisfactory way, than during the whole previous period of the church's history. There can, I think, be no reasonable doubt, that in point of intrinsic merit as authors, as successful labourers in expounding and establishing Christian truth, in bringing out clearly and intelligently, and in exhausting the various topics which they discussed, the Reformers and the divines who succeeded them are immeasurably superior to the theologians of preceding generations. In the respects to which I have referred, —and they are, beyond all question, the most important, so far as concerns the real value of authors and their writings, —the Fathers and the Schoolmen are mere children compared with the Reformers and with the great Protestant divines of the seventeenth century. Of the main topics in Christian theology which are still the subjects of occasional controversial discussion, and are, therefore, still of some practical importance, as actually bearing upon the process of the formation of men's opinions, almost the only ones which can be said to have undergone anything like a satisfactory discussion,

antecedently to the Reformation, are the Trinity, and some of the leading points involved in the Pelagian controversy; and even these have been much better and more fully discussed, so far as concerns the true bearing of the correctly ascertained meaning of Scripture upon the matter in dispute, in modern than in ancient times, —i.e., in the Socinian and Arminian, than in the Arian and Pelagian controversies. On the ground of this general truth, it is of much greater importance for all the proper ends of historical theology, or the history of doctrines, to survey and investigate the history of theological literature and discussion during the last three, than during the preceding fourteen, centuries. At the same time, there is no period in the history of the church that is entirely unfruitful, or that should be wholly neglected, even in its bearing on Christian theology, and independently of its historical value and importance. The first four centuries after the apostolic age, or the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries of the Christian era, are invested with no small measure of interest and importance with respect to the history of theology, as well as in other respects: the second and third centuries exhibiting the church in what was indeed, in some respects, its purest state, but exhibiting also the seeds, at least, of almost all the errors and corruptions which afterwards so extensively prevailed; and the fourth and fifth exhibiting a far larger amount of talents and learning among the doctors of the church than ever before, or for many centuries afterwards, she possessed, —applied, too, in defence of some important scriptural truths; but, at the same time, with a growing measure of error, which soon spread darkness over the church, —a darkness dispelled only by the light of the Reformation.

I. The Church

I. Nature of the Church

The questions as to what the church is, —what is the proper definition of it, and what are its qualities, prerogatives, marks, or distinguishing characters, —have given rise to a good deal of discussion, and are invested with considerable importance. They enter very deeply and influentially into the controversy between the Church of Rome and the Protestant churches, as it has been commonly conducted. Papists are usually anxious, when engaged in controversy with Protestants, to give prominence to the general subject of the church, —and this for two reasons: first, because they think— and they are not wholly mistaken in the opinion— that they have something to say upon the general topic of the church, as it is set before us in Scripture, which is somewhat more plausible than anything they find it practicable to adduce in regard to many of the particular doctrines controverted between them and Protestants, —and have found in experience the discussion of this topic more successful than any other in making converts to Popery; and secondly, because, were the views which they generally propound on the general subject of the church, and their application to the Church of Rome, established, this would supersede all further discussion of individual doctrines; for the practical result of them is virtually to put the church in the room of God as the immediate revealer of all truth, as well as the dispenser of all grace, or at least to put the church in the room of His word as the only standard of faith, —and the conclusion, of course, is, that men should implicitly submit their understandings to whatever the church may promulgate to them.

The substance of the Romish doctrine upon this general subject is, that Christ has established on earth the church as a distinct society, which is not only to continue always indefectible or without ceasing to exist, but to stand out visibly and palpably— distinguished from all other societies, civil or ecclesiastical, —that it is not liable to error, but will always continue to promulgate the truth, and the truth alone. When they have

proved this, they then try to prove that this one church of Christ, always visible and infallible, must of necessity be in communion with the Church of Rome, the mother and mistress of all churches, and in subjection to the Bishop of Rome, the vicar of Christ and the monarch of His church. Protestants admit that the church, as a distinct society instituted by Christ, considered generally or in its totality, is indefectible;— i.e., they believe that, in point of fact, it will never cease to exist, because Christ has explicitly promised this. They do not admit that there is anything in Scripture predicting, promising, or implying that it is to be always visible in the sense of the Romanists— i.e., that there must be at all times, in unbroken or continuous succession, an organized society publicly and palpably standing out to the eyes of men as the church of Christ; and they utterly deny that there is any good foundation for ascribing infallibility to the church in the Romish sense. They hold that there is no ground, either in scriptural statement or in historical fact, for asserting that there must always be, and has always been upon earth, a society, visible and easily recognisable, which has at all times held and proclaimed the truth of God without any mixture of error; while they further maintain that such a description does certainly not apply de facto to the Church of Rome; or to the church in connection with the Papal See.

It is very evident, from the nature of the case, that questions of this sort can be rightly decided only by an appeal to the sacred Scriptures, which both parties admit to be the word of God, and more particularly by investigating what the Scriptures sanction concerning the proper definition or description of the church, and concerning the privileges and prerogatives which Christ has conferred on, or promised to, it. These controversies, indeed, may be said to turn essentially upon this question. What definition or description of the church does the Scripture warrant or require us to give? It was upon this ground that the investigation of the proper definition or description of the church entered so largely into the controversies between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and that in most of the confessions of the Reformed churches we find a formal definition or description of the church as an important article of Scripture doctrine.

To show more clearly the importance of settling from Scripture what is

the proper definition or description of the church, I may refer to one leading department of the argument carried on between the Reformers and the Romanists. The Romanists were accustomed to employ the following argument: —Where there is not a valid ministry, there is no true church. Protestants have not a valid ministry, and therefore they are not a true church. The Reformers' answer was in substance this: — Wherever there is a true church, there is or may be a valid ministry. Protestants are a true church, or a true branch of the church, and therefore they have or may have— i.e., are entitled, or have a right, to a valid ministry. Now, it is quite manifest that the whole of this argumentation upon both sides depends essentially upon the question, What is a true church? or, in other words, what is the Scriptural view of the real nature, the essential qualities, and necessary or invariable properties of the church of Christ? and more especially, is the possession of a valid ministry essential to it in all possible circumstances; and if so, what constitutes a valid ministry? Papists, accordingly, usually try to introduce into the definition of the church elements which, if admitted or proved from Scripture, would formally or virtually settle the controversy, and decide in favour of their views. In the common Popish catechisms, the church is defined to be the congregation of all the faithful professing the same faith, partaking in the same sacraments, governed by lawful pastors under one visible head, the vicar of Christ. Cardinal Bellarmine, the great champion of Popery, expresses it thus: "*Coetus hominum ejusdem Christianae fidei professione, et eorundem Sacramentorum communione colligatus, sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac praecipue unius Christi in terris Vicarii Romani Pontificis;*" and he immediately adds, very truly and very simply, "*Ex qua definitione facile colligi potest, qui homines ad Ecclesiam pertineant, qui vero ad eam non pertineant.*" This definition, if admitted, certainly settles conclusively some important questions. But Protestants do not accept it: they demand, as they are entitled to do, scriptural proof for all the different elements introduced into the definition; and they are very sure that for some of them no such proof can be adduced. This, of course, throws us back upon the question, What view of the church is really given us in Scripture? what ideas does Scripture authorize and require us to introduce into our definition or description of it?

We find in Scripture that the word ἐκκλησία, commonly translated church, is applied sometimes to an assembly or collected number of men of any sort; as, for instance, when it is used in describing the tumultuous assembly in the theatre of Ephesus, t It is commonly employed, however, in a more limited or specific sense, as descriptive of a society or collected number of men standing in a certain peculiar relation to Jesus Christ; and even in this more limited sense, we find it used in several different applications. When we read in Scripture that the church is Christ's body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; that He loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; when we read of the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, —we cannot doubt that here the word church is employed as descriptive (to use the language of our Confession) "of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof;" and further, that in the passages referred to, none but those who have been chosen by God to salvation through Christ, and also are all in consequence saved, are regarded as comprehended in the church. There is, then, a church spoken of in Scripture which consists of the whole body of the elect, the believing, the saved, —of those who are chosen through Christ to faith and salvation, and who in due time attain to them, and of none others. Moreover, if this be the true meaning of the word in the passages referred to, it is evident from the nature of the case, and from the general scope and object of the passages, that whatever other meanings the word may bear, this, if indeed a real meaning of the word, must be its leading, guiding meaning, —that which must to some extent regulate and modify the rest.

Now, the church in this sense has been usually spoken of by Protestant divines as invisible; and the idea which they intend to convey by so designating it, is the very obvious and just one, that as those who are elected to life cannot with certainty be known or recognised individually by men even after they have been brought by God's grace to believe and to enter upon the way of salvation, the company or society so constituted cannot, as to its particular component members, be accurately and certainly discerned. The reason which led Protestants to give prominence to this idea of the invisible church as now explained, was, that the Church

of Rome maintains visibility, as including external organization, to be an essential property of the church, and founds important conclusions upon this position. If visibility be an essential property of the church, then it would seem to follow that a public and unbroken succession of a continuous society from the time of the apostles must have existed upon earth, and been distinctly traceable as the true church of Christ; and on this position they have always laboured to rest much in establishing the claims of the Church of Rome. Besides, it is chiefly by means of the statements made in Scripture which Protestants think applicable only to the whole number of the elect viewed as one body, or the invisible church, that Papists expect to be able to establish their peculiar views of the dignity, authority, and infallibility of the church as visible. Protestants, finding in the passages of Scripture formerly referred to, clear proof that the word church is used as a general term to describe the whole number of those who are elected and ultimately saved, viewed collectively, conclude that the Scripture does set before us an invisible church; and hence infer that visibility, in the sense in which it has been explained, and in which alone it is available for Popish purposes in this argument, is not an essential quality of the church of Christ in at least one of the leading aspects in which the church is presented to us in the Bible.

This, then, is one important topic of discussion, —Does the Scripture speak of a church consisting only of those who are predestinated to life and ultimately saved, and therefore invisible, in the sense formerly explained; or does it not? Protestants affirm this, Papists deny it. The passages formerly referred to prove this, and the attempts of Bellarmine and of other Popish writers to explain them away are utterly unsuccessful. These men prove indeed that there is a church spoken of in Scripture that is visible, or stands out palpably to the observation of men; but Protestants do not dispute that the Scripture sets before us a visible as well as an invisible church: not meaning, as Papists commonly allege, to represent these as two distinct or separate subjects, two different churches properly so called; but as two different phases or aspects of what is in substance one and the same.

To illustrate this, let us briefly advert to the scriptural evidence of the existence of a catholic or general visible church, and the mode in which

the idea arose and was developed. We read frequently in Scripture of the church of a particular place specified, and also of the churches of a particular district named. These churches must have been visible societies, having some outward marks of distinction by which they and their members might be recognised. When it is said, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," this plainly implies that there was antecedently existing a visible society to which these additions were made. The kingdom of God or of Christ is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as being virtually identical with the church; and it is set before us by such descriptions and similitudes as plainly imply that, in point of fact, it did contain persons of a different character from those whom the Lord added to the church on the occasion described in the passage quoted from the Acts. But there is no difficulty in reconciling these two things. The ἐκκλησία, both etymologically and really, is just the assembly or congregation of the κλητοὶ, those who are called out of the world. Christ calls men to come out of the world, to believe in Him, to submit to His authority, and to unite together in an organized society of which He is the head, and which is to be governed exclusively by His laws. We have plain indications in Scripture of a distinction between the outward and the inward call, or the effectual and the ineffectual call; in other words, we have good grounds in Scripture to believe that cases did, in point of fact, occur even in apostolic times, in which men professed to obey Christ's call by outwardly joining the society of the κλητοὶ, while they had not really by faith received Him as their Saviour, or in heart submitted to His authority. It was Christ's intention and requirement, that those who were effectually called and enabled by grace to receive Him personally and individually as their Saviour and their Master, should not only individually profess their faith in Him, and their subjection to His authority, but should also unite together in the discharge of certain outward duties which He enjoined, and in the enjoyment of certain privileges which He conferred; and it was not His intention to employ any supernatural means of accurately discriminating upon earth between those who made this profession in sincerity and truth, and those who, in making it, were deceiving themselves or others by a profession which did not correspond with the real state of their hearts and characters.

There thus arose, through the preaching of the gospel, and the labours of

the apostles, a body or company of men visibly distinguished from the mass of men around them, by their professing, individually and collectively, faith in Christ, and subjection to Him; and though it very soon appeared that, in point of fact, some had been admitted outwardly into this society who were not the genuine followers of Christ, yet it followed naturally, and almost necessarily, that the same names and designations which were properly and strictly applicable only to the true κλητοί, were applied to the company or society of those who professed to have obeyed the gospel call, and were, in consequence, visibly and outwardly associated with the followers of Christ. Thence arose the reality and the conception of the visible, as distinguished from the invisible church; of the professed followers of Christ, viewed collectively, and characterized by certain outward marks cognizable by men, as distinguished from the true followers of Christ, who were all chosen by God before the foundation of the world, who are all in due time united to Him by faith as members of His body, and who are at length admitted to share in His glory; and this idea of the visible, as distinguished from the invisible church, though not a different church from it, is most explicitly brought out in Scripture when it speaks of the church, or the churches, of particular cities or districts. But as the idea of catholicity or universality is most obviously and most properly applicable to the invisible church, as comprehending all the individuals of the human race, in every age and country, who have been chosen of God to salvation through Jesus Christ; so the same general idea may, without impropriety, be applied to the visible church, when now, under the gospel, it is not confined to one nation, as before, under the law, —the catholic or universal visible church thus consisting, as our Confession of Faith says, "of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." Romanists commonly allege, as we have hinted, that this assertion of a visible and an invisible church is making two churches, whereas the Scriptures ascribe unity to the church, or speak of the church as one. But this allegation rests upon a misstatement of the case. They are not properly two churches, but one church, contemplated in two different aspects— an internal and an external. They do not occupy different spheres, but the same sphere. The visible church includes or contains the invisible, though, in its present imperfect condition, it has also mixed up with it some inferior elements, —some chaff, which will one day be

separated from the wheat.

But really the great question is this: Does the Scripture indeed speak of a church— a church catholic or universal— consisting of all those, but of those only, who are elected to life, and ultimately saved, and therefore invisible in the sense above explained? If it does, as is surely evident enough, then this plainly must be the proper, principal sense of the word — the leading idea attached to it— that to which any other notion, to which, from necessity or convenience, the word may have been applied, must be regarded as subordinate. And if this is once proved, then it follows that visibility, including regular external organization, cannot be held to be a necessary or essential property of the church of Christ; and consequently there is no necessity of applying what is said in Scripture about certain of the prerogatives and privileges of the church to any visible society, or to any portion of any visible society. The course, then, of the argumentative discussion upon these points may be summed up in this way: —Romanists say the church is indefectible, or will never cease to exist. Protestants admit this; and hence Bellarmine says, "notandum est multos ex nostris tempus terere, dum probant absolute Ecclesiam non posse deficere: nam Calvinus, et caeteri haeretici id concedunt: sed dicunt, intelligi debere de Ecclesia invisibili." It is true that,

as Bellarmine says, Calvin and other heretics concede this, but say that it is to be understood of the invisible church;— i.e., they contend that the only sense in which the indefectibility of the church can be proved from Scripture is this, that from the time when Christ ascended to the right hand of His Father, there have always been, and until He come again there will always be, upon earth, some persons who have been chosen to salvation, and who, during their earthly career, are prepared for it. More than this may have, in point of fact, been realized in providence, with respect to the standing and manifestation of the church on earth in every age; but Protestants contend that nothing more than this can be proved to be implied in the statements and promises of Scripture upon this subject, —i.e., that for aught that can be proved, all the statements of Scripture may be true, and all its predictions and promises may have been fulfilled, though nothing more than this had been realized.

The Romanists go on to assert that this indefectible church is visible, and,

while it exists, must possess visibility. Protestants, while conceding the existence of visible churches, not composed exclusively of elect or believing persons, and even of " a catholic visible church, consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children," deny that there is anything in Scripture which guarantees the constant existence at all times, or in any one particular country, of an organized ecclesiastical society standing out visibly and palpably to the eyes of men as the true church of Christ; and, on the contrary, they think that there are' pretty plain intimations in Scripture, that in some periods the true church under the New Testament, as happened with the church under the law— when there were still, though the prophet could not discern them, seven thousand men in secret, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal— might be reduced so low as not to possess anything that could with propriety be called visibility. The Romanists further assert that the church, i.e., the indefectible visible church— for they now assume it to be indefectible, and always visible in their sense— is infallible, — i.e., that she always holds and proclaims the truth of God without any mixture of error; and in endeavouring to establish this position, they rest mainly upon the statements and promises of Scripture, which plainly relate not to any one visible society, not to the catholic visible church, or to any one branch or section of it, but to the true people of God; while, even in reference to them, the statements and promises referred to do not assure to them perfect freedom from all error, or entire uniformity among themselves in all points of belief, but merely such a knowledge of God's revealed will as may, even though in many of them mixed with some error, be sufficient to guide them to eternal life.

These general considerations, when followed out and applied, and viewed in connection with the scriptural statements which have been referred to, serve to unravel the web of error and plausible sophistry which the Church of Rome has woven around this subject as a general topic of discussion; while it should be remembered, also, that even if we were to concede to them their general positions in their own sense about the indefectibility, visibility and infallibility of the church, there would still be a gap to be filled up, or rather, an impassable gulf to be crossed, before these principles could be shown to apply to the Church of Rome, so as to establish her supremacy and infallibility, as if she were the only true

church of Christ, or the mother and mistress of all churches.

These observations serve to explain the meaning and application, and the scriptural ground of the doctrine of our Confession of Faith upon this subject, as expressed in the following words: —"This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible; and particular Churches which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some of them have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will."

From the primary etymological meaning of the word ἐκκλησία, viz., an assembly, it was quite natural that, even after it was applied to designate the whole body of true believers, or the whole body of professing Christians, it should still continue to be applied to any branch or section of this body or community; and of this we have repeated instances in Scripture, as when we read of the church which was at Jerusalem, the churches of Galatia, etc. It has been very confidently asserted, that there is no instance in Scripture of the word ἐκκλησία, in the singular number, being ever applied to anything intermediate between a single congregation meeting together for religious worship, and the whole community of believers or professing Christians, viewed collectively as a whole. This is a favourite position of those who support what are called Independent or Congregational views of church government; and it has been conceded to them by some professed Presbyterians, such as Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, who had quite as much of the affectation as of the reality of honesty and candour. There can be no doubt that these are the two senses in which the word church is most commonly used in Scripture. It is undeniable that the word ἐκκλησία is applied in Scripture to a single congregation meeting together for the worship of God; and that on many occasions, when the different congregations scattered over a district are spoken of, they are described not as the church, but the churches of that country.

But we are not prepared to admit that this usage is universal in Scripture,

so as to form an adequate basis for laying down as a general principle the unwarrantableness of applying the designation of a church to anything but a single congregation, or, what is virtually the same thing, the entire independency of each congregation, as having universally, in ordinary circumstances, entire sufficiency within itself for all the purposes of a church. It is laid down in our Form of Church Government, prepared by the Westminster Assembly, that "the Scripture doth hold forth that many particular congregations may be under one presbyterial government;" and I think this proposition is proved by the evidence and instances adduced in the cases of Jerusalem and Ephesus. Considering the numbers of converts in Jerusalem who professed their faith in Christ through the preaching of the apostles after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we cannot suppose that they were all accustomed ordinarily to assemble together in one place for public worship— we cannot doubt that they commonly met in different places as distinct congregations. Mosheim, who on some points has made considerable concessions to the Congregationalists, asserts this Presbyterian position very confidently, and indeed staked his whole reputation upon its truth in the following words: —"Aut nihil ego video, aut certum hoc est, amplissimam illam, quam Apostoli Hierosolymis collegerant, Christianorum multitudinem in plures minores familias divisam fuisse, singulisque his familiis suos presbyteros, suos ministros, suos conventuum sacrorum locos fuisse." Yet these distinct congregations are still spoken of repeatedly as the church which was at Jerusalem; and this church, consisting of several congregations, is represented as being under the superintendence of one united body of apostles, and presbyters, or elders. In like manner, we cannot doubt, from what we are told of Paul's labours for three years in Ephesus, that there were several congregations in that city, while yet they are described in the Apocalypse as the church in Ephesus, or the Ephesian church (for there are two readings, supported by about an equal amount of critical authority); and they are represented by Paul, in his address contained in the 20th chapter of the Acts, as a flock under the superintendence of a united body of men, whom he describes as at once presbyters and bishops.

On these grounds, I think there is sufficient evidence in Scripture, that the word church in the singular number is applied to something

intermediate between a single congregation on the one hand, and the catholic or universal church on the other, —viz., to a number of congregations united together in external communion and government; and that, of course, such a union of congregations is lawful and warrantable, and that to whatever extent such a union or combination may lawfully go, according as circumstances or providence may admit or require it, the designation of a church, and all the general principles and rules applicable to a church as such, may be warrantably applied to the union or combination.

II. Notes of the Church

The subject of the notes or marks of the true church, which also occupies a prominent place in the controversy between the Protestants and the Papists, has respect properly only to the visible church and its different branches or sections. It is not a subject of very great intrinsic importance, except in so far as it is necessary to refute the arguments which Papists found upon this topic in support of the claims of the Church of Rome.

That, of course, is the best and purest branch of the professing visible church, which, in its doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, most fully accords with the views upon all these points that are sanctioned by the word of God; and as the word of God plainly teaches that the principal function of the visible church, as an organized society, is to be a pillar and ground of the truth— i.e., to support and hold up the truth of God before men— we cannot refuse the title of a true or real church of Christ to any society which is organized in professed subjection to His authority, and with a professed submission to His word, and which holds forth to men those great fundamental truths, on the knowledge and belief of which the salvation of sinners depends. These are evidently the true fundamental principles applicable to this matter, and there is no very great difficulty in the application of them. But as Papists dwell very much upon this subject of the notes or marks of the church, and draw from it many important practical conclusions, it may be proper briefly to advert to their leading views upon this point.

When Romanists put forth the claim on behalf of the Church of Rome to

be the only true church, out of which there is no salvation; or to be the mother and mistress of all churches, to whom all the followers of Christ, all the members of His visible church, are bound to be in subjection, — they are called upon to produce and establish the grounds of this claim. Legitimate grounds for such a claim can be found only in the statements of Scripture; because, first, from the nature of the case, such a claim can rest upon no other foundation than the direct authority of God Himself; and, secondly, because the sacred Scriptures form the only common ground between the two parties in the discussion— the only common standard which both the advocates and the opposers of this claim admit, and therefore the only legitimate starting-point in an argument that can be honestly carried on between them. But Papists are not fond of attempting to establish this claim directly from the testimony of Scripture, —first, because they have a pretty distinct consciousness, whatever they may pretend, that Scripture does not afford them any sufficient materials for doing so; and, secondly, because, if, by entering upon such a discussion, it were practically conceded that an important investigation of the meaning of Scripture, conducted by men individually in the ordinary exercise of their faculties, could settle this important general question, there could be no good reason assigned why the same process should not be legitimately employed in determining all other questions at issue between the contending parties. They, therefore, in discussing this subject, usually prefer a different course, —that, viz., of trying to produce what they call motives of credibility, —i.e., certain general considerations suggested by Scripture, certain general views indicated there as to the qualities or properties of the church of Christ, which, when applied to the various societies over the world claiming this character, establish, they allege, the peculiar claims of the Church of Rome, and exclude those of all other professedly Christian societies not comprehended in her communion, and subject to her jurisdiction. When they are expatiating upon this subject at large, and endeavouring to bring out in detail, for popular purposes, all the presumptions or probabilities in favour of the preferable claims of the Church of Rome, as compared with those of other professedly Christian societies, they are accustomed to give many notes or marks of the true church. Bellarmine, for instance, gives fifteen, —viz., the name Catholic, usually applied to the Church of Rome, and often conceded even by its opponents; antiquity;

uninterrupted duration; amplitude, or great numbers of adherents; the succession of bishops in the Roman Church from the apostles; agreement in doctrine with the ancient church; union of the members among themselves and with the head; sanctity of doctrine; efficacy of doctrine; holiness of life; the glory of miracles; the light of prophecy; the confession of adversaries; the unhappy end of the opponents of the church; and the temporal felicity she has enjoyed. But when they treat the matter more compendiously, or when they are obliged to attempt to reason more rigidly, because discussing the subject of the foundations and validity of this mode of proof in general, they usually content themselves with laying down four notes or marks of the true church, taken from the epithets given to the church in the Nicene or Constantinopolitan creed, viz., unity, sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity.

The substance of the argument is this: the church of Christ is described in Scripture, and in the Creed, as one, holy, apostolic, and catholic: the Church of Rome is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic; and no other church or professedly Christian society can exhibit these notes or marks of the true church. We have not to do at present with the actual and detailed application of these notes or marks to the Church of Rome, or to other churches, but merely with their application to the church of Christ generally. We had occasion already to point out some of the ambiguities and sophistries involved in the common Popish representations and arguments about the indefectibility, the perpetual visibility, and the infallibility of the church; and we have something very similar to point out in regard to the topics now under consideration. Protestants have generally received the Nicene creed as sound and orthodox, and have no hesitation in professing their belief that the church of Christ is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic; but then they contend, first, that these notes or marks are not to be taken in the sense which the Papists attach to them, or with the application they make of them; and, secondly, that in the sense in which the Scripture sanctions the application of these notes or marks to the church of Christ, they afford no countenance whatever to the claims of the Church of Rome. These are two distinct positions, which in a full discussion of the subject it would be proper to treat separately, but which, in the very few remarks we have at present to make upon it, may be adverted to together.

Unity is undoubtedly ascribed in Scripture to the church of Christ, to His true servants; and hence it follows that all who are admitted to be His real disciples must profess and exhibit some qualities in which they agree, or are one; and also all societies admitted to belong to the church of Christ, or to be churches of Christ, must profess and exhibit some points of unity. Protestants, conceding this, have no difficulty in making out unity in many respects, —a large measure of oneness, —in all the individuals whom they admit to be Christians, and in all the societies which they admit to be churches. They are bound to point out, and they have no difficulty in doing so, a substantial oneness or identity among true Christians in the fundamental articles of their creed, and in the leading elements and features of their character; and in all societies which are really churches of Christ, or portions of His visible catholic church, a substantial accordance or unity in doctrine and practice, in the profession of the fundamental doctrines which Christ has revealed and enjoined His church to proclaim, and in the performance of those duties or the administration of those ordinances which should characterize societies organized in His name, and in professed subjection to His authority. And here I may remark, by the way, that it is manifestly impossible to unravel the sophistries, and to answer the arguments, of Papists on the subject of the unity of the church, without admitting or assuming the existence of a distinction in point of intrinsic importance among the articles of revealed truth, —a distinction commonly expressed by saying that some are fundamental and others are not; and that, on this ground, Papists have generally denied this distinction, and Protestants have generally contended for it. With this distinction, and with the important truths based upon it which have just been stated, as applicable to Christians and to churches, there is no difficulty in showing that the only really relevant question in the application of the unity of the church as a note or mark of what the church is, or of what are churches, is this, Does the unity ascribed in Scripture to the church imply that there must be entire uniformity in all matters of belief and practice among all Christians, or that all societies claiming to be regarded as churches of Christ must be included in one external visible communion, and subject to one external visible government? It can be easily proved that there is no warrant in Scripture for alleging that the unity there predicated of the church of Christ necessarily implies this; and if so, then there is not a shadow of

ground for the conclusion that the Church of Rome, or any one visible society, must be the one church of Christ, and that all other professedly Christian societies are beyond its pale.

We need not enlarge upon the other notes or marks of sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity, as this brief notice of the unity is sufficient to indicate how the case really stands, and how the argument is to be conducted. It can be easily proved that the common Popish notions of sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity, as properties and notes of the true church, are unwarranted by Scripture; and that, in so far as Scripture does represent these qualities as characteristic marks of the true church, they do not apply peculiarly and exclusively, if at all, to the Church of Rome.

Unity and catholicity in the Popish sense— i.e., unity in outward communion, and uniformity in outward profession, ordinances, and arrangements, and wide diffusion at all times over the earth in the manifestation of this unity— cannot be proved from Scripture to be characteristic notes or marks of the true church, and can therefore afford no scriptural support to the claims of the Church of Rome; while sanctity and apostolicity— i.e., holiness of heart and life, and conformity to the apostolic model— not only do not peculiarly characterize the Church of Rome, as distinguished from other churches, but may be made to afford conclusive arguments against her claims. The Church of Rome is, in all its features, flatly opposed to the representations given us in Scripture of the apostolic church; and no branch of the church has ever done so little, in proportion to its means and opportunities, to produce holiness, or done so much to corrupt the standard of morals, to eradicate a sense of moral responsibility, and to open the floodgates of all iniquity.

No professing church, however widely it may be diffused, and however closely its members may be united together in a common profession, and whatever pretensions, therefore, it may be able to put forth to an outward visible unity, or to catholicity, in a limited sense, can have any claim to be regarded as possessed of sanctity or apostolicity, unless its system of doctrine be in accordance with the word of God; and a church is apostolical just in proportion as in all its arrangements it is framed after the model, so far as the Scripture makes it known to us, of the churches

which the apostles established.

The churches which have been most forward to assume the designation and the character of apostolical are just those which have departed furthest from what a faithful adherence to the practice of the apostles would have led them to adopt; and when particular churches attach primary importance, in forming an estimate of themselves and of other branches of the visible church, to anything external, —to points of government and order, to a historical visible succession, to outward ordinances and arrangements, —this only proves that they themselves have fallen into grievous error upon most important points affecting the very nature, functions, and objects of a church of Christ; and that therefore, in point of purity and apostolicity, they must rank far beneath those churches which, holding the substance of revealed Christian truth, appreciate aright its paramount importance, and apply it to its intended purposes.

The corruption into which the visible church after the apostolic age so speedily and so extensively fell, and the desire to defend or to palliate all this, soon introduced very lax and erroneous views concerning the nature and objects of the church in general, concerning its constituent elements and qualities, and the standard by which it ought to be judged. The visible has in men's minds, to a large extent, swallowed up the invisible church, or thrown it into the background; and men have come, to a large extent, to judge practically of what the church of Christ should be, by what it too often, in its external aspects, actually is. It is certainly marvellous that any man having access to the Scriptures should believe that the Church of Rome bears any resemblance to the church of the New Testament; and it is not much less marvellous, considering the superior light and opportunities of the parties, that the members of the Church of England should be so forward to boast of their church, as they usually do, as pure and apostolical, the best constituted church in the world, etc., etc., when it is notorious that their own Reformers were so fully conscious that they had come far short of attaining to a right reformation, and when that church has always borne, and still bears, in its constitution and arrangements, so many palpable proofs of the operation, not of the New Testament standard, but of carnal policy and secular influences.

Let us seek to be more familiar with the scriptural doctrine, that the true church of Christ, in the highest and most proper sense of the word, consists only of those who have been chosen of God to eternal life, who are effectually called in due time to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are trained up to a meetness for heaven; and let all our views, impressions, and conduct in regard to the visible church, and its different branches, be regulated by some reference to this great invisible reality, — that thus we may be led to estimate the purity and efficiency of visible churches, mainly by a respect to the spiritual character and attainments of their individual members, and that we may ever have it as the great object of our prayers and labours, that the Lord would add daily unto the church of such as shall be saved, and would lead them to grow up in all things unto Him who is the Head.

III. Promises to the Church

Before speaking of the promises which Christ has made to His church, I may advert to one other point in the general doctrine of Scripture on the subject, as set forth in the 25th chapter of the Westminster Confession, which I have not yet explained. The views which I have attempted to explain are fitted, I think, to illustrate and confirm most of the positions contained in that chapter in regard to the church in general. But there is one which may deserve explanation, to which I have not formally adverted, though I adverted to some principles which are fitted to cast light upon it. It is this, —that unto this catholic visible church (previously described as consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children), "Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world, and doth by His own presence and Spirit make them effectual thereunto."

Now, the first part of this statement, that Christ has given the ministry, as well as the oracles and ordinances of God, to the church, does bear, and was intended to bear, upon an important topic, to which I formerly adverted when explaining the state of the question in one department of the argument carried on between the Reformers and the Church of Rome,

and to which I then referred for the purpose of illustrating the importance of settling the proper definition or description of the church. Papists used to lay down this position, —Where there is not a valid ministry, there is not a true church; and the Reformers answered them by laying down this counter-position, —Wherever there is a true church, there is, or may be, a valid ministry; and to this position of the Reformers, the declaration of the Confession, that Christ has given the ministry to the church, is substantially equivalent. The Popish position virtually proceeds upon the assumption that the church is for the sake of the ministry, and the Protestant one upon the assumption that the ministry is for the sake of the church. The Church of Rome makes the ministry the end, and the church the means; Protestants reverse this order, and make the ministry the means, and the church the end. Ministers are indeed the rulers of churches or congregations, invested, in conjunction with other ecclesiastical office-bearers, with a certain ministerial, not lordly, authority over them. But while this is true of actual ministers and congregations, it is not the less true that the ministry in the abstract may be said to occupy a position of subordination, and not of superiority, to the church, inasmuch as the formation of a church by calling men out of the world, and preparing them for heaven, was God's great design in sending His Son into the world, and in all His dealings with men; and as the institution of a ministry, and the raising up and qualifying of ministers, was just one of the means which He has been graciously pleased to employ for effecting that great end. And this is in substance the idea intended to be conveyed by the declaration in the Confession, that Christ has given the ministry to the church.

This doctrine is not in the least inconsistent with that of the divine institution of the ministry, or with that of the due rights and authority of ministers, as rulers, distinguished from the ordinary members of the church. But it suggests important considerations that ought not to be overlooked, and that are fitted to exert a wholesome practical influence, respecting the nature and design both of the ministry and of the church. The salvation of an elect people chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world— in other words, the planting and training of the true church— constitute God's great design in preserving this world, and in the whole providence which He exercises over it. There can be no higher or more

exalted position than to be employed by God in contributing to this end. Still, the system of means which He may have been pleased to employ, must always be regarded as in some sense subordinate to the end to be effected; and a time will come when the ministry, as well as prophecy and tongues, shall cease, when the whole church shall be presented to God a glorious church, and when the functions of human teachers and human rulers shall terminate, while it will still continue true, that they who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

The bearing of this relative position of the ministry and the church— the ministry being for the sake of the church, and not the church for the sake of the ministry— upon the principles discussed between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, is obvious enough. If this principle be true— and the Scripture plainly enough supports it— then these two inferences may be deduced from it: First, that the question, whether any particular company or society of professing Christians be or be not a true church, should take precedence of the question, whether or not they have a valid ministry? Secondly, that the Scripture not having explicitly asserted, or afforded any adequate ground for believing, that a valid ministry, or any specific feature in or about the ministry, is an essential mark of a true church, we are entitled, upon the ground of this general principle, positively to aver, that no inference drawn from the subject or character of the ministry can be of itself, and as a general rule, conclusive upon the character and standing of the church.

Upon these grounds, the Reformers contended that they ought to begin with considering whether Protestant societies were true churches of Christ, and that in discussing this point some other notes or marks must be fixed upon and applied, some other standard must be adopted, than the mere regularity or irregularity of their ministry; and taking a scriptural view of what was the great fundamental duty of men individually to whom the gospel was preached, viz., to receive the truth in the love of it, and also of what was the most important function of the church, or of believers or professed believers collectively, viz., to hold up and promote the truth or the way of salvation, they made the essential note or mark of a true church, as a visible body or society, to be the profession and maintenance of scriptural views of the great fundamental

principles of Christian doctrine. And as it is the manifest duty of all who profess to believe in Christ, and to submit to His authority, to unite together, as they have the means and opportunity, in worshipping God; and as, moreover, the sacraments which Christ appointed are at once the badges or symbols of a Christian profession, and the chief external ordinances which He has prescribed, the administration of these sacraments, according to Christ's appointment, was very generally introduced by the Reformers into their description of the distinguishing characteristics of the true church or churches. And it is a curious proof of the sense then generally entertained over the Protestant world of the importance of these principles, and of the necessity of maintaining them in opposition to the Church of Rome, that even the Church of England, while animated by a somewhat more hierarchic spirit than any other of the churches of the Reformation (though it should not be forgotten that the Reformers of that church had much less of that spirit than most of their successors), gave the following account of the church in the nineteenth Article: — "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful, i.e., believing men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

It was then universally acknowledged, that Protestant principles did not admit of the introduction into the definition of the church, or into the description of what is essential to it, of anything more specific than this as to external ordinances and arrangements. Subjection to lawful pastors, and to the Pope, as Christ's vicar, form, as we have seen, a component part of the Popish definition of the church. But Protestants regarded not only the Pope, but even the lawful, i.e., regular pastors, as not being an essential feature of the church, of such intrinsic and paramount importance as to form an indispensable part of the standard by which to settle at once and conclusively, in all circumstances, whether a particular society of professing Christians did or did not form a church of Christ. The Reformers did not admit that this principle was inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine institution of the Christian ministry, or with the obligation incumbent upon professing Christians to be in communion with a regular congregation under the superintendence of a pastor, and of a pastor, if possible, appointed in the ordinary, regular, prescribed way,

—i.e., by ordination conferred by those who were pastors before. But they held that, as the means are in some sense to be regarded as subordinate to the end, and as there may be occasionally, in particular circumstances, when perfect regularity in regard to outward arrangements is impracticable, or virtually so, a reference to the end rather than to the means, as the guiding and higher standard, it followed that these two practical conclusions might be deduced from it: —First, that the absence of a regular ministry, appointed in the ordinary prescribed way, or even the absence of a ministry altogether for a time, is not necessarily, and in all circumstances, a sufficient proof of itself that a society of professing Christians is not a church of Christ: —and secondly, that any company of faithful or believing men is entitled to a ministry, since Christ has given the ministry to the church; and if they are so placed in providence that they cannot have a ministry in the ordinary, regular, prescribed way, are entitled to make a ministry for themselves, and that that ministry, though not a regular, is a valid one.

On these grounds, the Reformers in general contended that any body of Christians who had come, from reading or hearing the word of God, to be convinced of the sinfulness of remaining in the communion of the Church of Rome, were not only entitled but bound to leave it; that they were warranted to form themselves into a distinct society for the worship of God, and the enjoyment of His ordinances; and that if it was impracticable for them, in the circumstances in which they were in providence placed, to get a minister in the ordinary regular way— i.e., one approved and set apart by persons already in the office of the ministry— they were entitled, since they were a church, and since Christ had given the ministry to the church, to appoint a minister for themselves, if there was any one among them possessed of the scriptural qualifications, to wait upon his ministry, and to receive the sacraments at his hands, without any apprehension of invalidity. This was the doctrine of the Reformers. I am persuaded that it is in accordance with the views of the church and the ministry, and of their relation to each other, given us in Scripture; and I believe it is implied in, and was intended in substance to be expressed by, the declaration of the Confession, that Christ has given the ministry, as well the oracles and the ordinances, to the Church.

Papists usually deny altogether the distinction which the Reformers were accustomed to make between a regular ministry and a valid ministry; and maintain that no ministry is valid unless it be regular, —i.e., that no man is in any instance, or in any circumstances, entitled to execute the functions of a pastor of a Christian flock, and to administer the ordinances which Christ has appointed for the edification of His church, unless he has been admitted to the ministry in the ordinary regular way. The Reformers maintained the distinction between a regular and a valid ministry, and opposed the Popish principle above stated; and they did so upon the ground which we have explained, —viz., that the ministry was given to the church, and belonged to it, or was in some sense subordinate to it; and that, consequently, the mere matter of regularity, the observance of the ordinary binding rule, with regard to a point of outward arrangement, must give way, if necessity required it, to the welfare and edification of the church, — to the importance of the church enjoying the right which Christ had given it of having a ministry.

They had also to contend with the Romanists, as we still have, upon the more specific question of what it is that constitutes a regular ministry, or what are the qualifications which generally, and in all ordinary circumstances, are necessary to warrant men to enter upon the function of the ministry. Upon this point, Romanists have always maintained—and in doing so they have been faithfully followed by High Church Prelatists—that there is no regular admission to the ministry, except what is conferred by episcopal ordination, and this, too, transmitted in regular unbroken succession from the ordination given by the apostles. The Reformers admitted that there are certain regulations indicated in Scripture, with regard to the admission of men to the ministry; that these regulations it was, as a general rule, sinful to neglect, and imperative to regard; and that nothing could, in any instance, warrant the neglect or violation of them, except the necessity, which might arise in certain circumstances, of having respect to the paramount object of the edification of the church. But the Reformers generally denied that, in order even to the regularity of a ministry, it was necessary that ordination should have been conveyed' by episcopal hands, or should have been transmitted in unbroken succession from the ordinations made by the apostles. They could find nothing in Scripture that seemed to necessitate

episcopal ordination, or to require the existence of the episcopal office; and they thought it amply sufficient if men were ordained as Timothy was, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. And with regard to the absolute necessity of an unbroken descent of ordination from the apostles, —a principle which is not to be confounded with that of the necessity of episcopal ordination, though they have commonly gone together, and which might be held by a Presbyterian, though I am not aware that any Presbyterian has ever been guilty of such folly, —they maintained that no sanction could be found for it in Scripture; while they also held that it was inconsistent with important scriptural principles, and with the whole scope and spirit of the New Testament arrangements, and was contradicted and disproved by the whole history of the Christian Church.

I proceed now to make some observations upon the scriptural promises in regard to the church, and the bearing of these, according as they are interpreted, upon men's views of the leading features exhibited in the actual history of the church in subsequent ages. The promises of Christ to His church amount in substance to an assurance of His own constant presence with it, and of the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth. Papists allege that these promises imply or secure, not only that the profession of Christianity would soon be widely extended in the world, but also that one widely extended visible society would continue always or uninterruptedly to proclaim the whole truth of God without any mixture of error. They assert that this has been promised, and that it has been fully realized in the Church of Rome, or in the visible church in communion with the Papal See, and in subjection to the Pope. Protestants maintain that the promises of the constant presence of Christ and of the Spirit in the church do not necessarily bear such a meaning, or lead us to expect such a result; and that they cannot be proved, by any fair principles of interpretation, to mean more than this— that by Christ's presence, and the operation of the Spirit, His church should enjoy and effect all that He intended it to enjoy and effect; that all who were chosen by God to eternal life should be brought to a knowledge and belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, and be trained up to a meetness for heaven; and that, therefore, all who had really entered Christ's service might boldly devote themselves to the advancement of His cause, and to the discharge

of all the duties which He might impose upon them, assured that they should suffer no real loss by faithfulness to Him, but would find all things made to work together for their good.

The promises certainly imply this; but as certainly they cannot be proved, in so far as they are clearly applicable to the church generally and permanently, and not merely to the apostles, and the special and infallible guidance which they enjoyed, to imply more than this. The promises of Christ's presence, and of the Spirit's operation in the church, must be viewed in connection with God's intended design, so far as we know it, in establishing and preserving a church upon earth. The promises of constant presence and guidance secure that, whatever it may be; but they do not of themselves give us any specific information as to what this design is; nor can they be supposed to secure anything but what was really comprehended in that design. Could it be proved separately and independently from Scripture, that it was Christ's purpose and intention that there should always exist upon earth a widely extended church, or visible society, which should always maintain and proclaim the whole truth of God without mixture of error, then the promised presence of Christ and His Spirit might with propriety be regarded as the pledge and the means of effecting this result. But if no such design can be established by independent evidence, it is vain to expect to establish it by the mere promise of His constant presence and blessing. Christ, by His presence, and the operation of His Spirit, accomplishes, in and by His church, whatever it was His design to accomplish— whatever He has given His church and people reason to expect. Protestants, however, contend not only that Christ has not given us any reason to expect that a widely extended visible church would always be preserved free from any mixture of error, and that therefore the promises of His constant presence must not be supposed to secure this; but also, moreover, that He has given us in Scripture plain enough intimations that the visible church would soon, in point of fact, be widely and deeply corrupted; and if such intimations are really to be found in Scripture, which is surely very manifest, then we are bound to conclude that He did not mean us to believe that, by promising His presence and Spirit, He intended to prevent such a result. And if, upon a historical survey of the church, we find that error and corruption, such as these intimations in Scripture

would lead us to expect, did in fact appear, then we are to regard this as a fulfilment of prophecy, and, as such, a proof of the divine mission of Christ, and as confirming, or rather establishing, the interpretation put upon the scriptural statements referred to. Protestants believe, as a matter of unquestionable historical certainty, that at a very early period error and corruption— i.e., deviations from the scriptural standard in matters of doctrine, government, worship, and discipline— manifested themselves in the visible church gradually, but rapidly; that this corruption deepened and increased, till it issued at length in a grand apostasy— in a widely extended and well digested system of heresy, idolatry, and tyranny, which involved in gross darkness nearly the whole of the visible church for almost a thousand years, until it was to some extent dispelled by the light of the Reformation. They believe that the soundness of this general view of the history of the church can be fully established by undoubted matters of fact, viewed in connection with the plain statements of Scripture. They see nothing in Christ's promises to His church that requires them to disbelieve or to doubt this; and, on the contrary, they find statements in Scripture which seem fitted and intended to lead men to expect some such result.

IV. Different Theories of the History of the Church

Papists, in accordance with their interpretation of the promises made to the church, give a totally different view of its actual history. They admit, indeed, that errors and corruptions soon appeared among professed Christians; but then they allege that these errors never infected the church, since she always rejected and condemned the errors, and expelled from her pale those who maintained them. They assert that the Catholic Church, in communion with the see of Rome, has always maintained the apostolic faith pure and uncorrupted, without any mixture of error; that she has never changed her faith or contradicted herself; that all the doctrines she now holds she has maintained stedfastly since the apostolic times, without any variation, although from time to time she has given more full and explicit definitions and explanations regarding them, in opposition to the various heresies that may have been propounded; that

she has never at any time degenerated into superstition, idolatry, or tyranny; but has continued through all ages the pure, and meek, and faithful spouse of Christ, and has been constantly acknowledged in that character by all good Catholics, i.e., by all professing Christians, except heretics and schismatics. This is the Popish theory of the history of the church; and, strange as it may seem, there have been not a few Papists of undoubted learning and ability who have elaborately maintained— first, that thus it must have been, for Christ promised it, and His constant presence with His church secured it; and, secondly, that thus it has been, for the voice of history establishes it. Romish writers would probably have been well pleased had they been allowed to confine themselves to the former of these modes of probation, viz., the a priori one, just as they like much better to try to prove that there should and must be a living, visible, infallible interpreter of God's will, than to show that such an interpreter has been actually appointed, and has been always faithfully discharging his duties. But they have not shrunk even from the historical evidence, and have really attempted to establish historically the monstrous theory which has been described.

In regard to the a priori proof, Protestants contend, as we have explained, that there is no evidence in Scripture that Christ intended to preserve a widely extended, perpetually visible society upon earth, which should always be free from all error; and still less that He intended to confer this privilege upon the Church of Rome; and that, therefore, the promises of His presence and Spirit do not secure it; nay, that there are clear intimations in Scripture that the history of the visible church would exhibit a very different aspect from what this theory assigns to it, —and more particularly that the Church of Rome would fall into apostasy, and become a mass of corruption, a synagogue of Satan and mystery of iniquity. Protestants, besides, wish to have matters of fact investigated and ascertained by the ordinary evidence applicable to the nature of the case. The character and doctrine of the visible church, or of any of its branches at any particular period, is a matter of fact, to be ascertained by the application of the ordinary principles and materials of historical evidence; and when the character and doctrine of any church or individual has been ascertained in the ordinary way, by appropriate means and evidence applicable to matters of fact, they should be judged

of, or estimated, by the standard of the word of God.

Not only can all the peculiarities of the Popish system be proved to be unsanctioned or opposed by the word of God, but many of them can be proved by undoubted historical evidence to have had a much later origin than the apostolic age, and to have been unknown in the primitive church. It is a very bold and daring course, when the advocates of the Church of Rome undertake to establish, by historical evidence, that theory and representation of the church's actual history, which their principles and claims require them to maintain. And yet many have tried it, and brought no small share of learning and ability to bear upon the attempt. The very hardihood of the attempt invests it with a certain measure of interest; and their whole theory of the church's history is so different from that which Protestants support—the whole materials of church history are presented in so changed an aspect from that in which we have been accustomed to contemplate them, that it becomes an interesting, and, in some respects, a not unprofitable exercise, to give some degree of attention to a Popish history of the church. The great work on ecclesiastical history published soon after the Reformation, and commonly known by the name of the Magdeburgh Centuriators, was written, to a large extent, with the view of bringing the testimony of history to bear against the Church of Rome. The apostasy felt the necessity of giving a different view of the history of the church, and for this purpose the Annals of Cardinal Baronius were prepared. In this great work, the author labours to prove not only that all the doctrines of the Church of Rome have been constantly held by the whole Christian world, except heretics and schismatics, from the apostolic age, but also that all the rites and ceremonies which cumber and deform its worship can be traced back to the same venerable antiquity. Being a defender also of the personal infallibility of the Pope, which all Romanists do not contend for, Baronius was obliged to undertake the desperate task of trying to prove that no Pope had ever contradicted himself or any other Pope, and that no Pope had ever fallen into error or heresy. He frankly admits that some Popes, especially in the ninth and tenth centuries, were men of infamous personal character, and attained to the possession of the chair of Peter by the most disgraceful means; but of course, like every other defender of Papal infallibility, he was obliged to assert, and to try to prove, that not

one of them had ever fallen into error or heresy.

The Church of Rome maintains doctrines and advances claims which, even were the word of God less clearly opposed to them all than it is, can be fully tested and overturned by the plain facts of history; and it is a fearful task which her defenders undertake, when they attempt to prove from history that the Bishops of Rome, from Peter downwards, have been, and have been recognised as, the vicars of Christ; have been both de facto and de jure the monarchs of the visible church; and have always exercised the function of teaching and ruling the church in entire accordance with the mind and will of their Master.

Some Roman Catholics have held principles which have somewhat modified the magnitude and difficulty of the task that devolves upon them in surveying the history of the church. They have restricted the alleged infallibility to matters of doctrine, and have not thought it necessary to maintain that she has made no changes or innovations in rites and ceremonies, or in matters of discipline. They have asserted the right and power of the church to make changes in these points as she saw cause. They have thought it safer and more expedient to assert this general principle, than to undertake the task of tracing back the whole of the existing rites, ceremonies, and discipline of the Romish Church to the apostolic age. They thus manage to throw off their shoulders a large share of the burden under which poor Baronius groaned. Some also, especially the French writers, who defend what are called the Gallican liberties, deny the personal infallibility of the Pope, ascribing infallibility only to general councils, and of course escape from the necessity of proving that no Pope can contradict himself, or another Pope, or deviate from the standard of orthodoxy. Others, again, like the Jansenists, though not quite prepared to deny the Pope's infallibility in matters of faith, do not extend it to matters of fact, and are thus enabled to be so far honest as to admit, when compelled by satisfactory historical evidence, that Popes may have fallen into mistakes, or even, as no one supposed them to be impeccable, uttered falsehoods.

This theory of the church's history, as implying at least the constant preservation of the purity of the visible church in all matters of faith and doctrine, and the actual derivation of all her tenets from the apostolic age,

is essentially involved in the principles and claims of the Church of Rome. She cannot abandon it, but must stand or fall with it. She is thus open to a fatal wound from the testimony of history, which she has no means of avoiding but by corrupting or perverting history. Protestants may, and do, derive important assistance in establishing their own principles, and in making out a case against the Church of Rome, from an investigation of the church's history; but they are not essentially dependent upon it, and no assault that can be fatal to their cause can come from that quarter. They do not need, as Protestants, or in virtue of the position they occupy as seceders from, and protesters against, the Romish apostasy, to adopt any particular theory of the church's history, and then to labour to silence or pervert the testimony of history, in order to support their theory, or to guard it against objections. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants; and when the divine origin and authority of the Bible are conceded or proved, Protestants are quite able to deduce from it all the doctrines which they maintain, and to establish them in such a way that no assault from any other quarter, such as the testimony of history, could competently be brought to bear upon them. The Romish Church stands in a different position. She has put forth principles and claims which compel her to maintain a certain theory of the actual history of the church, and a disproof of this theory by an actual investigation of the church's history inflicts upon her whole system a deadly wound. Protestants have thus not the same stake as Papists have in an investigation of the history of the church, for with Papists it is a matter of life or death; and they have, in consequence, brought to bear upon it all the deceivableness of unrighteousness which the Scriptures lead us to expect in that system.

We have described above the course which has been commonly pursued by Popish controversialists in exhibiting the history of the church, and especially in tracing the history of doctrine; and which their well-known and avowed principles require them to pursue. In virtue of the principles they hold with respect to the perpetual visibility and infallibility of the church, they must maintain that she has taught the same doctrines without variation in every period of her history; and in virtue of the principle they hold about the authority of tradition, they are bound to maintain, and may be called upon to prove, that all the doctrines which the church now propounds, were delivered by Christ and His inspired

apostles, though not at the time committed to writing. No satisfactory proof of an historical kind can be produced, that any of the doctrines of the Church of Rome which are rejected by Protestants, because not sanctioned by Scripture, were delivered orally to the church by Christ or His apostles. There are many of them with respect to which this allegation can be positively disproved, i.e., with respect to which it can be proved that they were unknown to the primitive church, and therefore were not taught by its founders. This has been often shown by Protestant writers, but was never more fully and conclusively established than in the present day, when the history of doctrines has been very thoroughly investigated, especially by German writers.

The manifest impossibility of maintaining the old Popish ground has led some in our own day to have recourse to a new expedient, viz., what is called the theory of Development This theory has been fully expounded in Dr Newman's Essay on that subject; and applied by him to the vindication of the additions which the Church of Rome has made to the Christianity of the New Testament. It is in substance this, that the doctrines taught by inspired men might be legitimately developed or drawn out in subsequent times into notions which were not contained in, or deducible from, the doctrines themselves, but merely stood related to them in some vague and distant connection. This theory, which is plainly infidel in its bearing and tendency, as virtually denying the supreme authority of an external objective revelation, is somewhat skilfully accommodated to modes of thinking largely prevalent in the present day, when there is a tendency to resolve everything, both in the material and in the moral world, into development; and to give great prominence to the subjective, or to what is found within man himself, as the source and test of what is true. At present we can only observe, that the adoption of this new theory implies an abandonment of the ground which was occupied by all former Popish controversialists, and which the well-known principles of their church required them to occupy. It amounts to a virtual acknowledgment that this ground is untenable. No doubt, the doctrine of the infallibility of the church, if once established, and fairly and fully applied, is quite adequate to cover and to vindicate anything. But the more judicious Popish controversialists are rather afraid of overburdening the doctrine of the infallibility of the church, by imposing

upon it more than it is able to bear; and, indeed, they are not fond of resting anything upon it alone, without having something else in the way of proof or evidence to relieve and assist it. Some of the more rash and unscrupulous defenders of Popery have held that the infallible authority of the church includes a power of establishing and imposing new articles of faith, which they might perhaps, in accordance with the fashionable phraseology of the present day, call developments of what was taught by inspired men. But the more judicious defenders of Popery have shrunk from taking up this extreme ground; and, besides, the doctrine of the Council of Trent on the subject of tradition plainly commits them to the necessity of maintaining that all their doctrines are contained either in the written word or in the unwritten traditions, and, of course, entitles us to demand of them proof that all they teach is either supported by Scripture, or can be traced up through another channel to the teaching of Christ or His apostles. It is a curious and characteristic specimen of Popish policy, that the Romish ecclesiastical authorities of this country, while labouring to take advantage of Dr Newman's theory of development, have not ventured very formally either to approve or to repudiate it; while their pretended unity is contradicted by the fact, that some of the leading Romish authorities in the United States have openly denounced it as heretical and dangerous.

It is the more important to keep these considerations in remembrance in investigating the history of the church, because really the history of the church for fifteen hundred years is, to a large extent, just the history of Popery. The apostle Paul assures us that, even in his time, the mystery of iniquity was already working; and in every succeeding century we find clearer and clearer traces of these seeds or elements, which, when fully developed, constitute the Popish system. Satan took six or seven hundred years to develop and bring to full maturity what has been justly described as his great masterpiece; and indeed some of the peculiarities of Popery were not devised till the middle ages, when the great body of the visible church was sunk in gross darkness, superstition, and idolatry. Even since the Reformation, the condition and efforts of the Papacy have exerted no small influence upon the general state of the professing church. In the present day, it is exerting more influence than it has done for a long period; and there is good ground to believe that that apostate and

antichristian system will henceforth continue to hold a most prominent and influential place in the history of the visible church, even until the Lord shall consume it with the breath of His mouth, and destroy it with the brightness of His coming.

There is, indeed, something dark and mysterious in the survey of the history of the church of Christ, in its so soon losing its purity, and falling into error and corruption; and in this error and corruption gaining such an ascendancy, and virtually overspreading the visible church for nearly a thousand years. And Papists take advantage of this circumstance, and appeal to men whether they can believe that, considering the promises of Christ's constant presence and Spirit, —can believe, that this is a correct view of the leading features in the church's history. But we deny that there is anything in these premises sufficient to prove, a priori, that this could not be: we find in Scripture other intimations, leading us to expect that it would be; we feel it to be our duty to judge of 'the truth of doctrines only by the standard of God's word, and of the truth of facts only by their appropriate historical evidence. We are not able to fathom the plans and purposes of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. But we can see enough in the history of God's dealings with men before the manifestation of His Son in the flesh, to convince us that there is nothing in the Protestant view of the history of the Christian church in the least inconsistent with the analogy of the divine procedure, or with the great principles which have all along regulated God's communication to them of spiritual blessings; and we cannot doubt that, in regard to this as in regard to any other department of His dealings with men, the Lord will yet more fully manifest to His people His manifold wisdom and His unshaken faithfulness.

II. The Council of Jerusalem

I. Scripture Narrative

Although our review of Theological Discussions properly begins at the close of the apostolic age, yet there is one transaction recorded in the New Testament to which it may be proper to advert, from its intimate connection with the whole subsequent history and government of the church, and with the controversies to which they have given rise, many of them continuing down to the present day. I allude to what is commonly called the Council of Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

There has been a very great deal of discussion about the true character of this transaction, and the lessons, if any, which it is fitted to suggest respecting the government of the church in subsequent ages. Papists, Prelates, and Presbyterians have usually held that it was fitted and intended to convey some instruction as to the way and manner in which the government of the church should be permanently conducted, and have all professed to find in it something to favour their respective systems; while Congregationalists, not being able to find in it anything to favour their views of church government, have generally contented themselves with maintaining that it does not afford any very clear or certain materials for determining in what way the government of the church should be conducted in subsequent ages. Papists, finding it recorded here that Peter took a prominent part in the discussion which arose upon this occasion, adduce the narrative as a proof that he acted then, was entitled to act, and was recognised as entitled to act, as the vicar of Christ and the head of the church. Prelatists, finding that, several centuries afterwards, the notion was broached that James was appointed by the apostles Bishop of Jerusalem, profess to get scriptural evidence of this fancy in the prominent part which he took in the discussion. There is not in the narrative a trace of any superiority in office or jurisdiction on the part either of Peter or James; so that the substance of the Popish argument is virtually this, —Peter spoke first, and therefore he was

superior in authority and jurisdiction to the other apostles; while the Prelatic argument is, —James spoke last, and gave shape to the decision of the council, and, therefore, he was diocesan bishop, and, as such, superior in some respects even to the apostles. This, of course, is sheer trifling; and the only question of real importance or difficulty connected with this matter, lies between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists or Independents.

The Congregationalists usually contend that this transaction was so peculiar and extraordinary as to afford no pattern or precedent for the disposal of theological controversies, and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in subsequent ages, and in ordinary circumstances; while Presbyterians deny this, and allege that it affords a warrant for the general substance of some of the leading features of Presbyterian church government. The question whether or not the transaction was so peculiar and extraordinary as to afford no model or precedent for the subsequent government of the church, is virtually identical with this one, —whether the apostles acted in this matter as inspired and infallible expounders of the will of God, or simply as the ordinary office-bearers of the church, using the ordinary means of ascertaining the divine will, and enjoying only the ordinary guidance and influences of His Spirit.

Presbyterians contend that there are plain indications in the New Testament that the apostles sometimes acted in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, not as inspired men directed by the infallible guidance of the Spirit which they enjoyed in declaring truth and in organizing the church, but simply as ordinary office-bearers in co-operation with other elders, and more especially that they acted in this capacity merely in this case; and Congregationalists, not absolutely denying, and yet not prepared to admit, that they never acted in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs without infallible guidance, strenuously contend that in this case they acted under the influence of immediate supernatural inspiration, which infallibly guided them to a right decision, and that therefore it affords no model or precedent for the church in future times. It seems very manifest, from the whole scope and strain of the narrative, that the apostles did not act here as inspired and infallible men, but simply as ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearers, in

conjunction with the elders or ordinary pastors. Had it been the purpose of God to settle the controversy which arose about the necessity of circumcision by an inspired infallible decision, then apostles might have at once decided it without meeting, and without discussion of any kind; or any one of them might have done so in the exercise of his apostolic authority, and confirmed his decision by the "signs of an apostle." Paul himself might have done so at Antioch, without the matter being brought up to Jerusalem at all. This was not done; the matter was brought up to the church at Jerusalem. The apostles and elders assembled to deliberate upon it publicly in the presence of the people; and we are expressly told that much disputing took place regarding it, when they were assembled to decide it. The apostles who took part in the discussion, in place of at once declaring authoritatively what was the mind and will of God regarding it, formally argued the question upon grounds derived at once from God's providential dealings, and from statements contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. In this way, and by this process, they carried conviction to the understandings of all who heard them, so that they concurred at length in an unanimous decision. Here everything plainly indicates, and seems to have been obviously intended to indicate, that inspiration was not in exercise, but that the matter was decided by means accessible to men in general under the ordinary guidance of the Spirit.

There is no evidence, indeed— and the Congregationalists found much on this consideration— that any of the apostles were, even at the first, of a different mind from that in which the whole assembly ultimately concurred, or that they had any disputing among themselves; but it is certain— and this is sufficient to warrant our conclusion— that there was much disputing, i.e., arguing on opposite sides, in the assembly in their presence; and that they did not put an end to this disputing by an immediate and infallible declaration of the mind of God upon the point, in the exercise of their apostolic authority, but by ordinary arguments derived from admitted principles, and addressed to the understandings of those who heard them. The only thing that appears to contradict the conclusion to which the whole scope and strain of the narrative obviously points, is the fact that the decision to which the assembly ultimately came is announced in these words: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Now, this statement certainly implies that they were confident that

the decision was de facto in accordance with the mind of the Holy Ghost, but it does not necessarily imply more than this; and therefore it should not be held to imply more, as it would then contradict the general scope and strain of the narrative, which are plainly fitted to teach us that Christ, the Head of the church, determined the disposal of this matter, not by direct and infallible inspiration, but by a general meeting of apostles and elders seeking and attaining the truth upon the point, by means accessible to men in general with the ordinary influences of the Spirit. Not only does the expression, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," not necessarily imply more than the certain accordance de facto between the decision given by them and the mind of the Spirit, but it seems of itself to indicate that there was something in the case different from a mere declaration of what they knew simply as inspired men. It seems much more natural, that if they had been simply declaring what they had been miraculously and supernaturally taught upon the point by the Spirit, they would have said only, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost;" the addition, "and to us," having the appearance of intimating that they did not act in the matter merely and solely as the inspired declarers of His mind, though confident that their decision was accordant with His.

We hold it, then, to be clear, that while the apostles ordinarily had the gift of supernatural infallible inspiration in the discharge of their public duties, in declaring the truth and in organizing the church, yet on this occasion they did not, in point of fact, exercise this gift, but left it as it were in abeyance, and acted in the matter just as uninspired men might and could have done. Now, these two facts, taken in combination, not only prove that this transaction may afford a pattern and precedent for the proceedings of the church ordinarily in similar circumstances, but also warrant us to believe that it was expressly arranged in this way for that very purpose, and that therefore it is the church's duty to apply it for the regulation of her conduct. We assume now, then, that the view generally taken by Congregationalists, as to this controversy having been decided by a supernatural exercise of infallible inspiration, is erroneous. We assume that the whole transaction must have been intended, and of course fitted, to convey instruction and direction to the church as to the management of its affairs; and we proceed to inquire what particular

instructions or directions it does convey.

II. The Rule of Church Power

This transaction, and the record of it which has been transmitted to us, are fitted to remind us of the great scriptural principle, that the sole standard by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated is the revealed will of God. The question upon this occasion was, whether Gentile converts should be required to be circumcised, and to keep the ceremonial law. The I apostles and elders, when met to consider this point, evidently had it for their sole object to ascertain what was the mind and will of God concerning it; and they looked to no other standard but this. None but God was entitled really to decide this question, and no certain materials for deciding it aright could be derived from any other quarter. Accordingly, they directed their attention to the sources from which the will of God might be learned, and examined them. They considered, indeed, both the providence of God and the word of God; for we find that Peter, in his statement, founded mainly upon what God had actually done in the case of Cornelius, upon the evidence of the fact that His Spirit had been then and there communicated; while James appealed to statements contained in the writings of the prophets. The written word of God is, properly speaking, the only standard by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated, though much is also to be learned from carefully considering His providence, or what He has actually done, in connection with the statements of His word; the example of Peter in this matter especially affording us warrant and encouragement to give careful attention to any evidence that may be presented to us of God having poured out His Spirit upon any occasion for the conversion of sinners.

The Church is represented in Scripture as the kingdom- of Christ. He alone is its King; and He has established and promulgated in His word its constitution and laws, as well as made provision for the ordinary application of these laws to the permanent regulation of its affairs, as a distinct organized society in the world, but not of the world. He has commissioned none to make laws for His kingdom; He has done this Himself, as a Son over His own house. He has indicated His will as to the

way in which the affairs of His kingdom are to be permanently administered, and he has committed the application and execution of the laws He has established to the church itself. He has authorized no civil or secular authority to interfere in the regulation of the affairs of His kingdom; and therefore it is at once unlawful for them to interfere, and for the church either to be a consenting party to their interference, or to pay any regard to their mere enactments or requirements. He has laid down the laws of His kingdom in His word, and therefore the church is bound to be guided wholly by His word in the execution of the functions which He has conferred, and in the discharge of the duties which He has imposed upon her; and with that view, she is called upon to bring everything to that standard, and to make it her sole object, in regard to every question that comes before her, to ascertain what is the mind and will of Christ concerning it. The church is not only not bound to be guided by any other rule or standard, but is not at liberty to have regard to any other; as this would be virtually to withdraw herself from subjection to Christ's authority, and voluntarily to submit to a foreign yoke. No mere laws or statutes of men, —no mere regard to worldly or secular advantages, —should ever regulate the conduct of the church of Christ, or of any section or branch of it. She should be guided solely by the revealed will of Christ, and she should ascertain what that will is by diligent and prayerful study of His word.

When this great principle is explained and enforced, men who, from whatever cause, dislike and shrink from it, but who do not venture openly and directly to dispute it, usually attempt to evade it, and to escape from the practical application of it, by questioning whether there are, in point of fact, materials in God's word for deciding many of those disputes that arise in connection with the administration of the affairs of the church.

This notion, as it is often exhibited, is little else than a pretence for escaping from the supremacy of God's word without formally denying its authority. But the truth is, that God fitted and intended His word to be a full and adequate guide to His church in the execution of its functions, and in the discharge of all its duties, and to His people individually in everything bearing upon their relation to God and their eternal destiny; and it is very certain, that if men were really willing to submit to the

authority of Christ as the supreme and only lawgiver, —if they were really anxious to know His will that they might do it, and if they would diligently and prayerfully search His word, they would find materials there for regulating their opinions and conduct in all circumstances much more fully and completely than they might anticipate. It has been remarked— and the remark, we think, is equally just and important— that many of the applications made in the New Testament of Old Testament statements seem to have been intended, besides their direct and immediate object, to convey this general lesson, that much more is to be learnt from the Old Testament— and, of course, from the Scriptures generally— than might at first sight appear. Men desirous to evade or abridge the authority of Scripture, in its practical applications, seem to think that they are not called upon to regard anything but what appears plainly and palpably upon the surface of Scripture, and is set forth there in distinct and explicit assertions or requirements. But the mode of applying Old Testament statements frequently adopted by our Saviour and His apostles, points to a very different conclusion. We have a specimen of this in the statement made by James on the occasion we are considering. There was nothing very direct and express in the Old Testament upon the precise question to be decided; and the way in which he does decide it, by an application of Old Testament statements, is one of the many instances of a similar kind, occurring in the New Testament, which are fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that much more is to be learnt from the written word than what can be found on the surface of it, —much which cannot be discovered and brought out without a large amount of study and meditation;— and that the Bible is fitted and intended, when rightly used and improved, to be far more extensively useful and effectual, as a rule or standard of faith and practice, than men commonly suppose or experience.

III. Authority of Church Officers

The inspired record of this Council of Jerusalem plainly sanctions the Presbyterian principle of the right of the office-bearers of the church, as distinguished from the ordinary members, to decide judicially any disputes that may arise about the affairs of the church, —to be the

ordinary interpreters and administrators of Christ's laws for the government of His house. It is quite plain, from the inspired narrative, that the apostles and elders, or presbyters— i.e., the office-bearers of the church— alone composed the Council; that they exclusively were its constituent members, and that they alone formally and judicially decided upon the point brought before them. It is true that the brethren— i.e., the Christian people— generally were present, that they were consulted, and that they concurred in the decision; and the place which they occupied in the matter will be afterwards adverted to. But it is certain that the apostles and elders alone composed the Council, and alone formally pronounced the decision. We have the regular formal minute of sederunt, as it might be called, in the sixth verse, where we are told that "the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter;" and at the fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter, the decrees of the Council are expressly described as "the decrees that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem;" and these decrees, it is manifest, were authoritative or binding upon the churches. There is, indeed, a clear distinction kept up in the New Testament between the office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church: the one class being described as rulers and governors, and of course being invested with a certain kind and degree of authority; and the other being bound to render a certain measure and degree of submission and obedience.

There are some obvious and important limitations of the authority to be exercised by the one party, and of the obedience to be rendered by the other.

First, The authority of the office-bearers, while restricted exclusively to the affairs of the church, —to the administration of the ordinary necessary business of Christ's house, —is even there not lordly, or legislative, or discretionary, but purely ministerial, to be exercised in Christ's name, i.e., in entire subjection to His authority and to His word. Christ is the church's only King and Head; and this implies that its affairs must be regulated by His mind and will revealed in His word. The constitution and laws of His kingdom have been fixed by Him, and cannot by any human or uninspired authority be altered, abrogated, or extended. The office-bearers of the church are not lords over God's

heritage: they have no dominion over men's faith; they have no jurisdiction over the conscience; they are the mere interpreters of Christ's word, the mere administrators of the laws which He has enacted.

Secondly, Even within their proper sphere of simply interpreting and administering Christ's laws— i.e., applying them to the actual regulation of the affairs of the church as occasion may require— the office-bearers of the church are not, as Papists allege, infallible, so as to be entitled to exact implicit and unquestioning obedience. No such privilege has been promised to, or conferred upon, them; and to claim it, is to put themselves in Christ's stead, and to usurp dominion over the conscience.

Thirdly, The office-bearers of the church have no exclusive right to interpret Christ's laws. Upon scriptural and Protestant principles, every man has the right of private judgment, —i.e., he is entitled to interpret the word of God for himself upon his own responsibility, for the regulation of his own opinions and conduct, for the execution of his own functions and the discharge of his own duties, whatever these may be; and Christ has conferred upon no class of men any power that interferes with the exercise of this right. This right of private judgment belongs to all men in their different capacities, public and private, and ought to be exercised by them with a view to the discharge of their own duties and functions, whatever these may be. Civil rulers are, on this ground, entitled and bound to interpret the word of God for themselves, with a view to the right discharge of any duties, competent to them in their own sphere and province, with respect to which the word of God affords any data for decision; and every private individual enjoys the same right or privilege. The same principle, in this general mode of stating it, applies equally to ecclesiastical office-bearers; but in their case it must be viewed in connection with this additional Scripture truth, that they are Christ's ordinance for the ordinary government of His visible church, —that it is their function and duty, while it is not the function and duty of any other party, to administer His laws for the management of the ordinary necessary business of His church, — for deciding and regulating all those matters which require to be regulated and decided wherever a church of Christ exists and is in full operation. This being their function and duty, they are of course entitled and bound to interpret the word of God for

themselves, in the exercise of their own judgment, and upon their own responsibility, for the execution and discharge of it. Christ has not vested the government of His church— i.e., the management of its ordinary necessary business— either in civil rulers or in the body of ordinary members; and therefore they are not entitled to interpret the word of God for the purpose of executing this function. He has vested the ordinary administration of the affairs of His church in ecclesiastical office-bearers; and to them, therefore, and to them alone, belongs the right of interpreting and applying His laws for the attainment of this object, the accomplishment of this end. In so far as the decisions of ecclesiastical office-bearers affect other men collectively or individually, these men are fully entitled to judge for themselves whether or not the decisions pronounced are in accordance with the mind and will of Christ; and by the judgment which they form upon this point to regulate their own conduct, in so far as they have any function to execute, or any duty to discharge. But since the judicial determination of the office-bearers of the church is the only ordinary provision which Christ has made for administering the affairs of His church, no party is entitled to interfere authoritatively with them in the execution of this function; and all parties, while exercising their own right of private judgment, ought to regard the decisions of the ordinary and only competent authorities in the matter with a certain measure of respect and deference— at least to this extent, that if they do resolve to condemn and disobey the decisions, they ought to be very sure that these decisions are opposed to the mind and will of Christ, and that, therefore, they may confidently appeal from the decision of the office-bearers to the tribunal of the Head of the church Himself.

With the limitations, and in the sense, now explained, it is a scriptural principle which has always been held by Presbyterians, in opposition to Independents or Congregationalists, that the government of the church— the ordinary administration of Christ's laws, the judicial determination of any questions that may arise, and that may require to be decided in the ordinary management of the business of His house— is vested, not in the body of the people, or the ordinary members, but in the office-bearers of His church; that they constitute the only regular and ordinary tribunal for the decision and regulation of these matters; that therefore their

decisions should be treated with respect and obedience, unless they be contrary to the mind and will of God; and that men who refuse to obey them are bound to be well satisfied, upon good scriptural grounds, that they can confidently appeal to Christ against the sentence pronounced in His name upon earth.

It is the doctrine of our church, as set forth in the Confession of Faith, that "the decrees and determination" of Synods and Councils, "if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereto in His word." Without giving a full exposition of this general principle, I merely observe that it may be regarded as comprehending the three following positions: —

First, That all the decrees and determinations of Councils or Church Courts should be regulated by the word of God.

Secondly, That they are to be received with reverence and submission only when they are consonant with the word of God; and that of this, of course, every one is entitled and bound to judge for himself on his own responsibility.

Thirdly, That when they are consonant with the word, regard should be had, in the feelings with which they are contemplated, and in the way in which they are treated, not only to the fact of their accordance with the word, but also to the fact that they are righteous. and scriptural decisions of a legitimate authority, rightfully exercised; that they are instances of the right working of a provision which God has made, of an ordinance which He has appointed for the administration of the affairs of His church. The ordinary provision which God has made for settling public controversies and regulating the ordinary necessary business of His church, is by the public deliberations and decisions (according to His word) of the ordinary office-bearers; and when, through His blessing, this provision operates rightly, and brings out results which are consonant with the word, men are called upon to recognise the wisdom and goodness of God in appointing such an ordinance, and in guiding it, upon this particular occasion, to a right and scriptural result, and to

contemplate and receive the result with the reverence and submission which the realization of the truth that this is an ordinance of God appointed thereto in his word is evidently fitted to call forth.

IV. The Place of Church Members

The history of the council suggests to us, that, in important ecclesiastical matters, the Christian people, or the ordinary members of the church, though not possessed of a judicial or authoritative voice in determining them, ought to be consulted; that the merits of the case ought to be expounded to them, and that their consent and concurrence should, if possible, be obtained. There is a very marked distinction kept up through the whole of the narrative we are now considering, as well as through the New Testament in general, between the position and functions of the apostles and elders, or of the office-bearers, on the one hand, and of the people or ordinary members on the other. The assembly, as we have seen, was composed properly and formally only of the apostles and elders; and its decisions were, as they are expressly called by the inspired historian, "the decrees that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." All this is very plain, —so plain, that it cannot be explained away; and therefore what is said or indicated of the place and standing of the people or ordinary members, must, if possible, be so interpreted as to be consistent with this.

What, then, is here said of the people; and what does it fairly and naturally imply? They are mentioned for the first time in the twelfth verse, where we are told that (i all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul." This, of course, implies that they were present, but it implies nothing more; and, for anything that appears here, they might have been mere spectators and auditors, without having anything more to do with the matter. They are next mentioned in the twenty-second verse, where we are told that "it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch." Now, the way in which they are here introduced, plainly implies that they did not stand upon the same platform in the matter with the apostles and elders, and that they had not the same place and

standing in this, any more than in the preceding part, of the transaction which the office-bearers had. It does imply, however, that after the apostles and elders had made up their minds as to what was the mind and will of God in this matter, and what decision should be pronounced, the subject was brought before the people, —that they were called upon to attend to it, to exercise their judgment upon it, and to make up their mind regarding it. It implies that all this was done, and that, as the result of it, the brethren were convinced of the justice and ' soundness of the decision, and expressed their concurrence in it, as well as in the practical step by which it was followed up, of sending chosen men of their company to Antioch. All this having taken place, it was perfectly natural that the public letter addressed upon the subject to the Gentile churches, should run in the name of the whole body of those who at Jerusalem had adopted or concurred in the decision or judgment pronounced; and, accordingly, we find at the twenty-second verse, that this letter runs in the name of "the apostles, and elders, and brethren." There is no reasonable ground to doubt the correctness of the representation we have given of the actual facts or *res gestae* of the case, as indicated by the narrative, up till the time of the preparation of this letter; and if it be correct, then the mere introduction of the brethren, along with the apostles and elders, into the letter, cannot be fairly held to indicate, as it certainly does not necessarily imply, that the brethren formed a constituent part of the assembly, or that they } had acted with anything like judicial authority, as the apostles and ' elders had done, in deciding upon the question.

Some Presbyterians, afraid that this introduction of the l brethren into the letter along with the apostles and elders, might sanction the idea, that ordinary members of the church had some judicial authority in deciding controversies as well as the office-bearers, have tried to show that the brethren mentioned here are l not the same parties as the whole church mentioned in the preceding verse, but rather the presbyters, or elders, who were not pastors n or teachers. But this, I think, is a forced and unnatural interpretation, unwarranted by anything in the passage itself, and unnecessary to the end for the promotion of which it has been devised. Presbyterians have always denied, upon good and sufficient grounds, that Scripture assigns to the ordinary members of the church

anything like judicial authority in the decision of controversies, or in the ordinary administration of the general government of the church. But they have very generally admitted, on the ground of what is contained in this chapter and in other parts of the New Testament, that, in important ecclesiastical questions, the nature and merits of the case, and the grounds and reasons of the judgment, should, in so far as circumstances allowed of it, be laid before the ordinary members of the church; and that their consent and concurrence should, if possible, be obtained. Presbyterians, indeed, have never assigned to the ordinary members of the church, because they could see no warrant in Scripture for doing so, the same distinct and definite place and influence in the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in general, as they have ascribed to them in the appointment of their own office-bearers; in other words, they have never held their consent or concurrence in the decisions pronounced by the office-bearers in the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs to be necessary or indispensable, so that the withholding or refusal of their consent nullified or invalidated the judgment, or formed a bar in the way of its taking practical effect.

Upon distinct and specific scriptural grounds bearing upon this particular subject, Presbyterians have usually held that the consent or concurrence of the ordinary members of the church is necessary or indispensable in the appointment of their office-bearers, so that the withholding or refusal of their consent or concurrence is an insuperable bar to the formation of the pastoral relation. But, while they have maintained this principle upon special scriptural grounds, bearing upon this particular topic of the election of office-bearers, they have usually denied that either this, or anything else contained in Scripture, afforded any sufficient ground for assigning to the ordinary members of the church so high and definite a standing and influence in the ordinary government of the church, or in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in general. They have, however, generally admitted that, in important questions affecting the welfare and peace of the church, the people should be consulted, and that their consent and concurrence should, if possible, be secured by the fair use of scriptural arguments addressed to their understandings.

The Presbyterians of this country about the time of the Westminster

Assembly, had perhaps somewhat higher and more aristocratic ideas of the power and authority of ecclesiastical office-bearers and church courts than had been generally entertained by the Reformers of the preceding century; not that there was any very marked or definite difference in opinion or doctrinal statement between them on this subject, but that there was a somewhat different impression produced by the controversy in which, at the later of these two periods, Presbyterians were engaged with the Independents, —a disposition to keep rather at a distance from anything that might seem to favour Congregationalism. Accordingly, there is nothing direct or explicit upon the subject of the place and standing of the people in the general regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, as distinguished from their influence or privilege in the election of their office-bearers, —nothing, indeed, but the general statement formerly explained, that Christ has given the ministry to the church, —contained in any of our authorized standard books prepared at that time. But, at the same time, it is certain that the leading Presbyterians of that period held the principle about the consultation and concurrence of the people which we are now illustrating; and that they ordinarily acted upon it in practice.

As this point has been very much overlooked in modern times, it may be proper briefly to adduce some evidence of the statement which has now been made. In 1641, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland sent a letter to their Presbyterian brethren in England, who had asked their opinion in regard to the Congregational scheme of church government, which contained the following passage: —"Not only the solemn execution of ecclesiastical power and authority, but the whole exercises and acts thereof, do properly belong unto the officers of the kirk; yet so that, in matters of chiefest importance, the tacit consent of the congregation be had before their decrees and sentences receive final execution." We have statements to the same effect published in the same year by Alexander Henderson and George Gillespie, — the one the most influential actor, and the other the most learned and conclusive reasoner, among the great men who adorned our church at that important era in her history. In the work entitled "The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland," intended to give an account to Englishmen of the ordinary practice of our church, Henderson says, "Nothing useth to be done by the lesser or greater presbytery— i.e., the kirk-session or the presbytery— in ordering

the public worship, in censuring of delinquents, or bringing them to public repentance, but according to the settled order of the church, and with express or tacit consent of the congregation." And Gillespie, in his treatise entitled "An Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland," has the following statement: "It is objected (by Independents) that what concerneth all, ought to be done with the consent of all. Answer, We hold the same; but the consent of all is one thing, the exercise of jurisdiction by all, another thing." And, in commenting upon the council of Jerusalem, he gives the same view of this point as we have done, saying, "The apostles and elders met, sat, and voiced apart from the whole church, and they alone judged and decreed. In the meanwhile were matters made known to the whole church, and done with the consent of all....The brethren are mentioned (along with the apostles and elders), because it was done with their knowledge, consent, and applause."

These were the views entertained upon this subject by the men to whom we are indebted for the standards of our church, who held that they were sanctioned by the inspired narrative of the council at Jerusalem, while they held also that neither this, nor any other portion of the New Testament, warranted or required the ascription to the people of any higher place or standing than this in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs.

V. Subordination of Church Courts

There is another principle of church government which Presbyterians have generally regarded as sanctioned by the transaction recorded in this chapter— viz., what is called the subordination of courts; or, to adopt the phraseology of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Form of Church Government, the right of synodical assemblies to exercise authority or jurisdiction over congregational and classical assemblies, i.e., over what we now call kirk-sessions and presbyteries, —their right to receive appeals in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same. The scriptural warrant for classical assemblies or presbyteries is, that there are clear instances in Scripture in which the whole body of

the Christians of a particular place— as at Jerusalem and Ephesus, where there must have been more than one congregation— are spoken of as a church, or one church, which they could be only as being under one and the same presbyterial government, having a joint or common body of ecclesiastical office-bearers, who presided over them, and regulated their common ecclesiastical affairs. The chief direct warrant which Presbyterians profess to find in Scripture for synodical assemblies, or higher courts invested with some measure of authority over congregational and classical assemblies or elderships, is this synod or council at Jerusalem; and I have no doubt that it does give countenance to the general idea on which the Presbyterian principle of a subordination of courts is based. The whole transaction here recorded, viewed in its complex character, naturally and obviously wears the aspect of the church at Antioch referring an important and difficult question, because of its importance and difficulty, and because of its affecting the interests of the whole church, to the church of Jerusalem, as to a superior authority; and of that church accordingly entertaining the reference, and giving an authoritative decision upon the subject referred to them. This, we say, is naturally and obviously the general character and aspect, of the transaction here recorded; and as there is nothing in the particular statements of the narrative inconsistent with, or exclusive of, this view, this must be held to be the general idea or principle which, if the transaction was really fitted to furnish a model or precedent for the government of the church in subsequent ages, it was intended to sanction. And if this was really the general character of the transaction, then it is plain that, if the church at Antioch, instead of referring the matter to the church at Jerusalem, had themselves given a decision upon it, as they might have done, it would have been equally competent for the minority in the church at Antioch (for we know there was a division there) to have appealed to the church at Jerusalem to review, and, if they saw cause, to reverse the decision.

While this is the idea or principle which the transaction, in its general aspect, naturally and obviously suggests and countenances, there is no real weight in the attempts which have been made by Congregationalists and others to overturn or escape from the conclusion. There are two positions upon this point which, with this view, and for this purpose, the

opponents of Presbyterian principles have laboured to establish: first, that the decision of the council at Jerusalem was not binding, as possessed of any proper authority, but was a mere counsel or advice, having only a moral weight or influence; and, secondly, that even if the decision were binding or authoritative, the council at Jerusalem did not stand to the church at Antioch, or to other churches, in a relation at all similar or analogous to that of a superior authority to an inferior one, as being possessed of higher and wider jurisdiction. That the decision was binding and authoritative, and was not merely a counsel or advice coming from a party whose judgment was entitled to much moral weight, seems very plain from the whole strain of the narrative, and especially from the twenty-eighth verse, where the council says, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;" and from the fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter, where it plainly appears that "the decrees which were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" were promulgated and prescribed as laws binding upon all the churches. This last circumstance— viz., that the decrees were imposed not only upon the church at Antioch, but upon all other churches likewise, overturns another view which has been propounded, intermediate between that which describes the decision as an authoritative judgment, and that which represents it as a mere counsel or advice. It has been contended by Boehmer— a very learned German jurist, who has thrown much light upon some important topics in ecclesiastical history and ecclesiastical jurisprudence, though he was a strenuous defender of Erastian principles— that this question was referred by the church at Antioch to the church at Jerusalem simply in the way of arbitration, or, as he says, *per modum compromissi*, —any obligation which might attach to the one party to obey the decision being based wholly upon their own voluntary act, in agreeing to submit it to the determination of the other. The narrative exhibits no trace of anything like a voluntary submission to arbitration on the part of the church at Antioch; and this, therefore, is a mere gratuitous assumption, devised to serve a purpose, while the imposition of the decrees upon other churches, equally with the church at Antioch, proves that this was not the character of the transaction.

The generality of Congregationalists, who maintain that this whole

transaction affords no direct pattern or model for the permanent government of the church, on the ground that the decision was pronounced by the apostles in the exercise of their apostolic authority, under infallible supernatural guidance, cannot of course adopt the first mode of overthrowing the Presbyterian conclusion, and commonly have recourse to the second position which we have mentioned— viz., that the church of Jerusalem did not stand to the church of Antioch in a relation at all similar or analogous to that of a supreme authority to a subordinate one, or of a higher to a lower church court; or, more generally, that the council at Jerusalem did not possess those qualities or attributes which Presbyterians require as necessary to warrant and legitimate the exercise of a supreme controlling authority on the part of synodical assemblies. Now, it must be admitted in fairness that some zealous Presbyterian writers have gone beyond what the inspired narrative warrants in making out a virtual identity, or very complete similarity, between the Council of Jerusalem and modern synodical assemblies. More particularly, it must be admitted that we have no evidence that any other churches were present, or were represented in this council, except those of Antioch and Jerusalem; and that thus the council cannot be shown to correspond fully with the modern idea of a synodical assembly or supreme church court, formally representing, and simply because representing a considerable number of particular churches, exercising authority or jurisdiction over them. But notwithstanding this concession, Presbyterians contend, and we think with good reason, that the general principle or idea of a representative character or standing, and of a corresponding jurisdiction or right of exercising judicial control, is sufficiently indicated and maintained by the general position of the church at Jerusalem, and especially of the apostles who resided there, and regulated and administered its affairs.

The apostles, whether regarded as inspired and infallible teachers, or merely as ordinary office-bearers, had, it will not be disputed, jurisdiction over the whole church of Christ. Their authority was not confined to any one particular place or district, but extended over the whole church, over all who professed subjection to their Master. And if so, then a Synod or Council of which they were constituent members might be fairly regarded as representing the church, and as thus entitled to exercise over the whole

length and breadth of it whatever authority and jurisdiction was in itself right or competent. This is quite sufficient to sanction the use which the more judicious Presbyterians make of the Council at Jerusalem, as countenancing the general idea or principle of courts of review, or of a subordination of courts of ecclesiastical office-bearers— of some assemblies possessed of a wider representative character, and of a corresponding wider jurisdiction than others. It is of course only the general principle or idea that is sanctioned— the general principle or idea of the subordination of one court to another of wider jurisdiction— of the subordination of one church to many churches, or to their representatives. The way in which this general idea is to be followed out and applied may, or rather must, depend much upon external circumstances, upon opportunities of meeting and organizing; but enough may be fairly deduced from the inspired record of the Council at Jerusalem, if it was really intended to afford instructions in regard to church government in subsequent ages, to show that this general idea may be legitimately applied to the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs.

The regulation of all ecclesiastical affairs, and especially the decision of theological controversies, should be characterized at once by an uncompromising adherence to truth, and by a tender regard to the infirmities and prejudices of those who may be to some extent involved in error.

That both these qualities were exhibited in the decision pronounced by the apostles and elders upon this occasion, might be easily shown; but it is not necessary to enter into detail upon this point. That these qualities should be combined in the decisions and proceedings of ecclesiastical office-bearers in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, is a position the truth of which all admit; but experience abundantly proves that it is very difficult to follow it out in practice, and the history of the church exhibits very many instances in which the one or the other of these objects was entirely disregarded or trampled under foot. There have been many instances in which individuals possessed of authority or influence in the church and in ecclesiastical councils have, on the one hand, exhibited, under the profession of a great zeal for truth, a great want of Christian forbearance and discretion, and practised odious and offensive

tyranny; or, on the other hand, under a profession of moderation and forbearance, have sacrificed the interests of truth and sound doctrine. The Council at Jerusalem did neither, but combined a due regard to both the important objects referred to; while the sharp contention that soon after separated Paul and Barnabas— originating, no doubt, in the same general features of character, in the same tendencies and infirmities which tempt men on more public questions either to undue zeal or to undue forbearance— affords a striking lesson of the necessity of men keeping at all times a strict watch over their own spirits, and realizing unceasingly their dependence upon the Spirit of all grace, that they may be guided in the ways of wisdom, and fitted for the right discharge of their duties, to the glory of God and the welfare of His church. Some Congregationalists have dwelt much upon the humility and condescension which the apostles manifested in the whole course they pursued upon this occasion, in submitting the decision of the matter to an assembly of elders in conjunction with themselves, —in permitting disputation to go on in their presence, —and in dealing with the erroneous views propounded by arguments, and not by mere authority. We have no doubt that the apostles manifested in their proceedings and deportment upon this occasion, everything which humility and condescension could have suggested; but in the facts now referred to, in which Congregationalists see only manifestations of these graces, we see, as has been explained, the proof of something else, of something different from this, and much more specific; a proof, viz., that they did not act in this matter as inspired men under infallible guidance, but as ordinary office-bearers in conjunction with the elders; and we venture to think, that if they were really upon this occasion exercising their infallible apostolic authority, as Congregationalists allege, the facts referred to would furnish indications rather of something like simulation and deceit, than of humility and condescension.

It thus appears, upon a survey of this whole subject, that the first controversy which arose in the Christian church, and which broke out while the church enjoyed the guidance of inspired men, was taken up and disposed of in such a way as was fitted and intended to afford general lessons as to the mode in which the affairs of the church should be conducted, after the miraculous and supernatural gifts of the Spirit

should be taken away.

VI. Obligation of Apostolic Practice

There can be no reasonable doubt that it may be justly laid down as a general principle, that apostolic practice, such as that exemplified in the Council at Jerusalem, does impose a permanent binding obligation in regard to the constitution and government of the church, and the administration of its affairs; though it has been generally conceded by Presbyterians, that there are some limitations or modifications attaching to this principle in its practical application. The truth of this general principle seems very clearly deducible from these two positions— First, that Christ commissioned and authorized the apostles to organize His church as a distinct visible society, and to make provision for preserving or perpetuating it to the end of the world; and secondly, that the apostles, in executing this branch of their commission, have left us few direct or formal precepts or instructions as to the constitution and government of the church, and have merely furnished us with some materials for ascertaining what it was that they themselves ordinarily did in establishing and organizing churches, or what was the actual state and condition of the church and the churches while under their guidance. Whatever precepts or directions they might have given on this or on any other subject, would have been received as binding, and whatever precepts or directions they have given, are admitted to be so; but as they were executing their Master's commission when they were establishing and organizing churches, —as they did little in the way of executing this branch of their commission except by their practice in establishing and organizing churches, and by giving us materials for ascertaining what their practice in this respect was, —and as there is no intimation in Scripture, either in the way of general principle or of specific statement, that any change was ever after to take place in the constitution and government of the church, or that any authority was to exist warranted to introduce innovations, the conclusion from all these considerations, taken in combination, seems unavoidable, that the practice of the apostles, or what they actually did in establishing and organizing churches, is, and was intended to be, a binding rule to the church in all

ages; that the Christian churches of subsequent times ought, de jure, to be fashioned after the model of the churches planted and superintended by the apostles.

It is proper, however, to advert to some of the limitations and modifications under which this general principle is to be held and applied, and to the objections commonly adduced against it. One very obvious limitation of it is, that the apostolic practice which is adduced as binding, must be itself established from the word of God, and must not rest merely upon materials derived from any other and inferior source. This position is virtually included in the great doctrine of the sufficiency and perfection of the written word, —a doctrine held by Protestants in opposition to the Church of Rome.

If this doctrine be true, then it follows that anything which is imposed upon the church as binding by God's authority, or jure divino, whether the medium, or proximate source, of obligation be apostolic practice or anything else, must be traced to, and established by, something contained in, or fairly deducible from, Scripture. Unless Scripture proof be adduced, we are entitled at once to set aside all claim alleged upon our submission. If God really fitted and intended the written word to be the only rule of faith and practice, and has made this known to us, He has thereby not only authorized, but required us to reject or disregard anything obtruded upon the church as binding that cannot be traced to that source. Papists and Prelatists, as we shall afterwards have occasion to show, profess to produce to us evidence of apostolic practice, or of what the apostles did, not derived from Scripture, but from later authors; and on this ground demand our assent and submission to their views and arrangements, in regard to the constitution and government of the church.

We think it can be shown that neither of these parties has produced proof of apostolic practice favourable to their views, which can be regarded as sufficient, when tried fairly by the ordinary rules of historical evidence. But even if they could produce evidence of apostolic practice that answered this description, and was adequate to establish any ordinary point of history as a matter of fact, we would hold it sufficient to disprove any alleged obligation to submit to it, that it could not be deduced from anything contained in the written word. Subsequent ordinary historical

evidence of apostolical practice might be legitimately employed in elucidating the meaning and confirming the sense of a scriptural statement which was somewhat obscure or dubious in its import, but could not of itself be sufficient to impose an authoritative obligation.

It is generally conceded, however, that everything which the apostles did or sanctioned, connected with the administration of the affairs of the church, is not necessarily and ipso facto, even when contained in or deduced from Scripture, binding universally and permanently upon the church. It has, for instance, been the opinion of the great body of divines of all sects and parties, that the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem, simply as such, and irrespective of anything else found in Scripture bearing upon any of the subjects to which they refer, were not intended to be of universal and permanent obligation, and are not now, in fact, binding upon Christians. It was undoubtedly made imperative upon the churches of that age by the decree of the Council, to abstain from things strangled, and from blood; but the great body of divines of all parties have been of opinion, that an obligation to abstain from these things was not thereby imposed permanently upon the church, and is not now binding upon Christians. If this principle may be warrantably applied to what was then by express injunction, in accordance with the mind of the Holy Ghost, imposed upon the church, it must be at least equally warrantable to hold it applicable to what merely prevailed in fact in the primitive churches under apostolic superintendence. And, accordingly, there are things which, as we learn from Scripture, obtained in the apostolic churches, but which scarcely any church now considers itself under an obligation to preserve. There were some things which, from their nature, seem to have been local and temporary, suited only to the particular circumstances of the church in that age, and in the countries where the gospel was first preached; and these have been generally regarded as destitute of all permanent binding force.

When this concession is once made, that there are some things made known to us in Scripture about the apostolic churches which were local and temporary, and not binding permanently upon the church in future ages (and it is a concession which could not be reasonably withheld), some degree of doubt or uncertainty is of course introduced into the

application of the general principle formerly established, as to the permanent binding force of apostolic practice in regard to the constitution and government of the church and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. But this doubt or uncertainty as to some of the applications of the principle affords no ground for the use which some have made of it in rejecting the principle altogether, and denying that apostolic practice, ordinarily and as a general rule, forms a binding law for the regulation of the affairs of the church. The general considerations already adverted to establish the truth of the general position as to the ordinary binding force of apostolic practice. These considerations cannot be directly answered and refuted, or shown to involve anything erroneous or absurd; and therefore, as nothing formidable can be adduced upon the other side, the general principle must be held as proved. And neither the ground we have to believe that the principle is to be held with some qualifications, nor the difficulties that may arise in particular cases, as to the practical application of the principle viewed in connection with these qualifications and limitations, warrant us in refusing to admit and maintain it, and to make a reasonable application of it.

It must be admitted, indeed, that some practical questions have been started upon the particular subject we are now considering which are not of very easy or certain solution. But they are all of such a kind as are manifestly, from their very nature, and from the general genius and spirit of the Christian economy, of no great intrinsic importance; and such as that the consciences of men who are conscious to themselves of a sincere and honest desire to do the will of Christ, so far as they clearly see it, need not be greatly distressed about the precise adjustment of them. We cannot enter into much detail upon this subject, or give any exposition of the particular questions that have been controverted under this general head; but we think the substance of the truth upon this topic— the principal general rules by which we ought to be guided in the regulation of this matter— may be summed up in the following positions: —

First, That nothing ought to be admitted into the ordinary government and worship of the Christian church which has not the sanction or warrant of scriptural authority, or apostolic practice at least, if not precept; but with this exception or limitation, as stated in the first

chapter of our Confession of Faith, 'that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.'

Secondly, That the scriptural proof of any arrangement or practice having existed in the apostolic churches ordinarily and prima facie imposes an obligation upon all churches to adopt it, — an obligation that is imperative and unlimited in regard to all those things which obviously enter into the substance of the government and worship of the church, and the mode in which they are administered.

Thirdly, That the onus probandi lies upon those who propose to omit anything which has the sanction of apostolic practice, and that they must produce a satisfactory reason for doing so, derived either from some general principle or specific statement of Scripture bearing upon the point, or from the nature of the case, as making it manifest that the particular point of practice under consideration was local and temporary.

There are two great practical questions involved in the right adjustment of this general topic of the binding force of apostolical practice, or of the permanent obligation of what we know from Scripture to have been actually done in the primitive churches under apostolic superintendence, viz., — first, whether it be lawful for Christian churches now to omit any arrangement or observance which the apostles introduced into, or sanctioned in, the churches; and, secondly, whether it be lawful to introduce into the church any arrangement or observance which they did not sanction or require. To maintain the affirmative on either of these questions, as a general rule, seems to amount to something like a negation of the place or standing which is plainly ascribed to the apostles in the New Testament, as supernaturally authorized and guided by Christ for the work of organizing and establishing His church in the world. If this function were really devolved by Christ upon the apostles, and if they were supernaturally qualified by Him for the execution of it, then there is no reason whatever to reject, but, on the contrary, every reason to admit, the conclusion, that what they did in this matter, either in introducing or in omitting, when ascertained from Scripture, forms a rule or standard

which the church in all ages is imperatively bound to follow. To deny this is virtually to reduce the apostles, with reference to what was evidently one of the main parts of their special function, to the level of ordinary uninspired men, and to ascribe to the office-bearers of the church in subsequent times an equal right and an equal fitness to determine the arrangements of Christ's kingdom with that which the apostles possessed. The rejection of apostolic practice as a binding rule for the church in all ages is of course glossed over by its defenders under plausible pretences; but it really amounts, in substance and in effect, to a preference of their own wisdom to that of the apostles, i.e., of the wisdom of man to that of God.

The chief pretences employed in this matter are the alleged impossibility of making arrangements and instituting observances that might be equally adapted for all ages and countries; the allegation that the apostles introduced somewhat different arrangements into the different churches which they planted, —an allegation of which no evidence can be produced; and the alleged propriety and expediency of leaving room for a judicious adaptation of things so insignificant as external arrangements and ceremonies to the suggestions of experience, and to the existing state of the development of the Christian life and the Christian consciousness, to use the favourite phraseology of our own day, of particular churches or classes of men.

There might have been some plausibility in the allegation of the impossibility of introducing at once arrangements and ceremonies that would be equally adapted to all ages and countries, if Christianity, as an outward system, had at all resembled in its general features and objects the Mosaic economy— if it had been intended to be a system of minute prescription and observance. This manifestly was not intended. Accordingly there is very little, as compared with the Mosaic economy, of what is external that can be held to be fixed or determined for the Christian church in all ages, either by the precepts or by the practice of the apostles. Christianity is adapted for permanence and for catholicity by the very absence of any detailed standard or directory of external arrangements and observances; and when so little that is merely external can be held to have been prescribed and imposed, even when it is

assumed that apostolic practice constitutes a permanent binding rule, the presumption is very strong that nothing which has been so sanctioned may be omitted in subsequent ages, unless there be pretty manifest indications, either in the nature of the case or in some scriptural statements, that it was intended to be but local or temporary. Accordingly, almost all churches have admitted, as a general principle, their obligation to have still what apostolic practice has sanctioned, and have not differed very materially as to the limitations and practical applications of this principle.

In making this statement, of course I do not refer to those questions which have been started and debated between different churches, as to whether or not particular arrangements were made by the apostles, and did obtain in the apostolic churches, —as, for instance, whether the apostolic church was under the government of Peter as Christ's vicar, — whether it was ruled by diocesan prelates, —whether presbyters or elders, who were not ordinary pastors, had a share in the administration of its affairs. In discussing these points, the question is not, whether apostolic practice is a binding rule, —for both parties in these controversies usually concede that it is, —but whether the practice of the apostles did, in point of fact, include and sanction these particular arrangements. We refer to cases with respect to which it is admitted that the apostolic practice did sanction them, and where, of course, the question that arises is, Did this admitted practice of the apostles render the observance of them imperatively binding upon the church in future ages? The chief points to which this question has been applied, are of no great importance in themselves, and have not occasioned any great diversity of opinion, or much controversial discussion among men of sense and discrimination. They are principally these: the washing of the feet of the disciples, practised, and in some sense enjoined, by our Lord, —abstinence from blood, —the order of deaconesses, —the kiss of charity, or what some of the more strenuous defenders of its permanent obligation have called the ordinance of salutation, —and the love-feasts, which seem to have usually succeeded the celebration of public worship. There is no great difficulty in showing, partly from the nature of the case, and the manifest relation of the practices to temporary or local circumstances, partly from the manner in which they are spoken of in Scripture, and partly from other

statements in the New Testament, which bear upon the particular point, though not directly and immediately treating of it, that these things are not binding upon Christians and churches in all ages, and that men's consciences need not be disturbed by the omission or disregard of them. The churches of Christ in general, while holding that these practices are not permanently binding, although admitting that we have in the New Testament sufficient grounds to believe that they did in fact generally obtain in apostolic times, have, at the same time, usually held, as a general principle, the binding force of apostolic practice or example, and have professed to apply this general principle to the actual regulation of their own conduct.

There is one topic connected with this subject which has given rise to a good deal of discussion in our own day, and on which, for this reason, we may make a passing observation, especially as it occupies a sort of intermediate position between the two classes of cases formerly adverted to, in the one of which the fact of the apostolic practice is admitted on both sides, and in the other of which it is controverted. I refer to the attempt which has been made to show that apostolic precept and practice fix one exclusive mode of providing for the temporal maintenance of a gospel ministry, viz., by the voluntary contributions of those who enjoy the benefit of it. That apostolic precept and practice impose an imperative obligation upon those who are taught to provide for the maintenance of him who teaches, and of course give him a right to maintenance from them, and that this was the way in which ordinarily ministers were maintained in the apostolic church, is of course admitted; and so far the parties are agreed as to what *de facto* the general apostolic practice was, while they are also agreed in this, that, *de jure*, this obligation to give, and this right to receive maintenance, permanently attach to the two parties respectively. But it is contended on the other side— and, we are persuaded, with complete success— that there is nothing either in the statements of Scripture, or in the practice of the apostles, which affords any-ground for the position, that it is unlawful for ministers to derive their support from any other source than the contributions of those among whom they labour; and that a survey of all that Scripture teaches upon the subject, and especially of the diversified procedure adopted by the apostle Paul in regard to his own maintenance, affords positive

grounds for holding that this position is not true.

We have dwelt, however, longer than we intended upon the less important department of the subject, viz., the lawfulness or unlawfulness of omitting what apostolic practice sanctions; and we must now briefly advert to the other and more important topic comprehended under this general subject, viz., the lawfulness or unlawfulness of introducing what apostolic practice has not sanctioned. The difference upon the former question is one merely of degree; for it is generally admitted, even by those who hold as a general rule the binding force of apostolic practice or example, that there are some things which have the sanction of apostolic practice which may be lawfully omitted as not permanently binding. But, on the latter question, the difference is one of kind or of principle, because we hold it as a great general truth, that it is unwarrantable and unlawful to introduce into the government and worship of the Christian church any arrangements and ordinances which have not been positively sanctioned by Christ or His apostles; and because, when this general truth is denied, there is no limitation that can be put to the introduction of the inventions of men into the government and worship of Christ's house. There is no valid argument, or even reasonable presumption, against the truth of this general position, as we have above explained it; and there is a great deal that cannot be answered to be adduced in support of it. There is no warrant in Scripture for the doctrine laid down in the twentieth Article of the Church of England, that 'the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies,' unless this power be restricted within the limits indicated in the quotation formerly given from the first chapter of our own Confession of Faith. If these limits are carefully observed, the principle we have laid down is safe, for scarcely any case has ever been started where there was any real difficulty in deciding, — and on this the question turns, — whether a particular ecclesiastical arrangement about the government and worship of the church was really the introduction and establishment of a new and unauthorized thing into the church, or merely the regulation of the circumstances requiring to be regulated in the mode of doing things, which things Christ or His apostles have sanctioned.

VII. Divine Right of a Form of Church

Government

Another question' suggested by the history of the council of Jerusalem is, whether or not a particular form of church government is laid down in Scripture so as to be binding by God's authority, or, *jure divino*, upon the church in subsequent ages? This question has given rise to a good deal of discussion, though it has not unfrequently been discussed in such a way as to resolve very much into a dispute about words, in which men, whose views did not very materially differ from each other, might support the affirmative or the negative in the question, according to the precise sense in which its terms might be explained. It has been the most generally prevalent opinion in the Christian church, that a particular form of church government has been laid down in Scripture so as to be binding upon future ages, though there has, of course, been much difference of opinion as to what the particular form of church government is which has received the sanction of Scripture. Those who have disputed or denied this general position about the Scripture sanctioning a particular form of church government, have been most commonly men who had some particular purpose to serve, who were exposed to the temptation of being influenced in their views and practice by some other consideration than a pure love of truth, —as, for instance, a desire to leave room for the interference of the civil power in the government of the church, or to palliate their own submission to what the civil power may have sanctioned and established in this matter. And in defending the position, that no particular form of church government was laid down in Scripture, they have usually represented the opposite opinion in a manner which the statements of its supporters do not warrant, as if they meant to assert that the whole detailed particulars of a full directory for the government of the church were laid down in Scripture, and admitted of no change, —a position which is manifestly untenable.

Papists, Prelatists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, have, in general, contended that their own system of church government is laid down in Scripture, and is binding upon the church in all ages; but they have also in general admitted, that it is only the leading features, or fundamental principles of their system, that are sanctioned by Scripture, without claiming direct scriptural authority for its details, and without

denying that there are things of minor importance connected with the government of the church which the church herself may regulate from time to time, according as local or temporary circumstances may suggest or require. In this way it sometimes happens, that the more reasonable and judicious affirmers and deniers of the *jus divinum* of a particular form of church government, do not differ very materially from each other on the general question, while very considerable differences are to be found on both sides as to what particular form of church government it is that has the sanction of Scripture, or can make out the most plausible claims to support upon scriptural grounds. It is also to be noticed, that those who concur in maintaining that there is a form of church government laid down in Scripture, differ considerably among themselves as to the extent to which they claim a scriptural sanction for the subordinate features of their own scheme; and as to the view they take of the fulness and clearness of the scriptural evidence even of what they may think the Scripture sanctions. So that, in laying down the position usually maintained by the defenders of the binding scriptural authority of a particular form of church government, it must be stated in this way, that the fundamental principles or leading features of a particular form of government for the church of all ages are indicated in Scripture, and are indicated in such a way as to impose an obligation of conformity upon the church in all succeeding times. I have no doubt of the truth of this position, and think that it can be satisfactorily established.

I think it can be, and has often been, proved that the Presbyterian form of church government, in its fundamental principles and leading features, is sanctioned by Scripture and apostolic practice; or, to adopt the language of our ordination formula, "is founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto and that this can not be truly predicated of any other form of church government, such as Prelacy and Congregationalism. I am not called upon at present to establish this position, as I am merely proposing to illustrate the general topic of the way in which the subject of the *jus divinum*, of church government has been, and should be, discussed. I may remark, however, in general, that the mode in which this position is to be established is that of an induction of particulars, —i.e., we proceed in the way of collating from Scripture certain rules in regard

to the government of the church, which have the sanction of apostolic practice; we combine these together; we show that, when combined, they constitute what may be fairly called a scheme or system of church government; and that this scheme or system is just Presbyterianism in its fundamental principles and leading features, as it has been held by the great body of those who have been usually classed under this designation. It is no very difficult matter, I think, to prove from Scripture that the apostles, in establishing and organizing churches, committed the ordinary administration of divine ordinances, and the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, not to the body of the ordinary members of the church, but to rulers or office-bearers; that these office-bearers, settled and constituted by the apostles in the churches which they founded, were of two classes, viz., presbyters, —called also bishops, —and deacons; that no other ordinary class of functionaries was introduced by them into the administration of the government of the church, and especially no class of ordinary functionaries of superior rank or authority to the ministers of the word— the pastors of congregations; that these presbyters or bishops were divided into two classes, one of whom both taught and ruled, and the other only ruled, but did not ordinarily exercise the function of public teaching; that while these presbyters alone administered the spiritual affairs of the church, they all, in conjunction with the deacons, managed its temporal or secular affairs; that, in some cases at least, several congregations were placed under one presbyterial government; and that some countenance is given to the general idea of a gradation of judicatories— the general principle of a subordination of courts.

This was the way in which we see from Scripture that the apostles organized and made provision for the government of the churches which they planted. These different rules and arrangements, if really scriptural, as we believe they are, manifestly constitute, when combined together, a full scheme or system of government— what may be justly and reasonably called a particular form of church government; and that form of church government is manifestly just Presbyterianism in all its essential principles and leading features, as distinguished from Prelacy on the one hand, and from Congregationalism on the other. The Presbyterian form of church government, then, has the warrant and sanction of apostolic practice, i.e., we can show from Scripture that the churches planted by

the apostles were organized substantially in accordance with the arrangements of what is usually called the Presbyterian system; and we have shown that there is no good ground for denying, and that there is quite sufficient ground for maintaining, as a general principle, with the limitations or modifications then explained, that the practice of the apostles in establishing and organizing churches, as made known or indicated to us in Scripture, is, and was intended to be, a permanent binding rule for regulating the government of the church of Christ, and of all its branches or sections. From all this the conclusion manifestly follows, that a particular form of church government has been laid down in scripture as permanently binding upon the church of Christ— that form being the Presbyterian one.

This is what is implied in the profession which the ministers of our church are called upon to make when they receive ordination, and which, as I have already mentioned, is expressed in these words, that "the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church are founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto." The language here employed is cautious and temperate, and is thus well suited to the circumstances of a solemn profession to be made by a numerous body of men, who might not all see their way to concur in stronger and more specific phraseology. Besides, it is to be observed that the profession respects not merely the fundamentals or essentials of Presbyterianism in the abstract, which alone can be reasonably maintained to have the clear and positive sanction of apostolic practice; but "the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church," including the detailed development of the essential principles of Presbyterianism as exhibited in the actual constitution and arrangements of our church, and of all this in the concrete, or taken complexly, nothing higher or stronger could with propriety be affirmed, than that it is founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto. Of the fundamental principles and leading features of the Presbyterian system of church government as above described, and as distinguished from Prelacy and from Congregationalism, I would not hesitate to use stronger and more specific language than our ordination formula applies to the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church— viz. this, that in its substance it is the form in regard to which Christ has, with sufficient plainness, indicated in His word, by the

practice of His inspired apostles in establishing and organizing churches, that it is His mind and will that it, to the exclusion of all others, in so far as they are inconsistent with it, should be the form of government adopted in His church, and in all its branches: in other words, that Presbyterianism, in its substance or fundamental principles, is binding *jure divino* as the form of government by which the church of Christ ought permanently and everywhere to be regulated.

Some, in opposing the principle of the permanent scriptural authority or *jus divinum* of any one particular form of church government, take the ground that we have no sufficient materials in Scripture for determining what the apostolic practice in establishing and organizing churches was. Others— and this is the view taken by Mosheim— that the apostolic practice, though substantially known and ascertained, does not constitute a rule permanently binding upon the church; while others, again— though this is virtually a modification of the first view— found much upon an allegation that the apostles did not establish the same form of government in all the churches which they planted. For this last allegation no evidence whatever can be produced, and unless it be restricted to matters of a comparatively insignificant kind, and of a manifestly local and temporary character, such as would not affect the real position in dispute, there is much that conclusively disproves it. The first of these views implies a large amount of distorting and perverting the word of God, —the exercise of a great deal of sinful ingenuity in involving it in obscurity and confusion; while the second, unless restricted, as we have explained, within such narrow limits as to make it incapable of affecting the proper question in dispute, is based, as we have shown, upon a general principle that is not only untenable, but dangerous, as infringing upon the sufficiency and perfection of the written word.

These are nothing more than mere hints upon a somewhat difficult and complicated subject; but if pondered and followed out, they may help to form a judgment upon a topic of considerable practical interest and importance in the present day, and may contribute to guard against the loose and latitudinarian views that are generally prevalent concerning it.

In conclusion, I would simply advert to another pretence which is

sometimes employed in our day by those whose views concerning the government of the church, and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, cannot stand a scriptural investigation, and which is had recourse to for the purpose of evading the authority of Scripture, without needing to face the question of what it is that Scripture teaches and imposes upon the subject. It consists in the insinuation (for the notion is too absurd to be openly and explicitly asserted) of some such idea as this, that the obligation to be subject wholly to Christ, and to be guided exclusively by His written word in all things, attaches only to the invisible church, or to individual believers; and not, or at least not so fully, to the visible church and its separate branches. To state this notion plainly and distinctly is to refute it, for nothing surely can be more obvious than that the obligation to be subject wholly to Christ's authority, and to be guided exclusively by His word in all matters on which it furnishes any information, attaches equally to all societies as to all individuals, which profess to receive Him as their Master; that the general principles, in this respect, which apply to the invisible must apply equally to the visible church; and that the general principles and rules applicable to the catholic visible church in its totality, must apply equally to every particular church, i.e., to every section or branch of the catholic visible church, to every distinct organized society, large or small, Prelatic, Presbyterian, or Congregational, which assumes to itself the character and designation of a church of Christ.

III. The Apostles' Creed

I assume it as settled and proved, that the books which compose the New Testament were all given by inspiration of God; that the other works which have been ascribed to the apostles, whether assuming the form of gospels, or epistles, or liturgies— for we have some under all these heads — are to be regarded neither as genuine nor authoritative; and that the books of the New Testament, along with those of the Old Testament, as commonly held canonical by Protestants, form the only authoritative standard of faith and practice. All the different productions here referred to, though claiming to emanate from the apostles of our Lord, are destitute of any adequate external historical evidence, and their spuriousness can be fully established by conclusive internal evidence derived from their contents. There is, however, one production, in favour of which a claim has been set up to an apostolic origin, and of the genuineness of which it has been generally admitted that there is no specific internal proof. I refer to what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, *Symbolum Apostolicum*. It is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, though some of the most candid and judicious Romanists have been unable to assent to it, that this creed was composed by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and that, of course, it is to be regarded as possessed of the same direct divine authority as the canonical Scriptures; and Protestants in general, though they have commonly denied that it was composed by the , apostles, or is possessed in itself of any proper authority, have admitted that it contains sound apostolic doctrine, which is in accordance with, and can be established by, the word of God. The Lutheran and Anglican churches have adopted it along with , the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, as a part of their authorized symbolical profession of faith. The Westminster divines subjoined it, along with the ten commandments and the Lord's prayer, " to their catechisms, accompanied with this explanatory statement: "It is here annexed, not as though it were composed by the apostles, or ought to be esteemed canonical Scripture, as the ten commandments and Lord's prayer, but because it is a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ."

It is not, however, possessed of any great antiquity, for it was not generally received in its present form till the very end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century, since which time it has been adopted as the creed of the Roman or Western Church, and is often spoken of by old writers under the name of *Symbolum Romanum*, though it has never been received by the Oriental or Greek churches. Among other notions borrowed from the Church of Rome, this of the apostolic origin and authority of the creed has been embraced and advocated by the Tractarians. Dr Newman, long before he joined the Church of Rome, described it as "the formal symbol which the apostles adopted, and bequeathed to the church," and asserted that "it has an evidence of its apostolical origin, the same in kind with that for the Scriptures.

Mosheim says that "all who have the least knowledge of antiquity look upon this opinion as entirely false, and destitute of all foundation." The reasons which led Dr Newman and other Tractarians, who certainly had some knowledge of antiquity, to assert that the Creed was composed by the apostles, were probably these. They had been much in the habit, under the influence of a strong Popish leaning, of copying statements without much examination, notwithstanding all their pretensions to learning, from unscrupulous Popish controversialists. It is impossible, I think, for any man to doubt this, who has read Goode's very learned and valuable work, entitled, "The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice." With the views which these men held, in common with the Church of Rome, on the subject of tradition and the rule of faith, it was important to break down, as it were, the monopoly of infallibility which Protestants assign to the Scriptures, by bringing forward one other document not contained in Scripture, but handed down by tradition, which yet possessed apostolic authority. There is thus a great principle— that, viz., of the completeness or perfection of the sacred Scriptures— involved in the claim put forth on behalf of the Creed to an apostolic origin. And I have no doubt that another motive which induced them to support this notion was this, that, being determined enemies to the doctrines of grace— the great doctrines of the Reformation— they were glad to have a pretence for representing, as an inspired summary of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, a document in which these great truths were not explicitly asserted. Some of the early Protestant writers, such as the Magdeburg Centuriators, were

disposed to concede the apostolic origin of the Creed, influenced apparently by the desire of being able to maintain, in opposition to the Romish charge against them of departing from the apostolic faith, that they held the whole doctrines which the apostles embodied in their summary of faith. Even Calvin talks as if he had no great objection to concede to it an apostolic origin, and were rather disposed to favour the notion. It is nothing more than ascribing to Calvin (who may be fairly regarded as being, all things considered, the greatest and most useful gift that God has given to the church since the apostolic age) a participation in the common infirmities of humanity, if we suppose that he may have been unconsciously disposed to think more favourably of the apostolic origin of the Creed than the historical evidence warrants, because it seems to contain a more explicit assertion, than the word of God does, of a doctrine which he held, and to which he appears to have attached some importance, viz., that Christ descended into hell, —in this sense, that after death He went to the place of the damned, and shared somehow in their torments. Calvin says that the ancients, with one accord, ascribed it to the apostles, and Newman says that the evidence of its apostolic origin is the same in kind as that for the Scriptures. Let us briefly state how this stands as a matter of fact.

We have no notice of the Creed in its present form till about the end of the fourth century, and we have no evidence antecedent to that period of its being asserted, or generally believed, that the apostles drew up and committed to writing any formal creed or summary of faith. A notion of this sort, originating in the end of the fourth century, —not existing previously, and not based upon anything like evidence previously recognised, —is entitled to no weight whatever in proof of a matter of fact of the kind in question. The precise facts are these. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in a letter written about the year 380, speaks of the Creed of the Apostles, which the Roman Church always preserves uncorrupted. But he does not expressly assign to it, as a document; an apostolic origin, and he might call it the Apostles' Creed merely to indicate that it contained a summary of the doctrine which the apostles taught. Ruffinus, in his Exposition upon the Creed, published about fifteen years later, near the very end of the century, is the first who expressly ascribes it to the apostles; and his statement embodies some circumstances which throw

much doubt upon his leading position. He describes it as a tradition of their forefathers, tradunt majores nostri; which may perhaps be regarded as an admission that this had not previously been asserted in writing in any of those ancient works which are now lost, any more than in those which have been preserved. He tells us that the apostles, before dispersing to preach the gospel over the world, resolved to prepare a common summary of the Christian faith, in order to guard against any diversity in their future teaching, —"ne forte alii ab aliis abducti diversum aliquid his qui ad fidem Christi invitabantur, exponerent;" —and accordingly they met together, and, under the guidance of the Spirit, they prepared this Creed in this way, by each contributing a portion as he thought best, —" conferendo in unum quod sentiebat unusquisque." This is certainly a very improbable story, both as it respects the motive and the process of the composition. His statement as to the mode of composing it was very soon improved and adorned in a sermon, falsely ascribed to Augustine, and published in the fifth century, which informs us that each of the twelve apostles, when assembled to compose the Creed, uttered in succession one of the clauses of which it consists: Peter saying, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth Andrew, "and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord;" James, "who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," etc. Pope Leo the Great, who flourished in the middle of the fifth century, repeats the substance of this story, ascribing a clause to each of the twelve apostles, but without specifying the individual authors of each. From this time, the apostolic origin of the Creed, in the sense of the document having been prepared in its present form by the apostles, was generally held as an article of faith in the Western churches, though so late as the Council of Florence, about the middle of the fifteenth century, the Greeks maintained that this Creed was, and had always been, unknown in the churches of the East.

This is really the whole evidence from antiquity in support of the apostolic origin of the Creed, in its present form, as a document; and, even if we were to concede to Dr Newman that the evidence is the same in kind as for the Scriptures, still it is manifest that the difference in degree is so great, that we may confidently maintain, that in the one case it amounts to a conclusive proof, and in the other it does not reach even to a presumption. Some of the fathers, though none more ancient than the

time of Ambrose and Ruffinus, have told us that the apostles used a creed which was not committed to writing, but handed down by memory and tradition. But this, even if true, is not relevant to the point under consideration; unless, indeed, it could be proved that the creed which they used and transmitted was precisely identical, not only in substance, but in words, with that which we now have.

Some of the earlier fathers speak frequently of a canon or rule of faith, evidently meaning by this, a brief, comprehensive summary of the leading doctrines of Christianity. But they did not, in using this language, refer to the present Creed, —for some of them, in using it, and even in applying to the summary the word *symbolum*, refer explicitly to the general confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the administration of baptism, as prescribed by our Saviour, and recorded in Scripture; and the rest, when they speak of the creed, the canon, the rule of faith, give us a creed of their own, agreeing, indeed, in substance with the present Creed, but not by any means identical with it. This latter statement applies more particularly to Irenaeus and Tertullian in the second century, who have given us each two different summaries of the faith generally received in the Christian church; and to Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus, in the third, who have given us each one such creed or summary;— all these agreeing in substance with each other, and with the present Creed, but all so far differing from it, as to prove that it was not during the first three centuries known in the church as an apostolic document, and that no one brief summary of the Christian faith, supposed to possess apostolic authority, was then generally known and adopted. The entire absence of all reference to the Apostles' Creed in the proceedings and discussions connected with the Nicene Council, and the formation of the Nicene Creed, affords conclusive proof that the church in general, even in the early part of the fourth century, knew nothing of any creed that was generally regarded as having an apostolic origin and authority. And this is confirmed by the fact that, whereas the Nicene Creed, like the creeds or summaries of faith which we find in Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, was but an amplification of the confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with a much more precise and specific condemnation of Arianism than we find in any previous creed or summary; it was not till the Council of Constantinople in 381, when our

present Creed was becoming better known through the growing ascendancy of the Church of Rome, that there were added to the Nicene Creed, along with a much fuller profession concerning the divinity of the Holy Ghost, in opposition to the heresy of Macedonius, the other articles not so immediately connected with the confession of the Trinity, which still form the conclusion of the Creed.

The diversities which we find subsisting among the ancient creeds or summaries, —and which are very considerable as to their fulness, or the number of the different articles they contain, and as to the words in which they are expressed, though they all agree as to their substance so far as they go, —furnish satisfactory evidence that there was not during the first four centuries any creed, written or oral, which was generally regarded as the production of the apostles. And what is specially important and altogether conclusive, in showing that the present Creed has no claim to an apostolic origin in any other sense than this, that it contains, as all admit, a summary of the doctrine which the apostles taught, is the express testimony of Ruffinus, that the two articles, of the descent of Christ into hell, and the communion of saints, were not to be found in the creed of the Roman Church, or of any of the Eastern churches even at the end of the fourth century; while the creed of some other churches which contained these articles, wanted others which were found in the creeds of the Roman and Oriental churches.

In opposition to all this body of evidence, Romanists have really nothing to say that is possessed even of plausibility. They can say nothing but this, —that there was no material variation among the early creeds in point of substance. But this is not to the point. No one doubts that all those creeds which have been referred to, including the different versions of the present Creed, exhibit correctly, so far as they go, the substance of the doctrine which the apostles taught, and which is accordant with the Scripture. The only question is, —Was the present Creed, —as a document of course, as to the words of which it is composed, —or any other creed or summary of Christian doctrine, the production of the inspired apostles? and the evidence which has been referred to, requires us to answer this question in the negative. Yet the Church of Rome has defined in the Trent Catechism, that the apostles not only composed the

Creed, but gave it the name of symbolum; and she exacts the belief of this of her subjects.

Laurentius Valla, a learned and candid writer who flourished before the Reformation in the end of the fifteenth century, maintained that the Creed was not the production of the apostles, and was not composed till the time of the Council of Nice; but the Inquisition compelled him to retract this heresy, and to profess that he believed what holy mother church believed upon this point. Erasmus, in his preface to his Annotations upon Matthews Gospel, made the following very cautious statement: "Symbolum an ab Apostolis proditum sit, nescio." The Faculty of Theology at Paris censured this nescientia) as they called it, as fitted to promote impiety; and Erasmus, in a declaration which he published in consequence of the censure, has fully explained the grounds of his hesitation, though professing his willingness to believe in its apostolic origin, if the church required it.

Dupin, one of the most fair and candid of the Romanist writers, held that there was no proof of the apostolic origin of the Creed, and that, on the contrary, the historical evidence was against it. But he was obliged by the Archbishop of Paris to make a sort of retractation of this opinion; although, after all, it was only in the following form: "I acknowledge that we ought to regard the Creed of the apostles as a formula of faith prepared by them in substance, though some terms in it were not the same in all churches."

Attempts have been made to show that the canonical Scriptures countenance the idea that the apostles prepared and communicated to the churches a brief summary of Christian doctrine; nay, it has even been asserted that there are references in Scripture to that very document which we now call the Apostles' Creed. This notion is indeed repudiated by the more judicious and candid of the Roman Catholic writers, but it has found favour among the Anglican Tractarians, and Dr Newman went so far as to say that the apostle Paul quotes from the Creed, and refers in proof of this to 1 Cor. xv. 3: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." The quotation of course is, "Christ died for our sins." Dr Newman is of opinion that the source from which Paul derived this

doctrine was the Creed. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that Paul has repeatedly, and explicitly declared that he received his doctrine from a different and a higher source, even from the Lord, and by the revelation of Jesus Christ. We have plain enough intimations in Scripture, that, before men were admitted by baptism into the communion of the visible church, they were not only instructed in the leading principles of Christianity, but were called upon to make a profession of their faith in Christ, and to answer some questions which were proposed to them. It was quite natural that the profession of faith which converts were expected and required to make before and at baptism, should be connected with, and based upon, a confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose name baptism was administered; and accordingly, as we formerly remarked, many of the fathers speak of the creed or rule of faith as comprised in the apostolic commission to baptize in the name of the three persons of the Godhead; and, moreover, we find that all the earlier creeds were just amplifications or explanations of these heads, —fuller statements of what the Scriptures teach concerning these three persons. This profession, though everywhere the same in substance, varied considerably at different periods and in different churches, just because there was no one form which was recognised as possessed of apostolical authority; and there was no church which, during the first three centuries, attempted to exercise, or was recognised as entitled to exercise, authority to impose a form upon the other churches of Christ.

We have no adequate materials for tracing the growth or enlargement of any of these early creeds, and the different changes they underwent; but we have good ground to believe generally, that explanations and additional declarations were from time to time introduced into them, guarding against the different errors and heresies that might have been broached, and importing upon the part of those who received them a renunciation of these errors and heresies; and this is just the principle which is to be applied in unfolding and explaining the history of all creeds and confessions down till the present day. This general statement applies no doubt to the Apostles' Creed, which was just the creed commonly used in the Roman Church. We do not know precisely the history of all the changes which have been made upon it; but we do know the important fact, that the articles on Christ's descent to hell and the communion of

saints, formed no part of it till the end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century; and we have no positive evidence that the article on Christ's descent to hell had previously existed in the creed of any church except that of Aquileia. Attempts have been made to trace the additions which, since the apostles' age, have been made to the Creed, by reference to the errors against which they were intended to guard. But this is not a subject of much practical importance, as the errors and heresies referred to have long ceased to meet with any support; and as it can scarcely be said that the Creed, even supposing it were possessed of authority, does give anything like an explicit decision upon any topics of importance which now divide the professing churches of Christ.

Protestants usually profess their adherence to all the articles of the Apostles' Creed, as well as Papists; and neither party can deduce any argument against the other from anything actually contained in it. It is indeed true, that when Protestants used to defend themselves against the charge adduced by the Romanists, that they had departed from the apostolic faith, by alleging that they held all the doctrines of the apostolic Creed, some Papists met this allegation with a denial, and asserted that Protestants did not believe in the holy catholic church. But this, of course, they could make out only by attaching their own arbitrary and unwarranted sense, —first, to the holy catholic church as a subsisting thing; and secondly, to what is implied in a profession of belief in it. The Papists would fain have it assumed that the holy catholic church in the Creed, means a widely extended visible society, united in outward communion under the same government, and with one visible head. Protestants maintain that this is not the correct idea of the catholic church, as presented to us either in Scripture or in primitive antiquity; and of course object to the warrantableness of putting such an interpretation upon it in the Creed. Papists further contend that a profession of believing in the holy catholic church implies a conviction, not only that Christ has a church on earth, but also that all men are bound to believe the church in all things pertaining to faith. This is explicitly laid down in the ordinary Popish catechisms in common use in this country; and it was taught also by Dr Newman even before he made an avowal of Popery. Protestants, however, repudiate this interpretation, and can easily prove that the words do not properly mean; and were not

in the early church understood to mean, anything more than a belief in the existence of the catholic church as a society in some respects one.

If men appeal to the Creed as a proof of their orthodoxy, they are of course bound to explain its meaning, and to show that they hold its statements in a reasonable and honest sense. But except upon the ground of such an appeal made by ourselves, and thereby committing us, we are under no obligation to give any interpretation to the statements of the Creed, —to prove that they have any meaning, or to establish what that meaning is, —just because the Creed, not being possessed of any proper intrinsic authority, the truth and accuracy of all its statements must, like those of every other uninspired, and consequently unauthoritative document, be judged of by another standard. It may be an interesting inquiry to ascertain in what sense the articles of the Creed were generally understood at the time when, so far as we can learn, they were first introduced, and at subsequent periods. But the inquiry is a purely historical one, and the result, whatever it may be, can lay us under no obligation as to our own faith. An essay was once written by a Lutheran divine, in which he exhibited in parallel columns the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, and the Popish interpretations of all the different articles in the Creed. And it certainly could not be proved that any one of them was inconsistent with the sense which the words bear, or in which they might be reasonably understood. Another writer afterwards added a fourth column, containing the Arminian or Pelagian interpretation of all the articles, and neither could this be successfully redargued, without having recourse to a standard at once more authoritative and more explicit.

Nay, it is well known that Arians, who deny the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, have no hesitation in expressing their concurrence in the Creed, and even appeal to the common use of it in early times, as showing that a profession of belief in the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, was not required in the primitive church. The conclusion which they draw is unfounded. It can be satisfactorily proved that the doctrine of the Trinity was generally held in the primitive church from the age of the apostles, although it is also certain that, before the Arians and other heretics openly opposed it, some Christian writers did not speak with so much precision and accuracy on these points as were used by subsequent

authors; and that on the same ground it was not so prominently and explicitly set forth in the public profession of the church. It is also true that the Apostles' Creed, and indeed all the ancient creeds, are plainly constructed upon a plan which insinuates, or rather countenances, the doctrine of the Trinity, as they are all based upon the apostolic commission embodying a requirement to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Still it cannot be said that the Apostles' Creed excludes the Arian view with anything like explicitness; and it is certain that we have creeds composed by Arians in the fourth century, which do speak of the dignity of our Lord and Saviour, so far as the mere words employed are concerned, in a far higher strain than the Apostles' Creed does.

These considerations are quite sufficient of themselves to prove that the Apostles' Creed, as it is called, is not entitled to much respect, and is not fitted to be of much use, as a summary of the leading doctrines of Christianity. A document which may be honestly assented to by Papists and Arians, by the adherents of the great apostasy and by the opposers of the divinity of our Saviour, can be of no real utility as a directory, or as an element or bond of union among the churches of Christ. And while it is so brief and general as to be no adequate protest or protection against error, it does not contain any statement of some important truths essential to a right comprehension of the scheme of Christian doctrine and the way of salvation. It is quite true that, under the different articles of the Creed, or even under any of the earlier creeds which contained merely a brief profession of faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we might bring in, as many authors have done, an explanation of all the leading doctrines taught us in Scripture; but it is not the less true that they are not stated in the document itself, and that there is nothing in its words which is fitted to bring them to our notice.

Neither can it be said that all that is contained in the Creed is of primary importance; and it is rather gratifying to know that the articles of Christ's descent into hell, and of the communion of saints— certainly the least important which it contains— were not inserted at least till the end of the fourth century. The first of these articles— viz., the statement that Christ descended into hell — has given rise to a good deal of discussion. In

adverting to it, it must be remembered that, in so far as the statement that Christ descended into hell is merely to be found in the Creed, we are under no obligation to explain or to believe it. But the important question is, Does Scripture sanction the statement; and if so, in what sense? Now there is no reasonable doubt that the statement in terminis is sanctioned by Scripture. The declaration of Peter seems to imply, that immediately antecedent to His resurrection, the ψυχή of Christ was in Hades, the word often translated by hell in our version; and the statement of Paul, referring apparently to the same period of Christ's history, seems to warrant us in applying to his condition at that time the idea of a descent, so that the statement applied to Christ in the Creed— κατελθόντα εἰς ᾗδην— "descendit ad inferos"— is in terminis supported by Scripture, and may therefore be warrantably adopted. It does not by any means follow, however, that it is either so clear in its sense as thus put, or so important in its application, as to be entitled to occupy a place in a public profession of faith, whether more compendious or more enlarged; and yet the Church of England has injudiciously made it the sole subject of one of her thirty-nine articles. But the only important question is, —What is the real meaning of those portions of Scripture which seem to warrant the statement that Christ descended into Hades?

Calvin's view has been already stated, but it is entirely unsupported by any scriptural evidence, and it seems to be plainly enough contradicted by our Saviour's declaration to the penitent thief upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Many are of opinion that the scriptural statements mean merely that He was really and truly dead in the same sense in which other men die, by the actual separation of the soul from the body, and that he really continued under the power of death for a time. And the Westminster divines give this explanation of the article in the Creed about his descent into Hades, that ec He continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, till the third day." There is good scriptural ground for maintaining that Hades sometimes means merely the grave or the state of death, without including any more precise or specific idea: it is manifest that the scope of the passage in the second of Acts— and the same may be said of the passage in Ephesians— does not require us to attach any other meaning to it; and, therefore, so far as these two passages are concerned— and they constitute, as we have

seen, the scriptural foundation of the position— nothing more than this can be proved. But the question still remains, —naturally suggested by this subject, though not necessary to the exposition of it, —Do we know nothing more of the condition of Christ's soul during the period of its separation from His body? The only thing in Scripture that can be fairly regarded as conveying to us any certain information upon this point, is His own declaration to the thief upon the cross, that he would that day be with Him in paradise, which may be considered to imply that His soul did go to Hades, or the state of the departed, taken as descriptive of, or including the place and condition of the souls of the righteous in happiness, waiting for the redemption of their bodies. The Church of Rome teaches— and in this she has the sanction of some of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and even of Augustine, by far the greatest of them all— that Christ's descent into hell means that He went to the *limbus patrum*, a place somewhere in the neighbourhood of hell, in the more common sense of that word, where all the righteous men that died before His incarnation, from Adam downwards, had hitherto been kept, —took them thence with Him, and carried them to heaven. But all this is a presumptuous fable, having no warrant in the word of God. We have, indeed, no definite information as to anything Christ did, or as to the way in which He was engaged between His death and His resurrection, except His own declaration upon the cross, that He would that day be in paradise; for, with respect to the very obscure and difficult passage in 1 Pet. iii. 19, about His going and preaching to the spirits in prison, I must say that I have never met with an interpretation of it that seemed to me altogether satisfactory. Among the many interpretations that have been given of it, there are just two in support of which anything really plausible, as it appears to me, can be advanced— viz., first, that which regards the preaching there spoken of as having taken place in the time of Noah, and through the instrumentality of Noah; and secondly, that which regards it as having taken place after His resurrection, and through the instrumentality of the apostles. The latter view is ably advocated in Dr John Brown's Expository Discourses on First Peter. If either of these interpretations be the true one, the passage has no reference to the period of His history between His death and His resurrection.

I think it is much to be regretted that so very inadequate and defective a

summary of the leading principles of Christianity as the Apostles' Creed, —possessed of no authority, and having no extrinsic claims to respect, — should have been exalted to such a place of prominence and influence in the worship and services of the church of Christ; and I have no doubt that this has operated injuriously in leading to the disregard of some important articles of Christian doctrine, which are not embodied in it, but which are of fundamental importance. Even in the third century, we find the doctrines of grace, —the true principles of the gospel which unfold the scriptural method of salvation, —were thrown into the background, were little attended to, and not very distinctly understood; while the attention of the church in the fourth century was almost entirely engrossed by controversial speculations, about the Trinity and the person of Christ; and it is, I believe, in some measure from the same cause— i.e., having the Apostles' Creed pressed upon men's attention in the ordinary public services of the church, as a summary of Christian doctrine, entitled to great deference and respect— that we are to account for the ignorance and indifference respecting the great principles of evangelical truth by which so large a proportion of the ordinary attenders upon the services of the Church of England have been usually characterized, —a result aided, no doubt, by the peculiar character and complexion of the other two creeds which are also sanctioned by her articles, and which are sometimes, though not so frequently, used in her public service— the Nicene and the Athanasian.

IV. The Apostolical Fathers

Although I do not intend to dwell at any length upon individuals, however eminent, or upon mere literary history, I think it right to advert to the apostolical fathers, as they are called, and their works, genuine or spurious. Under this designation are comprehended those men to whom any writings now in existence are ascribed, who lived before the apostles were removed from the world, i.e., before the end of the first century, — the date when there is good reason to believe that John, the last of the apostles, died. The period of which we have an inspired history in the book of the Acts, extends to about thirty years, from the death of our Saviour till about the year A.D. 64. There is no reason to doubt, though Mosheim speaks doubtfully of it, that Paul suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Nero, in the year A.D. 67 or 68; and there is some ground to believe, though the historical evidence of this is not so full and strong, that Peter too then entered into his rest. There are none of the canonical books of the New Testament which were written after this period, except the Epistles and the Apocalypse of John, composed about the end of the century. And these writings of John convey to us little information of a historical kind, with respect to the condition of the church, beyond this, that errors in doctrine and corruptions in practice had crept in, and infested the churches to a considerable extent. It has been often remarked, that there is no period in the history of the Christian church, in regard to which we have so little information, as that of above thirty years, reaching from the death of Peter and Paul to that of John. There is no good reason to believe that any of the writings of the apostolic fathers now extant, were published during that interval. Those of them that are genuine, do not convey to us much information concerning the condition of the church, and add but little to our knowledge upon any subject; and what may be gleaned from later writers concerning this period, is very defective, and not much to be depended upon. It is enough that God has given us in His word everything necessary for the formation of our opinions, and the regulation of our conduct; and we cannot doubt that He has in mercy and wisdom withheld from us what there is too much reason to think would have been greatly abused. As matters stand, we have these

two important points established: First, that we have no certain information, —nothing on which, as a mere question of evidence, we can place any firm reliance, —as to what the inspired apostles taught and ordained, but what is contained in, or deduced from, the canonical Scriptures; and secondly, that there are no men, except the authors of the books of Scripture, to whom there is anything like a plausible pretence for calling upon us to look up as guides or oracles. The truth of these positions will appear abundantly manifest from a brief survey of the apostolical fathers and their writings; and in conducting this survey, I shall aim chiefly at collecting such materials as may be best fitted to establish and illustrate them, as they are indeed the only really important lessons bearing upon theological inquiries, which an examination of the writings of the apostolical fathers is fitted to suggest.

There are five persons usually comprehended under this name, i.e., there are five men who undoubtedly lived during the age of the apostles, and did converse, or might have conversed, with them, to whom writings still in existence have been ascribed, viz., Barnabas, Hermas, Clemens, Polycarp, and Ignatius.

I. Barnabas

Barnabas was the companion of Paul during a considerable portion of his labours; is frequently mentioned in the book of the Acts; and has even the title of an apostle applied to him. An epistle exists, partly in Greek and partly in a Latin translation, which, though it does not contain in gremio any formal indication of its author, has been long known under the title of the Catholic Epistle of Barnabas; and it is expressly ascribed by Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, early in the third century, to the Barnabas of the Acts. The epistle gives no information, doctrinal, practical, or historical, of the slightest value; and contains so much that is manifestly senseless and childish, especially in allegorizing the facts of Old Testament history, and the rites of the Jewish church, that it is strange that it should ever have been regarded as the production of Barnabas. Its genuineness was at one time strenuously defended by the most eminent writers of the Church of England, such as Hammond, Bull, and Pearson.

Its spuriousness was elaborately and conclusively established by Jones, in the i second volume of his work on the Canon. Its genuineness is now almost universally given up, even by Episcopalians, and is scarcely maintained, so far as I am aware, by any except some German rationalists, who have a very low standard of what was to be expected in point of sense and accuracy even from apostles; and who would fain persuade men that there are just as unwarrantable and extravagant misapplications of the Old Testament in the epistles ascribed to Paul, and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as in that ascribed to Barnabas. The testimonies, however, of Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, prove that this epistle must have existed about the middle of the second century, and perhaps earlier; and it thus, especially when viewed in connection with the commendation which these eminent men bestowed upon it, affords a proof of the little reliance that is to be placed upon the authority of the fathers in the interpretation of Scripture. It is proper to mention, that the epistle ascribed to Barnabas does not contain indications of any material deviations from the system of doctrine taught in the sacred Scriptures, and that pretty explicit testimonies have been produced from it in support of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ.

II. Hermias

Most of what has now been said about the Epistle of Barnabas applies also in substance to the work which has been called the Shepherd of Hermas. It is utterly unworthy of being ascribed, as it has often been, to the Hermas who is mentioned in Paul's epistles, or to any man who was a companion of the apostles, although, from the references made to it, not only by Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, but also by Irenaeus, who lived before them, it must have been written before the middle of the second century, and, what is rather strange, was sometimes read in the churches. It contains nothing of any value, either historically or theologically, except that one or two extracts have been produced from it in support of the divinity of our Saviour. There is one passage in it which has been adduced by Blondell as a testimony in favour of Presbyterianism, and by Hammond in favour of Prelacy; while it is very plain, I think, that Hermas' words really give no support to either side,

and that both these eminent men, in attempting to derive from it some support to their opposite views on the subject of church government, were unduly influenced by a spirit of partisanship.

III. Clemens Romanus

We proceed to Clemens Romanus, described in after ages, as Bishop of Rome, and now commonly known under that designation. Eusebius says that he was the same Clemens who is spoken of by Paul as one of his fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life; and there is no historical ground to doubt the truth of this. Of course we do not believe that he, or any man, was at that early period Bishop of Rome, in the modern sense of the word bishop; but there is no reason to doubt that he occupied a prominent and influential place as a pastor in the Roman Church during the apostolic age, and held it till after the beginning of the second century. Many works have been ascribed to him, such as the Apostolic Canons and Constitutions, besides others of less value and importance, which can be proved to have been fabricated or compiled not earlier than the third, fourth, or perhaps even the fifth century, not to mention the five letters ascribed to him in the decretal epistles of the Popes, forged by the Church of Rome for Popish purposes most probably about the beginning of the ninth century. The only works ascribed to Clement, which have pretty generally been regarded as genuine ever since they were first published, about two centuries ago, from the Alexandrian MS. in the British Museum— the only copy of them known to exist— are an epistle to the Corinthians, and a portion of what has been called a second epistle to the same church, but which seems rather to be a fragment of a sermon. The genuineness of the first epistle has been very generally admitted, while many have doubted of that of the second. There is no distinct internal evidence to lead us to entertain any doubt that the second might have been written by the author of the first, and in the apostolic age. The difference lies almost wholly in the external evidence, and more particularly in this, that whereas we have abundant evidence in declarations, quotations, and references found in the works of subsequent fathers, that Clement did write an epistle to the Corinthians, which was highly esteemed in the early ages, and even for a time read in

the churches, and which was in substance the same as w~e now have under the designation of his first epistle, we have no satisfactory evidence of a similar kind that he wrote a second epistle, such as we have under that name. The question is one of very little practical importance, for the second epistle, as it is called, by itself possesses no historical or theological value, — i.e., it gives us no information, directly or indirectly, either as to matters of fact or doctrine, which may not be more fully and obviously deduced from the first.

Clement's first epistle, then, to the Corinthians, is to be regarded as the earliest of the genuine remains of Christian antiquity, written by one who was a companion and fellow-worker of the apostles, and who occupied, while some of them were still alive, and probably by their appointment, an eminent station in the church. This, of course, invests it with a large measure of interest. We have no certain means of knowing when this epistle was written, or what circumstances gave occasion to the writing of it, except what are derived from the contents of the epistle itself. It does not contain any very certain notes or marks of time. The most explicit is, that it gives some indication of having been written soon after the church had endured a severe persecution, and this must have been either the persecution under Nero or that under Domitian. If the former, it must have been written soon after the last of Paul's epistles, and before the destruction of Jerusalem; if the latter, which is much the more probable, it must have been written about the end of the first century, or beginning of the second; and this is the opinion most generally entertained, that it was written soon after the death of John, and the close of the canon of the New Testament.

The genuineness of this epistle as the production of Clement being well established and generally admitted, the next question concerns its integrity, or its freedom from material corruptions and interpolations. As there is but one MS. of it, and that not in a very good state of preservation, the text is by no means in a very satisfactory condition, though, of course, there are no various readings except what owe their origin to conjecture. But the main question is, whether there have been any intentional deprivations or interpolations of the original text. Mosheim suspected that it had been interpolated by some person who

wished to make the venerable father appear more learned and ingenious than he was; and who, accordingly, Mosheim thinks, has put in some things alien from the general simplicity of the substance and the style of it. There is no very obvious ground for this suspicion; the allegation is rather vague, and I do not think it can be supported by satisfactory instances. The only plausible instance of this kind is his referring to the well-known fable of the Phoenix, evidently believing the common story concerning it, as an argument or illustration in favour of the resurrection of the body. This may be regarded as a good proof that he was not raised by divine inspiration above ignorance and credulity in ordinary matters; and that, notwithstanding the relation in which he stood to the apostles, he was but a common man. But the credulity thus manifested is accordant enough with the views which Mosheim evidently entertained of Clement's general character. Mosheim gives in his larger works statement of the grounds of his opinion as to the interpolations of this epistle, and they are not such as, even if true, warrant his suspicion about the special character and object of the supposed interpolations. He refers, indeed, to Clement's credulity in adducing the story of the Phoenix; but he rests principally upon this, that the train of thought in the epistle is not very closely or very steadily directed to its leading object; that it is broken by digressions which have no very clear relation to the main subject. There is some truth in this representation, though I think Mosheim somewhat exaggerates the defects; but as the digressions partake much of the general character of the rest of the epistle, they can scarcely be regarded "as interpolated by some one who wished, as Mosheim supposes, to make Clement appear more learned and ingenious than he found him.

Neander entertains the same opinion as Mosheim did as to Clement's epistle being somewhat interpolated by a later hand; but he rests his opinion upon a more definite and plausible, though, I am inclined to think, equally insufficient ground. He says, "This letter, although, on the whole, genuine, is nevertheless not free from important interpolations; e.g., a contradiction is apparent, since throughout the whole Epistle we perceive the simple relations of the earliest forms of a Christian Church, as the Bishops and Presbyters are always put upon an equality, and yet in one passage (40 and following) the whole system of the Jewish priesthood is transferred to the Christian church." Now, there can be no

reasonable doubt that the whole scope and spirit and several particular statements of Clement's epistle, in so far as it throws any light upon the government which the apostles established, and upon the existing condition of the church when he wrote, are unequivocally and decidedly Presbyterian, or at least anti-Prelatic. But I am not satisfied that the passage to which Neander refers is, as he alleges, inconsistent with this. The adduction of such an argument by Neander, and the confidence with which he rests upon it as of itself a conclusive proof of interpolation, affords a strong indication of the deep sense which he entertained of the utter inconsistency between the spirit and government of the apostolic church, and those of a Prelatic or hierarchic one; and it is gratifying to find that this conviction was so deeply impressed upon the mind of one who may be justly regarded as the highest recent authority in church history, as to lead him at once, to conclude that the only passage which Prelatists have ever produced from Clement as countenancing their claims, must necessarily, and for that very reason, be an interpolation. If the passage really required the interpretation, admitting of no other, put upon it by the Prelatists and Neander, —for in this special point of the import and bearing of this particular passage, he, of course, substantially agrees with them, —I think we would be entitled to reject it, as Neander does, upon the ground of its inconsistency with the rest of the epistle, and with the spirit of the apostolic and primitive church. But I am not satisfied that it requires the construction which Neander puts upon it. The matter stands thus: —

The church of Corinth was, it seems, involved at this time in divisions and contentions: a spirit of faction and insubordination had been manifested among them, and had assumed the form of casting off the authority of their pastors or presbyters. Clement, or rather the church of Rome, in whose name the letter runs, wrote this epistle to the church at Corinth, 'expostulating with them on their divisions, exhorting them to peace and harmony, and urging a return to the respect and submission due to their pastors or presbyters. This naturally led to a setting forth of the authority and claims of the ministerial office, and of those who held it. This, however, is done very briefly and very delicately, and in a spirit the very reverse of hierarchic assumption or insolence; Clement being evidently anxious principally about the state of their hearts and

affections, both because this was most important in itself, and because here lay the true root of the evil, the contention and insubordination. He does, however, set forth the necessity of order and arrangement, and of each one keeping his own place, and executing rightly and peaceably his own functions. And in support of these general positions he does refer to the fact that the high priest, the priests, the Levites, and the people, had each their prescribed place and functions under the law, and that regulations were laid down in the Old Testament as to the administration of religious services. This is all he says about the Jewish priesthood, and the only application he makes of it is to inculcate the general obligation of order and subordination; and this affords no adequate ground for asserting, as Neander does, that he "transferred the whole system of the Jewish priesthood to the Christian church." The fathers of the third and fourth centuries often referred to the Jewish priesthood as establishing the claim of the Christian ministry in general to a kind and degree of sacredness and of power which the New Testament does not sanction, and came at length to regard the high priest, the priests, and Levites, as types and warrants of the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons. Neander evidently viewed all this with the strongest disapprobation; and there can be no doubt that the unwarranted transference of the system of the Jewish priesthood to the Christian church produced unspeakable mischief, — mischief which continually increased until it issued in the establishment of the only feasible antitype of the high priest upon the hierarchic system, —viz., the Pope as the monarch of the universal church. It is not altogether improbable that Clement's allusion to the Jewish priesthood may have contributed somewhat to introduce and encourage in subsequent times the baneful mode of thinking and arguing to which we have referred; but Clement is not chargeable with it, and should not be held responsible for it, as he merely referred to the arrangements connected with the Jewish priesthood and services, to illustrate the importance and obligation of order in general; just as he also referred with the same view to the discipline of an army. In short, he does not lay down any position, or deduce from the Jewish priesthood any inference, respecting either the dignity and authority of the Christian ministry in general, or the different orders of which it is composed, in the least inconsistent with the word of God, or in the least resembling or sanctioning the use or application

made of this topic by the fathers of the third and fourth centuries. Nay, he expressly lays down, as one ground of the claim which their pastors or presbyters had to respect and obedience, that, in accordance with apostolic arrangements, they had been settled among them with the cordial consent of the whole church, and this, certainly, was not a Jewish and hierarchic, but a scriptural and Presbyterian, principle. The passage in Clement, then, does not, as Neander alleges, sanction the "transference of the whole system of the Jewish priesthood to the Christian church," and should in fairness really be regarded in no other light than our own Gillespie's entitling his masterly and valuable book, designed to "vindicate the divine ordinance of church government," "Aaron's Rod Blossoming," by an allusion to the way in which God decided the controversy as to the right of the priesthood. There is no inconsistency, then, between this portion of Clement's epistle and its general scope and spirit, which are undoubtedly and unequivocally anti-Prelatic; and most certainly no such clear and palpable inconsistency as to warrant us in regarding it as an interpolation of later times.

Upon the whole, I am not convinced by the arguments of Mosheim or Neander that Clement's epistle is interpolated, and think we have sufficient grounds for regarding it as a genuine and uncorrupted work of a companion of the apostles, and as thus a most valuable and interesting relic of Christian antiquity.

The striking contrast between the writings of the apostles and their immediate successors has been often remarked, and should never be overlooked or forgotten. Neander's observation upon this subject is this: "A phenomenon singular in its kind, is the striking difference between the writings of the apostles and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, who were so nearly their contemporaries. In other cases, transitions are wont to be gradual; but in this instance we observe a sudden change. There are here no gentle gradations, but all at once an abrupt transition from one style of language to another; a phenomenon which should lead us to acknowledge the fact of a special agency of the divine Spirit in the souls of the apostles."

Clement's epistle shows him to have been a man of a thoroughly apostolical spirit, i.e., a man who, understanding and feeling the power of

the great doctrines of Christianity, was pervaded by zeal for the glory of God and love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and an earnest desire to promote the spiritual welfare of men; and who subordinated all other desires and ends to the manifestation of these principles, and the accomplishment of these objects. To this praise he is most fully entitled; but there is nothing else about him to call forth any great enthusiasm or admiration. We respect and esteem him as a devoted Christian, a faithful and zealous minister of the Lord; and this is the highest style of man: no higher commendation could be given. But there is nothing about Clement, so far as his epistle makes him known to us, that raises him above many in every age who have been born again of the word of God, —who have walked with Him, and have served Him faithfully in the gospel of His Son. There is nothing about him that should tempt us to look up to him as an oracle, or to receive implicitly whatever he might inculcate. He was indeed the friend and companion of the inspired apostles, and he might possibly have learned from them much which they knew by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But whether this were so or not, the fact is unquestionable, that the Lord has not been pleased to employ him in making known to us anything which is not at least as fully and clearly, and of course much more authoritatively, taught us in the canonical Scripture. Neither has God been pleased to give us through Clement almost any materials fitted to aid us in understanding any of the individual statements of the Bible. It appears from Clement's epistle that he held the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the other fundamental principles of Christian truth; but he has not left us any statements upon any doctrinal points which may not be as easily misinterpreted or perverted as the sacred Scripture, and to which men of different and opposite opinions have not just as confidently appealed in support of their own views as they have to the word of God. He has, neither by his own exposition of Scripture, nor by communicating to us any information which an expositor of Scripture might improve and apply, cast any light upon any portion of the word of God, or afforded to others any materials for doing so. Indeed, his epistle contains plain enough proofs that no great reliance is to be placed upon his accurate interpretation, or correct and judicious application, of scriptural statements. Besides the testimony which, in common with all the rest of the fathers, he bears to the leading facts on which the Christian system is founded, as then known and

believed, and to the existence and reception of the books of Scripture (and all this, of course, is invaluable), the only things for the knowledge of which we may be said to be indebted to Clement are these two: First, that the scriptural and apostolic identity of bishops and presbyters continued in the church after the apostles left the world; and, secondly, that pastors continued, as under the apostolic administration, to be settled only with the cordial consent of the church or congregation. These things have been made known to us through the instrumentality of Clement. We receive and value the information, but it is information which most of those who profess the greatest respect for the authority of the fathers, and who are in the habit of charging Presbyterians with disregarding and despising them, seem but little disposed to welcome. I will have occasion to advert to this more fully when I come to consider more formally the government of the early church; but enough has now been said for my present purpose, in so far as Clement is concerned, which is merely to give a very general view of the character and value of the writings of the apostolical fathers.

Sect. IV. Polycarp.

Polycarp, another of the apostolical fathers, is usually, in accordance with the style of later writers, described as Bishop of Smyrna, though his pupil and admirer, Irenaeus, in a letter to Florinus, preserved by Eusebius, speaks of him long after his death, as "that blessed and apostolic presbyter." His name is not mentioned in Scripture, though some have supposed him to be the angel of the church at Smyrna, to whom the apocalyptic epistle was addressed by our Saviour. This is not probable; but there is no reason to doubt that he had conversed with the apostle John, and that he presided over the church at Smyrna for many years before his martyrdom, which took place about the year 160. He lived many years after all the rest of the fathers of the apostolic age; and if he had written much, and if his writings had been preserved to us, he might have given us much interesting and important information concerning the condition of the church during the first half of the second century. But the Head of the church has not been pleased to afford us this privilege, or to communicate to us instruction or information through this channel. The only thing of Polycarp's that has come down to us, is a very short

epistle to the church at Philippi, consisting chiefly of plain, practical exhortations, wholly in the spirit, and very much in the words, of Scripture. It was written about the year 116, and thus belongs to exactly the same period as the epistles ascribed to Ignatius; and though Mosheim declines to give any decision upon the point, there is no sufficient reason, as Neander admits, for doubting its genuineness or suspecting it of interpolations.

Almost all the general observations we have made upon the character of Clement, and the value of his epistle, apply equally to Polycarp. Polycarp occupies an important place in bearing testimony, directly and indirectly, to the leading facts of Christianity, and to the general reception of the books of Scripture; but beyond this, there is not much of real value or importance that can be directly, or by implication, derived from his epistle. We learn from it nothing concerning Christ or the apostles, their actions or their doctrines, but what is at least as fully and plainly taught us in the canonical Scripture; and it contains nothing fitted to throw any light upon any of the more obscure and difficult portions of the word of God. It does give us some indications of what was the government of the church in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles; and these are in perfect accord with the statements of Scripture and the informations of Clement. We learn from the inscription of this epistle, that other presbyters were associated with Polycarp in the government of the church at Smyrna; while we have no indication that he held a different office from theirs, or exercised any jurisdiction over them. We learn from it, also, that at this time the church of Philippi was governed by presbyters and deacons, just as we learn from Paul's epistle to the same church, written about sixty years before, that it was then governed by bishops and deacons. This might be regarded as a confirmation, if a thing so clear required to be confirmed, that in Scripture bishop and presbyter are the same; while it also shows that this identity, which the apostles established and the Scripture sanctions, continued for some time after the inspired rulers of the church had been taken away. The only other thing of any value or interest which we learn from Polycarp's epistle is, that instances occasionally occurred, even in that early period, in which presbyters fell into gross and open immorality, and were in consequence deposed from their office.

V. Epistle to Diognetus

There is a very interesting and valuable production now generally classed among those of the apostolical fathers, though formerly — I mean among the olders writers on these subjects— it was little attended to or regarded, being hid, as it were, among the works of Justin Martyr, along with which, or rather as a part of which, it has commonly been published. It is in the form of a letter addressed to a person of the name of Diognetus; and the only reason apparently for ascribing it to Justin Martyr, and inserting it among his works, is, that we know that there was a philosopher of that name at the court of the emperor to whom one of Justin's apologies was addressed. We have no external evidence as to its author, or the time at which it was written. It bears in gremio to have been written by one who was a disciple of the apostles, and a teacher of the nations; and there is no evidence whatever, external or internal, fitted to throw any doubt upon the truth of this statement.

Some critics, judging from the style of thought and writing by which it is characterized, have pronounced a very confident opinion that it is the production of Justin; while others, judging by the same standard, have been equally confident that it could not have been written by the author of the works which are universally ascribed to him. The following short extract from Bishop Bull's Defence of the Nicene Creed, embodies the opinion upon this point of two very eminent authorities in patristic literature, viz., Bull himself, and Sylburgius, whom he quotes, who has published an edition of the works of Justin, "*Epistolam autem illam ad Diognetum plane Justinum redolere, si cum caeteris ejus scriptis conferatur, et multa cum illis habere communia, recte observavit Fredericus Sylburgius.*" On the other hand, one of the latest writers in this country on the subject— Dr Bennet— in a very valuable work, entitled "*The Theology of the Early Christian Church exhibited in quotations from the writers of the first three centuries,*" expresses his opinion in the following terms: "*The styles of Cicero and Tacitus, or those of Addison and Gibbon, are not more dissimilar than the composition of Justin and that of the writer to Diognetus. The sentences of the Martyr are loose, prolix, and inaccurate, with somewhat of a morose tone and a foreign air; while those of the letter writer have all the benevolent grace of the*

Christian, with all the elegant simplicity, luminous terseness, and logical finish, of a practised author in his native Greek." And, in accordance with this view, Neander says of it, "Its language and thoughts, as well as the silence of the ancients, prove that the letter does not proceed from Justin."

I have no great confidence in the judgments even of eminent critics upon questions of this sort, unless there be materials for bringing them to be tested by some pretty definite and palpable standard; and, indeed, I have made these quotations chiefly for the purpose of pointing out how little reliance is to be placed upon decisions of points of this sort, which abound so much in the writings of continental critics, and are by many of them applied very boldly even to the different books of Scripture. In this particular case, however, I think that the internal evidence is in favour of ascribing the letter to Diognetus to a different author from Justin; and, as I have already remarked, there is no proof, nor even any strong probability against the truth of the author's statement, whoever he may have been, that he was a disciple of the apostles, though it has been suspected by some that the part of the epistle where this statement occurs is an interpolation.

The letter is an answer to an inquiry which had been addressed to the author as to what was the character of the Christian religion, and what were the reasons why he had embraced it. It is, in point of thought, sentiment, and style, decidedly superior to the works of any of the apostolical fathers, and is deserving of more attention than it has commonly received. It gives a brief but spirited and effective summary of the grounds on which the Christians had abandoned Paganism and Judaism; this is followed by a description of the leading features in the character and personal conduct of the Christians of that period; and then all that is peculiar in their character and conduct is traced to the influence of the doctrines which they had been led upon God's authority to believe, of which a striking and scriptural summary is presented. It does not afford us any historical information about the government or the worship of the church at the time when it was written. It makes known to us nothing but what we know from the canonical Scriptures; but it shows that the doctrines which orthodox churches have generally deduced from

Scripture were taught in the church after the apostles left it.

I have introduced here this brief reference to the letter to Diognetus, because it is similar in its character, and in the way in which it should be noticed, to the letters of Clement and Polycarp; and because the mention of it leaves nothing else to be adverted to under the head of the apostolical fathers, except the epistles of Ignatius, which are in many respects peculiar.

VI. Ignatius

Ignatius certainly lived in the time of the apostles, and occupied a position which led the writers of a subsequent age, when Prelacy had been established, to call him Bishop of Antioch. We know little of his history, except that he was condemned to death by the emperor Trajan for his adherence to Christ; that he was in consequence carried to Rome, where he was exposed to wild beasts, and gained the crown of martyrdom in the year, as some think, 107, but more probably in the year 116. We have several epistles which profess to have been written by Ignatius during his journey from Antioch to Rome to endure the sentence of death which had been pronounced upon him.

The genuineness and integrity of these epistles have given rise to a controversy which is so voluminous, and involves so many points of detail connected with the early history of the church, that it would be no easy matter to give an abstract of it. This would be of no great importance; but what increases the difficulty of saying anything about them is, that it is no easy matter to make up one's mind as to what is really true, or even most probable, in regard to them.

I have no doubt, indeed, that the epistles of Ignatius, as we now have them, even in the purest and most uncorrupted form, did not proceed from his hand; but whether they ought to be regarded as wholly fabricated, or merely as interpolated by some over-zealous defender of the threefold order of bishop, priests, and deacons, it is not easy to decide. Upon the revival of letters, fifteen epistles were published, purporting to be written by Ignatius; but it was soon seen and generally

admitted that eight of these, including one addressed by him to the apostle John, and another addressed to the Virgin Mary, were the forgeries of a much later age. A considerable diversity of opinion prevailed as to the genuineness and integrity of the other seven. The Reformers, being Presbyterians, were not likely to think favourably of the genuineness and integrity of these epistles; and their impressions upon this point were confirmed by finding that the Socinians produced from them passages which could not easily be reconciled with orthodox views upon the subject of the Trinity. Calvin, accordingly, did not hesitate to say, that there is nothing more senseless than the stuff "that has been collected under the name of this martyr. All the earliest defenders of the Church of England— Whitgift, Bancroft, Bilson, Downson— appealed to them with confidence in favour of Prelacy. At length Archbishop Usher discovered in a MS., and published at Oxford in 1644, a Latin translation of the seven epistles of Ignatius, differing considerably from any edition that was previously known. The epistles in this translation were considerably shorter; they were free from Arianism, and did not by any means exhibit such clear and palpable proofs of fabrication. About the same time, by a remarkable coincidence, the celebrated scholar, Isaac Vossius, discovered and published a Greek MS. of the epistles of Ignatius, which had been preserved at Florence, corresponding fully with Usher's Latin version, so far as it went, but containing only six epistles instead of seven. This greatly encouraged the defenders of Prelacy and Ignatius. They immediately abandoned the old edition, which formerly they had defended as well as they could, admitting now that it had been corrupted and interpolated by a later hand; while they maintained the genuineness of the shorter and more modern edition.

In consequence of this discovery, all the discussions about the epistles of Ignatius, which are more than 200 years old, are deprived of their relevancy and value, since they bear reference to an edition which was then abandoned by Romanists and Prelatists, and has not since been formally defended, so far as I know, except by Whiston, who was an Arian, and by one or two German neologians. It was at once conceded by anti-Prelatic writers, that many of the objections which had been adduced against the older edition of Ignatius did not apply to this shorter and more modern one; but it was not universally admitted that even this more

pure edition exhibited the genuine letters of Ignatius, or at least exhibited them without considerable interpolations. Salmasius and Blondell, who have written in opposition to Prelacy with an extent of erudition that has never been surpassed, declared that, after examining the edition of Vossius and Usher, they were still satisfied that we had no genuine epistles of Ignatius; or, at least, that even in their purest form they were grossly corrupted. Hammond defended Ignatius against their attacks; and this produced a controversy on the subject between him and Dr Owen. Daille, or Dallaeus, a very learned divine of the French Protestant Church, soon after wrote a book to prove that the epistles ascribed to Ignatius were forged by some friend of the hierarchy about the end of the third century. Bishop Pearson's celebrated work, "*Vindiciae Epistolarum S. Ignatii*," of which the Episcopalians have ever since continued to boast as unanswerable, was an answer to this book of Daille's, and professed to prove that the epistles of Ignatius, as published by Usher and Vossius, are genuine and uncorrupted. An answer was written to Pearson by another French divine, Larroque, entitled "*Observationes in Ignatianas Pearsonii Vindicias*;" and then the controversy terminated.

Since that time Prelatists have generally continued, upon the ground of what was proved by Hammond and Pearson, to maintain, and Presbyterians, upon the ground of what was proved by Daille and Larroque, to deny, their genuineness, or at least their integrity. Perhaps it may be said to be the most prevalent opinion among anti-Prelatic writers, that the epistles of Ignatius, in their shorter and purer form, or at least six out of the seven, —for not only Mosheim, but Archbishop Usher, rejected the epistle to Polycarp, —are genuine, i.e., were in substance written by Ignatius, while they have been generally of opinion that some parts of them, especially those on which Prelatists found, were interpolated by a later hand. Neander expresses his opinion of them in the following terms: —"Certainly, these epistles contain passages which at least bear completely upon them the character of antiquity. This is particularly the case with the passages directed against Judaism and Docetism; but even the shorter and more trustworthy edition is very much interpolated." A Presbyterian, i.e., one who is convinced that the canonical Scriptures give no countenance to the threefold order in the ministry, —bishops, priests, and deacons, — and that the Scriptures uniformly use the words bishops

and presbyters synonymously or indiscriminately, as descriptive of one and the same class of functionaries, can scarcely read the epistles of Ignatius, and Daille's treatise upon the subject, without being strongly disposed to adopt his theory, viz., that they were forged in the end of the third century by some ardent and unscrupulous supporter of the hierarchy. And yet, I think, it must in fairness be admitted, that Daille has not thoroughly proved this; and that so much that is plausible has been adduced by Pearson in answer to many of his arguments, that the proof of an entire fabrication of the whole is not brought home very forcibly to one's understanding. After wading through a great deal of very intricate and confused discussion, especially in regard to alleged anachronisms in reference to heresies which Daille contends were not heard of till after Ignatius' martyrdom, one does feel somewhat at a loss to lay his hand definitely upon anything, except the distinction between bishops, presbyters, and deacons, in regard to which he would undertake to affirm that Ignatius could not have written it. The external evidence in favour of their genuineness in the gross — i.e., in favour of the position that Ignatius did write some epistles, such as those we now have under his name— must be admitted to be strong. Polycarp, in the conclusion of his epistle, speaks of his having made a collection of the epistles of Ignatius, and sent them to the church of Philippi for their edification. And Daille's notion, that this was an interpolated addition to Polycarp's letter, has no solid foundation to rest upon. He founds much upon the allegation, that these epistles are not alluded to by any other writer from Polycarp to Eusebius, who wrote in the early part of the fourth century. This would not be quite conclusive, even if true. But it has been alleged, on the other side, that they are referred to and quoted by Irenaeus in the second, and Origen in the third century. Daille maintains that the works ascribed to Origen, in which these references occur, are not his; and it is really not easy to decide whether they are or not. But he certainly is not successful in getting over the testimony of Irenaeus. That father made a statement, which is not only found in his own writings, but is expressly quoted from him by Eusebius, to this effect, that one of our martyrs who was condemned to the wild beasts said — and then he gives a quotation, which we still find in Ignatius' epistle to the Romans. And Daille's only answer to this is, that there is no express mention of an epistle, and that it is not said that he wrote, but that he said this; as if this

saying of Ignatius might have been handed down by tradition, without having been committed to writing. But this is forced and strained, as it is evident that Irenaeus most probably would have used the word said, and not wrote, as is common in such cases, even if he had been quoting from a writing. Daille admits that the epistles, as we have them, were extant in the time of Eusebius, and were regarded by him, as well as by Athanasius and Jerome, who flourished in the same century, as genuine; and this must in fairness be admitted to be a pretty strong evidence that they are so.

The ground on which Neander was convinced that the epistles of Ignatius, even in their purest form, were very much interpolated, is the same principle in virtue of which he was convinced that there was an interpolation in the epistle of Clement, —a principle just and weighty in itself, though, as we think, misapplied by Neander in the case of Clement. It is in substance this, —that there are statements in Ignatius which plainly assert the existence of a Prelatic hierarchic government in the church, in contradiction at once to the sacred Scriptures, and to every other uninspired document of the apostolic, and even of a later age. We cannot defend Ignatius, as we endeavoured to defend Clement, from the application of this sound and important principle of judging. There can be no doubt that Ignatius' epistles are crammed, usque ad nauseam, with bishops, presbyters, and deacons, evidently spoken of as three distinct orders or classes of functionaries, and that obedience and submission to them are exacted in a very absolute and imperious style, nay, that they exhibit something of the Popish principle of vicarious priestly responsibility; for he pledges his soul for theirs who are subject to the bishops, presbyters, and deacons; and yet these epistles have been constantly held up by the most learned Episcopalians as the very sheet anchor of their cause. They seem now at last to be getting half ashamed of the strength of his statements; and one of the latest Prelatic writers I have seen upon this subject, Conybeare, in his Bampton Lectures for 1839, makes the following candid, and yet very cautious, admission upon this point. After giving some extracts from the epistles of Ignatius, embodying very excellent practical exhortations, he continues in the following words: —" All Christians, of every sect, will agree in admiring these sentiments; but the great point on which in every Epistle Ignatius most strenuously

and repeatedly insists, is the necessity of a strict conformity to the discipline of the Church, and a devoted submission to Episcopal authority, which he makes to rest on the same principles with our obedience to our Lord Himself. It is needless to remark that such passages have afforded the great reason why so many writers of the Presbyterian party have been so reluctant to admit the authenticity of these remains; and we, while it is most satisfactory to our minds to find so early a testimony in confirmation of the primitive and apostolical origin of the constitution faithfully preserved by our own church, yet even we ourselves shall probably shrink from some of the language employed in these Epistles, as seeming excessive and overstrained.

We do trust indeed that our Episcopal authority is in and through the Lord, and most suitable for the edification of His body the church; and we may hope that this was all that Ignatius meant to imply; but we must regret, that in the somewhat overcharged and inflated style of his rhetoric, he has too often been betrayed into expressions which seem almost to imply a parity of authority over the Church, between its earthly superintendent, and its heavenly Head."

At present, however, we have to do, not with the general subject of the government of the early church, but merely with the integrity of Ignatius' epistles; and it is certainly not easy to believe that a pious and devoted minister who was a companion of the apostles could have written as he is represented to have done on this subject. Daille's leading argument upon this point is this: no other writer of the apostolic age, and indeed no writer during the whole of the second century, has spoken upon this subject in a style similar to that which Ignatius has employed; and, more particularly, no other writer of this period has uniformly employed the terms bishop and presbyter as descriptive of two distinct and separate classes of functionaries, —the bishop being of a higher, and the presbyter of a lower, order; and if so, it follows, that these portions of the epistles ascribed to him did not proceed from his pen, but owed their origin to a later age. Now, this position, we think, Daille has incontrovertibly established. Pearson has not answered his argument, but, as Larroque has conclusively proved, is chargeable in the whole discussion with practising the sophism called *ignoratio elenchi*, by running off into a

general investigation of the whole subject of the government of the church during the second century, instead of meeting fairly the critical and philological argument on which Daille based his conclusion that these parts of the epistles at least were not written by Ignatius. The argument is a very simple one: No other writer of the first and second centuries, inspired or uninspired, has uniformly used the words bishop and presbyter as descriptive of two distinct classes of functionaries, the one higher and the other lower; this distinction is uniformly and systematically made in the epistles of Ignatius; and therefore these epistles, or at least these parts of them, were not written by one who lived in the beginning of the second century. The conclusion is inevitable upon all the recognised principles of fair literary criticism, if the premises be established.

It is to be remarked that the main position is this: no other writer of the first two centuries has uniformly observed the distinction between the words bishop and presbyter as Ignatius has done, and as was done generally in the latter part of the third century, and universally afterwards. It is no disproof of this position to show that there are writers of the second century who give some indications of the existence de facto of some distinction between bishops and presbyters before the end of that century, for this is not denied 'by Presbyterians; nor even to show that this distinction was then generally recognised and established, — and yet this is all that Pearson has attempted to prove. All this might be true, and yet the striking and marked peculiarity in the use of the words might still afford a satisfactory proof that the epistles ascribed to Ignatius were defective, either in genuineness, or at least in integrity. The common or indiscriminate use of the names bishop and presbyter in the New Testament is now universally conceded by Episcopalians, though many of the older Prelatists denied it, or at least refused to admit it. There is no distinction in the use of them to be traced in the apostolical fathers Clement and Polycarp, but the reverse. They were sometimes, if not always, used indiscriminately by all the other writers of the second century (who used them at all, for Justin Martyr does not use them), — by Papias, Irenaeus, and Pius, Bishop of Rome. There are plain traces of the same indiscriminate use of the words in Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian, who lived partly in the third century, and it has not wholly

disappeared even in Origen and Cyprian. But it appears no more thereafter in the ordinary unintentional usage of language during the subsequent history of the church. Now here is the remarkable peculiarity, that while all the inspired writers before him use the words bishop and presbyter synonymously and indiscriminately, — while his only contemporaries whose writings have come down to us, Clement and Polycarp, follow faithfully in their footsteps, — while the same indiscriminate use of the words is exhibited more or less fully, though not uniformly, by all the subsequent writers of the second century, — Ignatius, who died at the latest in 116, alone adheres rigidly, uniformly, and without a single exception, to a distinction in the use and application of these words which grew up in the course of the third century, was not fully established till the fourth, and has continued ever since.

Now, this argument against the integrity at least of the epistles of Ignatius, so obvious and so conclusive, and bearing so directly and influentially upon the precise point which has given to the controversy about the genuineness and integrity of these epistles its chief value and interest, Pearson has not answered, nay, he can scarcely with propriety be said to have attempted to answer it; for he has not professed to produce what alone could constitute an answer, — any one author of the first two centuries, inspired or uninspired, of whom he affirms that he uniformly observes this distinction in the use of the words; and yet there is perhaps no one book of which Episcopalian controversialists are more in the habit of boasting as conclusive and unanswerable than Pearson's "Vindiciae," while they constantly allege that Presbyterians have no reason for rejecting Ignatius' epistles, or any part of them, except that they are decisive against their views. As Ignatius not only observes this distinction uniformly, wherever he has occasion to use the words, but as he is constantly ringing changes upon the bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and the necessity and advantages of honouring and obeying them, — this may be fairly regarded as a conclusive proof that, as Neander says, "even the shorter and more trustworthy edition is very much interpolated."

Ignatius, in his epistle to the Trallians, boasts— though Archbishop Wake, in his translation, endeavours to conceal this— that he was able to write to them about things so exalted that it would choke them if he spoke

about them, and that he could describe to them the places of the angels, and the several companies of them under their respective princes. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, while on his way to that city, condemned to be exposed to the wild beasts, he besought them to address no prayers to God, and to use no influence with men, in order to procure a removal of the sentence: he declared that he would coax, and even compel, the wild beasts to devour him; and that he hoped that they would devour him wholly, so that none of his body should be left. When we read such things as these in the epistles ascribed to Ignatius, we are tempted to wish that their spuriousness could be established; or, at least, that the interpolations could be proved to extend beyond his frequent references to bishops, presbyters, and deacons. But perhaps we are not warranted in saying that it was not possible, though it is certainly very improbable, that an eminently holy and devoted minister, who had conversed with the apostles— and such Ignatius was— when soon to be offered up as a martyr for Christ's sake, could have manifested such palpable proofs of the infirmities of humanity; though, if he did write in this strain, we can attach little weight to his authority, and must rank him, in point of good sense and correct Christian feeling, greatly below his contemporaries, Clement and Polycarp. We are, however, warranted in saying that no man placed in the circumstances of Ignatius could have constantly and uniformly used the words bishop and presbyter as descriptive of two different and separate classes of functionaries, and that this uniform use of them unequivocally indicates a later age.

It is also a very strong confirmation of the position that the epistles of Ignatius are corrupted, if not entirely spurious, that we have some works bearing the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, a convert of Paul's, mentioned in the book of the Acts, which are now universally, by Protestants at least, regarded as having been forged, and not earlier than the fourth century, and which in several points bear a resemblance to the epistles of Ignatius. The pretended Dionysius brings out fully and in detail that minute knowledge of the angels and their ranks which Ignatius possessed, but which in mercy to the Trallians he concealed; and the main scope and objects of his works are to invest with apostolic sanction the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons, and the whole mass of rites and ceremonies which disfigured and polluted the church even in

the fourth century. The book of Daille, to which I have so often referred, is directed equally against the genuineness of the writings ascribed to Dionysius and of those ascribed to Ignatius, and is entitled "De Scriptis, quae sub Dionysii Areopagitae et Ignatii Antiocheni nominibus circumferuntur.

This is, I think, a fair view of the controversy as it has been generally conducted until recent times. But Mr Cureton's publication of the Syriac version of these epistles, recently discovered in a monastery in Egypt, and now in the British Museum, materially changes the whole aspect of the controversy, and warrants and requires a decision in regard to most of the topics that used to be discussed in it, in opposition to that which the Episcopalians have so long and so strenuously contended for. This MS. of a Syriac version seems to have been written about the sixth century. It contains only the three epistles above mentioned, and exhibits them in a briefer and more compendious form than even the shorter edition of Usher and Vossius, except that some things found in the older editions in the fourth and fifth chapters of the epistle to the Trallians, about his knowledge of the angels, are found in the Syriac, in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Mr Cureton, who seems to have discharged his duties with great diligence and learning, judgment and candour, has proved beyond all reasonable doubt that there is no ground for regarding as genuine anything ascribed to Ignatius, except these three epistles in this Syriac version; that, of course, a large portion of the objections of Daill⁶ and other Presbyterians, at least to the integrity of the epistles, were well founded; that the ground taken by Pearson and other Episcopalians is wholly untenable; and that, therefore, writings were forged in early times in the name of Ignatius, as well as of Clement and Dionysius the Areopagite, to serve the cause of Prelacy. The Episcopalians seem very unwilling to admit these positions. They seem unable to imitate the candour of Mr Cureton; and both the English and the Quarterly Reviews have endeavoured to answer his arguments, and to maintain the ground occupied by Pearson. But this will not do. The case is clear and hollow, and cannot stand investigation. It has long been a sort of article of faith in the Church of England, handed down by tradition, that Pearson's *Vindiciae* is unanswerable. Cureton, in the preface to his *Corpus Ignatianum* (p. 14, Note), says: "In the whole course

of my inquiry respecting the Ignatian epistles I have never met with one person who professes to have read Bishop Pearson's celebrated book; but I was informed by one of the most learned and eminent of the present Bench of Bishops, that Porson, after having perused the *Vindiciae*, had expressed to him his opinion that it was a "very unsatisfactory work."

But while it may now be considered settled that there is nothing else of what has been ascribed to Ignatius genuine except these three epistles, according to the Syriac version, the question remains, Are we bound now to receive these as genuine and uninterpolated? The existence of this Syriac version, omitting, as it does, most of the things in the older editions which were founded upon by Daill⁶ and other Presbyterians, as militating against their genuineness, or at least their integrity, must in fairness be admitted to give some confirmation to the genuineness of the epistles which it contains. But it does not establish their integrity or entire freedom from interpolations. They still contain the boasting about knowing celestial and angelic matters— the eagerness for martyrdom— the desire that the wild beasts should devour him wholly. This is in the epistle to the Romans; and in the epistle to the Ephesians, there is the statement about Satan being ignorant of the virginity of Mary and the birth of Christ, though they omit here the mention of his death, and the surpassing brightness of the star of Bethlehem, which the former editions had. Of the mass of stuff about bishops, presbyters, and deacons, with which the former editions were crammed, there is only one passage left. It is in the epistle to Polycarp, c. vi., but it is a strong and offensive one. It is this. After having exhorted them not to marry without the counsel of the bishop, he adds this general exhortation, as translated from the Syriac by Mr Cureton: "Look to the bishop, that God may also look upon you. I will be instead of the souls of those who are subject to the Bishop, and the Presbyter, and the Deacons; with them may I have a portion near God." This is quite the same in the longer and shorter of the old editions as in the Syriac, except that the longer has "presbytery" instead of *cc* presbyters." There is certainly nothing in the least resembling this, either in language or in spirit, in the New Testament, or in Clement and Polycarp, and it may be fairly regarded as an interpolation. Ignatius, in the Syriac version, occupies a place very similar to Clement's, in whose epistle Neander pronounced one passage to be a clear interpolation,

because of its anti-apostolic, hierarchic tendency. We think the application of the principle wrong as concerns the passage in Clement; but the principle is a sound one, and it seems fairly to apply to this only remaining prelatie passage in Ignatius.

Such are the apostolical fathers, and such their writings, in so far as God has been pleased to preserve them, and to afford us the means of distinguishing them. And I think this brief survey of them must be quite sufficient to show the truth of the two positions which I laid down in introducing this topic— viz., first, that we have no certain information, nothing on which we can rely with confidence as a mere question of evidence, as to what the inspired apostles taught and ordained, except what is contained in the canonical Scriptures; and, secondly, that there are no men, except the authors of the inspired books of Scripture, to whom there is any plausible pretence for calling upon us to look up as guides or oracles. It was manifestly, as the result proves, not the purpose of God to convey to us, through the instrumentality of the immediate successors of the apostles, any important information as to the substance of the revelation which he made to man, in addition to what, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has been embodied in the sacred Scriptures, and has in His good providence been preserved pure and uncorrupted. The apostolical fathers hold an important place as witnesses to the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the Scriptures; but this is their principal value. There is much about them, both in their character and in their writings, which is fitted to confirm our faith in the divine origin of Christianity, and the divine authority of the Scriptures; but there is nothing about them that should tempt us to take them instead of, or even in addition to, the evangelists and apostles as our guides. They exhibit a beautiful manifestation of the practical operation of Christian principle, and especially of ardent love to the Saviour, and entire devotedness to His service, which is well fitted to impress our minds, and to constrain us to imitation; but there is also not a little about them fitted to remind us that we must be followers of them only as they were of Christ, and that it is only the word of God that is fitted to make us perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

V. The Heresies of the Apostolic Age

We have very plain intimations given us in the sacred Scriptures, that, even while the apostles lived, errors of various kinds were broached, and disturbed the purity and peace of the church; and we have predictions that these would continue and extend. We have not much explicit information given us in the New Testament as to what these errors or heresies were. But they engaged the attention, and they occupy a prominent place in the works, of the Christian authors who lived after the apostles, and the heresies fill a considerable department in the ecclesiastical history of these early ages. Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who flourished during the latter half of the second century, and who has many claims upon our respect, wrote a book against the heresies of the age, which has come down to us, though chiefly in a Latin translation; and this, with the remains of Hippolytus, is the main source of our information as to the doctrines of the earlier heretics. Irenaeus was accustomed— and in this he was followed by the generality of the fathers who succeeded him, including both those who have written fully and formally upon heresies, such as Epiphanius and Augustine, and those who have adverted to the subject more incidentally— to use the word heresy, not as we do, to denote an important deviation from sound doctrine made by one who professed to believe in the divine mission of Jesus and the authority of the Scriptures, but any system of error into which any reference to Christ and Christianity was introduced, even though those who maintained it could not with propriety be called Christians, and could not have been members of any Christian church. We find that errors of this sort did, in point of fact, disturb the purity and the peace of the early church, that they are adverted to and condemned by the apostles in their addresses to the churches, and that they engaged much of the attention of the early fathers; and as they called them heresies, they continue to rank under that name in ecclesiastical history, though the word is now commonly used in a more limited sense, and though these early heresies might with more propriety be called forms of infidelity. Many of the notions explained and discussed under the head of the heresies of the first and second centuries are very like the ravings of

madmen who followed no definite standard, whether natural or supernatural, whether reason or Scripture, but who gave full scope to their imaginations in the formation of their systems. They did not exert a permanent or extensive direct influence, because they had no plausible foundation to rest upon. An investigation, therefore, into the history and precise tenets of the heretics of the first two centuries, —and this observation applies also in some measure to the third century, —is rather curious, than either very interesting or useful. The monstrous systems of these heretics did not take a very firm hold of men's minds, and cannot be said to have directly influenced to any considerable extent the views of the church in subsequent ages. They were, indeed, connected with some questions which have always occupied and still occupy the minds of reflecting men, such as the origin and cause of evil, and the creation of the world as connected with the subject of the origin of evil. But the early heretics, though they propounded a variety of theories upon these subjects, cannot be said to have thrown any light upon them, or to have materially influenced the views of men who have since investigated these topics, under the guidance either of a sounder philosophy, or of more implicit deference to God's revelation.

Gnosticism, indeed, which may be properly enough used as a general name for the heretical systems of the first two centuries, — and in some measure also of the third, although in the third century Manichaeism obtained greater prominence, —forms a curious chapter in the history of the human mind, and may furnish some useful and instructive lessons to the observer of human nature, and to the philosophical expounder of its capacities and tendencies. It strikingly illustrates some of the more simple and obvious doctrines of Scripture about the natural darkness of men's understandings. It is a striking commentary upon the apostle's declaration that the world by wisdom knew not God, and that men professing to be wise became fools. But it is not of any great importance in a purely theological point of view, inasmuch as it throws little light upon the real system of divine truth, and has had little direct influence upon the subsequent labours of men in investigating, under better auspices, the subjects which it professed to explain. Indeed, the principal practical use of a knowledge of the early heresies is, that an acquaintance with them does throw some light upon some portions of the word of God

which refer to them. This is an object which, indeed, is of the highest value, and it may be said to be in some measure the standard by which we should estimate the real value of all knowledge. The highest object at which we can aim, so far as the mere exercise of the understanding is concerned, is to attain to an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the revealed will of God; and whatever contributes to promote this, and just in proportion as it does so, is to be esteemed important and valuable. We should desire to ascertain, as far as possible, the true meaning and application of every portion of God's word; and appropriate and apply aright everything that is fitted to contribute to this result. We can easily conceive that the writings of the apostolical fathers might have conveyed to us information which would have thrown much light upon some of the more obscure and difficult passages in the New Testament. They might, for example, have given us information which would have settled some of those chronological questions in the history of Paul, and of his journeys and epistles, which, from the want of any definite materials in Scripture to decide them, have given rise to much discussion. They might have given us information which would have rendered more obvious and certain the interpretation of some passages which are obscure and have been disputed, because we know little of the prevalent customs that may have been referred to, or of the condition and circumstances of the church in general, or of some particular church at the time. They might possibly have conveyed to us information upon many points which, without their so intending it, might have admitted of a useful application in this way, and to these objects. And we might have made this application of the information, and thus have established the true meaning of some portions of Scripture, without ascribing to those who conveyed the information to us any authority, or attaching any weight to their opinion, as such. All this might have been; but we have had occasion to show that, in point of fact, God has not been pleased to convey to us, through the early ecclesiastical writers, much information that admits of a useful practical application in the interpretation of Scripture.

One exception, however, to this remark, —one case in which the information communicated to us by subsequent writers does give us some assistance in understanding the meaning and application of some passages of the New Testament, and the propriety and suitableness of the

words in which they are expressed, —is to be found in this matter of the early heresies, while it is also the chief practical purpose to which a knowledge of the early heresies is to be applied. Of the persons mentioned by name in the New Testament, as having in some way set themselves in opposition to the apostles, or as having deserted them, viz., Hermogenes, Phygellus, Demas, Hymenaeus, Philetus, Alexander, and Diotrephes, we have no certain or trustworthy information in early writers, in addition to the very brief notices given of them in Scripture; for we cannot regard the explanations given of the passages, when they are mentioned by commentators of the fourth and fifth centuries, as of any value or weight, except in so far as they seem to be fairly suggested by the Scripture notices. The most specific indication given us in the New Testament of a heresy, combined with the mention of names, is Paul's statement regarding Hymenaeus and Philetus, of whom he tells that "concerning the truth,"— i.e., in a matter of doctrine, —" they have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." Of Hymenaeus and Philetus personally we learn nothing from subsequent writers; we have no information throwing any direct light upon the specific statement of Paul as to the nature of the heresy held by them. But, in what we learn generally from subsequent writers as to the views of some of the Gnostic sects, we have materials for explaining it. We know that the Gnostic sects in general denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The Docetae, more especially, denying the reality of Christ's body, of course denied the reality of His death and resurrection; and having thus taken out of the way the great pattern and proof of the resurrection, it was an easy step to deny it altogether. Still some explanation must, if possible, be given of statements that seemed to assert or imply a resurrection of the body. Paul tells us that these men said it was past already; and here the inquiry naturally arises, What past thing was it to which they pointed as being the resurrection? Now Irenaeus informs us that Menander, one of the leading Gnostics of the first century, taught that Gnostic baptism was the resurrection, and the only resurrection that was to be expected. And when we thus learn that there was a sect of Gnostics in the apostolic age who allegorized away the resurrection into baptism, we can have no difficulty in seeing what Hymenaeus and Philetus meant when they said that it was past already.

In regard to Simon Magus and the Nicolaitanes, who are mentioned in Scripture, we have a good deal of information given us by subsequent writers; but it is not of a kind fitted to throw any light upon the statements made in Scripture concerning them. It is new and additional information regarding them, which there is nothing in Scripture to lead us to expect. It is not inconsistent, indeed, with Scripture, and may be all true. As it throws no light upon the statements of Scripture concerning them, but is purely historical in its character and application, and as even historically it is attended with considerable difficulties and no small measure of uncertainty, I shall not further enlarge upon it.

The heresies, however, to which there seem to be the most frequent references in Scripture, and a knowledge of which throws most light upon the interpretation of its statements, are those of Cerinthus and the Docetae.

As the first century advanced, and the apostles were most of them removed from this world, the Gnostic heresies seem to have become somewhat more prevalent, to have been brought to bear more upon some of the subjects comprehended in the Christian revelation, and to have affected more the state and condition of the church. The Docetae denied the reality of Christ's body, and of course of His sufferings; and maintained that these were mere phantoms or appearances; and we find that the apostle John repeatedly referred to this heresy, and that an acquaintance with its nature throws some light upon the true import of some of his statements. We find also, both in the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, and in the Gospel of John, references to the doctrines of Cerinthus. We know that the doctrine of the crucifixion of the Saviour was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And, accordingly, we find that very soon some who did not altogether deny Christ's divine mission, began to explain away His crucifixion. These attempts were made every in the apostolic age; and we have pretty full accounts of them as managed by some Gnostic heretics in the second century, such as Saturninus and Valentinus. Some have supposed that Paul referred to them when he spoke of enemies of the cross of Christ; but the expression in that passage seems rather to be taken in a wider and less specific sense. But there can be no reasonable doubt that John

referred to them in his epistles. Indeed, the very first sentence of his first epistle may be fairly regarded as bearing a reference to the heresy of the Docetae: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," or carefully inspected, "and our; hands have handled of the Word of life." The apostle was not likely to have added the last clause, "which our hands have handled," but because he had a reference to some such error as that which we know was taught by the Docetae, or Phantasiastae, as they were also called, who held that Christ's body was such only in appearance, — that it was a mere phantasm, which appeared indeed a body to the eyes of men, but would not admit of being handled. The heresy of the Docetae plainly implied a denial of the incarnation of Christ in any proper sense, — a denial that He had taken to Himself a true body; in short, a denial that He had come in the flesh. Hence the apostle says, in the beginning of the fourth chapter, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world," — a statement illustrated by one of Jerome's, viz., that even while the apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ still fresh in Judaea, men arose who maintained that His body was a mere phantasm or deceitful appearance. The statement that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is a plain assertion of His incarnation, and clearly implies that He existed previously to His coming, and that contemporaneously with His coming He took flesh, or assumed a true and real body. It is an assertion of His incarnation, in the sense in which we have explained it, against whoever may deny it, and upon whatever ground the denial may rest, and is equally conclusive against the modern Socinians and the ancient Docetae; but the knowledge of what were the views of the ancient Docetae throws light upon the import of the expression, and illustrates the propriety and exact bearing of the words employed.

It is true that, if John here intended more immediately to contradict the heresy of the Docetae, the declaration that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, cannot be regarded as in itself equivalent to, or co-extensive with, the position that He assumed human nature. It would in that case merely

assert that He, having previously existed, took, when He came, a true body, without asserting also that He took likewise a reasonable soul. And indeed the controversy as to the soul of Christ is one of later origin than the apostolic age, or the first century. But there is no difficulty in proving from other parts of Scripture, that Jesus Christ, when He came, took a reasonable human soul, as well as a true body. Incarnation, in the literal meaning of the word— ἐνσώκωσις — is here expressly asserted, implying a previous existence, and an assumption of a true and real body as contemporaneous and identical with His coming or with His appearance in this world. An assertion of the reality of Christ's flesh or body, while He was on earth, was all that was necessary in condemning the Docetae, and warning the church against them; but under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it is expressed in words which plainly imply -a previous existence, so that the statement is, as we have said, just as conclusive against modern as against ancient heretics.

We have said also that the apostle John referred to the heresy of Cerinthus; and indeed Irenaeus tells us that John wrote his gospel principally in order to oppose the doctrines which Cerinthus had been propagating; and we know of no ground, external or internal, for disbelieving this. We learn from the testimony of subsequent writers, that Cerinthus held— and in this he was followed by some other Gnostic heretics of the second century— that Jesus and Christ must be carefully distinguished from each other: that Jesus was a mere man; that Christ, one of the αἰῶνες, descended upon Him at His baptism, dwelt in Him till He was about to suffer death, and then left Him, and returned to the pleroma. Now, this whole theory is contradicted and exploded by the position, that Jesus is Christ. This position, in terminis, denies the distinction which the Cerinthians made between them, and it plainly implies that there never was a time when Jesus existed, and was not Christ, which is in direct opposition to what we know the Cerinthians held upon this point. Now John, in the next chapter of his epistle, the fifth, at the beginning lays down this position, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." We have, indeed, similar statements to this in the book of the Acts, in the recorded preaching of the apostles. They laboured to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; and the meaning of this manifestly is just this, that Jesus was the

Messiah promised to the fathers and predicted by the prophets. But when we know, that before John wrote this epistle, men had arisen who were disturbing the purity and peace of the church by making a distinction or separation between Jesus and Christ; when we see that, in the context, John is warning the churches against another branch of the heresy concerning Christ's person; and when we know that this heresy, which consisted substantially in a denial that Jesus is Christ, not only existed in John's time, but continued to infest the church for several succeeding generations, we can scarcely refuse to admit that the statement is to be taken here in a more limited and specific sense than that in which it is employed in the book of the Acts, and was intended to be, what it really is, a denial of the heresy of Cerinthus; and moreover, by plain implication, an assertion of the vital or fundamental importance of right views of the person of Christ, as intimately connected with those radical changes of character which bear so directly upon the salvation of men's souls.

I have no doubt that it has been often proved that the introduction of John's gospel is an exposure of the heresies of the Docetae and the Cerinthians, of those who even at that time denied His incarnation and real humanity, and of those who, while admitting that Christ came down from heaven and was in some sense divine, separated Jesus from Christ, —held that Christ left Jesus before His final sufferings, and, of course, denied anything like the permanent union of the divine and human natures in His one person. But it would be to go out of our way to enter at any length into the illustration of this subject. I have made these observations, not so much for the purpose of explaining those portions of the New Testament which refer to the early heresies, —for I have merely glanced, and very hurriedly, at a few of them, —but rather for the purpose of showing that a knowledge of the ancient heresies is not so entirely destitute of all direct utility as at first sight it might appear to be; and that it has some bearing, though neither very extensive nor very influential, upon the great object of opening up the true and exact meaning of some portions of the word of God.

In asserting the comparative unimportance of a knowledge of the early heresies, I must be understood as referring rather to the detailed

exposition of the particular views of individuals as formal categorical doctrines, than to the leading effects and results of the Gnostic system as a whole, or in its main features; for though the historical questions as to what were the precise doctrines held by this heretic and by the other in the first or second century, are not of much importance in themselves, besides being often involved in considerable doubt or uncertainty, I have no doubt that the Gnostic system did exert a considerable influence upon the views and condition of the church in early times, especially in regard to two points, —viz., first, the Trinity and the person of Christ; and secondly, what has been called the ascetic institute or discipline, as including celibacy and monasticism, which soon began to prevail so widely in the church, and which exerted so injurious an influence. The earliest heretics upon the subject of the Trinity and the person of Christ were deeply involved in the principles of the Gnostic system; and even those who maintained sound and orthodox views upon these points, in opposition to the heretics, especially in the third century, gave many indications that they were too much entangled in rash and presumptuous speculations about matters connected with the Divine nature, above the comprehension of the human faculties, and not clearly revealed in Scripture. The great body of the church, indeed, preserved in the main a scriptural orthodoxy upon these important questions; and when, in the fourth and fifth centuries, they came to be fully discussed and decided on in the councils of the church, the creeds and decrees adopted were, on the whole, so accordant with Scripture, as to have secured the general concurrence of subsequent generations.

It was not so, however, with the ascetic institute. Upon this subject the leaven of the Gnostic system seems to have insinuated itself into the great body of the church itself, even when its formal doctrines were openly condemned; and to have gradually succeeded in exerting a most injurious influence upon the general tone of sentiment and practice. The indirect influence of the Gnostic system, absurd and ridiculous as that system was in its more formal and specific doctrines, has been developed with great ingenuity and sagacity, and in a very impressive way, in Mr Isaac Taylor's very valuable and interesting work entitled "Ancient Christianity," written in opposition to Tractarianism, —a work I which, though it contains some rather strong and extreme views, naturally enough arising from the

zealous prosecution of one I important object, ought to be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the true condition of the church, both in regard to doctrine and practice in that period— viz., the latter half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth centuries— which has been held up by the Tractarians as the great model according to which the church should now be regulated. Celibacy and monasticism were the cases in which Gnostic principles were most clearly and fully developed among those who adhered to the church; but those who are curious in tracing the progress and connection of doctrines profess to discover traces of its operation in other views and notions that prevailed in early times, and were afterwards fully developed in Popery.

Gnosticism, viewed as a general description of a system, and abstracted from the special absurdities and extravagances which particular individuals mixed up with it, is regarded by many, and apparently with justice, as being traceable to a sort of combination of the Oriental theosophy, the Jewish cabbala, and the Platonic philosophy. And in the course of the second century, and still more in the third, we see traces, on the one hand, of this system t of philosophical speculation being modified by the influences of the Christian revelation and its contents; and, on the other hand, of the views that prevailed in the church among those who professed] a greater respect for the sacred Scriptures being more and more influenced by the prevailing philosophy. The result was the formation of a class of men in regard to whom it remains to this day a subject for controversial discussion, whether or not they were Christians in any sense, —a question which, in the same sense, might be discussed in regard to many modern philosophers. The question practically assumes this form: Did they, or did they not, admit the authority of the Christian revelation as the ultimate standard in regard to every subject to which its statements apply? Now, there have been many, both in ancient and in modern times, calling themselves philosophers, who would not have liked to have given a categorical answer to this question, but whose conduct in prosecuting their speculations practically answered it in the negative. It is to be regarded as a mere difference in degree, and as not essentially affecting the rectitude of the relation in which men stood to God's revelation, —whether, first, they openly denied its authority; or, secondly, got rid of, or explained away its statements by processes which are

manifestly unfair, and which practically render it of no real utility; or, thirdly, just left it out of view altogether, and carried on their speculations about God, and man's relation to Him, and his duties and destiny, without any reference to what the word of God teaches, —without giving any opinion, or committing themselves upon the subject, of the authority of Scripture.

Each of these three modes of casting off the controlling authority of God's word, and leaving full scope for indulging in their own theories and speculations, —i.e., bringing all subjects, even the highest and most exalted, to be tried by the standard of their own understandings or feelings, their fancies and inclinations, — has prevailed at different times, and in different countries, according to diversities of circumstances and influences. The second mode, which consists substantially in arbitrarily rejecting some parts of Scripture, and in explaining away and perverting the rest, prevailed very generally in the early times of the church; and it has prevailed largely in the past and present generations. It was generally adopted by the Gnostics of the second and third, and by the Manichaeans of the third and fourth, centuries. Origen, though remaining connected with the church, came very near to it; and it is just that which has been followed by modern rationalists and neologians upon the Continent. Mosheim gives the following description of the way in which the Gnostics and Manichaeans dealt with the books of Scripture, —and it is impossible to read it without being struck with the remarkable and thorough similarity of their views and conduct in this matter to those of modern German rationalists: — "They did not deny that in most of the books of the New Testament there were some things that were divine, and that came from Christ and His apostles; but they contended that there were mixed up with these many things that were false and impious; whence they inferred that those things only in the N. T. were worthy of credit which agreed with the opinions of their master Manichseus;" and again, " Sometimes they seem to grant, nay, they do grant, that these gospels are of divine origin; but what they grant they immediately again withdraw and overturn. For they add that they have been miserably corrupted and interpolated by deceitful and mendacious men, and stuffed with Jewish fables; whence it follows that, as we now have them, they are of no value or utility... But in other passages they expressly deny that these books

have the apostles of Christ for their authors, or that they were written either by Christ or by the apostles whose names they bear; and, on the contrary, maintain that their authors were half Jews, credulous and deceitful."

This is a most accurate full-length portrait of modern German rationalism, from the Manichaeans of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The contemplation of the heresies of the early ages, viewed in connection with the heresies of modern times, is well fitted to remind us of the paramount necessity of our settling clearly and definitively, as the most important of all questions, whether God has really given us a positive supernatural revelation of His will; if so, where, or in what book, that revelation is to be found, and whether it was really intended to be understood by men in general through the ordinary natural processes of interpretation, and is fitted to be a standard of faith and practice; and after having settled this, and made our minds familiar with the grounds on which our judgment on these points rests, of making a constant, honest, and unshrinking application, to every subject of thought and practice, of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

VI. The Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries

Having adverted to the writings of the apostolical fathers, and endeavoured to estimate their real value and importance, especially in so far as concerns the interpretation of Scripture, and the correct exposition of the scheme of divine truth; and having also attempted to explain the application, and to estimate the value of a knowledge of the heresies of the early ages, I propose to give a brief survey of the principal writers of the second and third centuries, chiefly for the purpose of adverting to the influence they exerted, and the measure of practical importance that may still attach to their writings. For this purpose, I intend to collect together, in one view, those facts connected with the principal fathers of these two centuries, however otherwise simple, and however well known, which it seems to me most important to remember, and which are best fitted to furnish an antidote to some of the notions upon this subject which are zealously advocated in the present day.

I. Justin Martyr

The first writer whose works have come down to us, and who had not lived in the time of the apostles or conversed with them, is Justin, who flourished about the middle of the second century, and who, as well as Polycarp, suffered martyrdom in the persecution under M. Aurelius Antoninus, the philosopher, soon after the year 160; and is commonly called Justin Martyr. Various considerations invest Justin as a writer with peculiar interest and importance in the history of the early church. He is the earliest author who has written much that has come down to us, and the first who wrote defences of Christianity against the attacks of Jews and infidels, his defences being the models of the early apologies, even of Tertullian's, down till Origen's. He is the earliest Christian author of whom we have any remains still extant, that was versant in Pagan literature and philosophy before his conversion to Christianity; and finally, the modern Socinians have assigned to him the honour of

inventing, with the assistance of Plato the Greek and Philo the Jew, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. All these various considerations contribute to invest the writings of Justin with no ordinary importance in the history of the early church. There is no reason to doubt that Justin was a genuine convert to the faith of Christ: that he was not merely convinced intellectually of the divine origin of Christianity, but that he had been enabled to believe to the saving of his soul, and, of course, had been born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.

In regard to Justin, as in regard to most of the fathers, there are some preliminary questions to be settled as to the genuineness of the works commonly ascribed to him; and these questions are often attended with extreme difficulty. It is certain that several works which Justin wrote have perished; and of the pieces extant, which have been commonly ascribed to him, and are usually found in the editions of his works, the substance of what seems to approach nearest to truth and certainty is this— that the two Apologies for Christianity, the one written most probably about the year 140, and the other about the year 160; the Dialogue with Trypho the Jew; the Exhortation to the Greeks; and the fragment of a work upon the Resurrection, are genuine, and that the rest are spurious. There is nothing in the writings of Justin, any more than in those of the apostolical fathers, to give the least countenance to the exalted notions that have sometimes been propounded regarding the authority of the fathers upon exegetical or theological subjects. He does not profess to communicate to us any information that had been derived from the apostles in addition to what has been conveyed to us through the channel of the sacred Scriptures. He is assuredly no safe guide to follow in the interpretation of Scripture; for nothing can be more certain than that, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, in which he discusses fully the argument from prophecy for the Messiahship of Jesus, he has given many interpretations and applications of Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, that are erroneous and ridiculous. He forms, as indeed almost every one of the fathers of the first three centuries does, an important link in the chain of evidence, by which we prove the genuineness and integrity of the books of Scripture, though it is remarkable that he never quotes any of the epistles of Paul, probably to avoid giving offence to the Jews,

for whose conversion, being himself a native of Palestine though born of Greek parents, he chiefly laboured, and who were strongly prejudiced against the apostle of the Gentiles.

Justin has been often accused, even by others than Socinians, of corrupting the simplicity of the gospel scheme of doctrine by mere philosophical speculations, derived especially from the works of Plato and his followers. The accusation is certainly not altogether destitute of foundation, though it has been often very much exaggerated. Justin unequivocally professes to hold what we would now call the perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures as the only rule of faith. He professed to take them as his own rule in the formation of his opinions. He no doubt honestly intended to apply this principle in practice; and in the main he succeeded, though it cannot be denied that in some points he was led astray by his respect for the works of the ancient philosophers. He indulges in some rash and unwarranted speculations about angels. He is the author, so far as we have any means of knowing, of the very absurd interpretation, which was adopted generally by the fathers of the first three centuries, of Gen. vi. 4, and which represents the sons of God who went in to the daughters of men as angels, and their progeny as demons, who became the gods of the pagans. The errors of Justin, however, which probably exerted the most injurious influence, and were, perhaps, the clearest indications of a declension from the purity of scriptural theology, through the influence of false philosophy, were the assertion of the Christianity of the more respectable pagans who lived before Christ, and of the independent freedom of the human will. Justin was accustomed to say that Socrates and Plato, and such men, were Christians, and were saved; but it is difficult to discern exactly what were the grounds on which he maintained this position, or what he held to be involved in it. It is certain that he thought that Plato and some other ancient philosophers had had access to the Jewish Scriptures, and derived some of their views from that source. He does not seem to have gone nearly so far as to maintain that men could be saved by following the light of nature, and the dictates of their own religion, whatever it might be. He had some obscure notion of these men having in some way or other acquired some knowledge of Christ; and perhaps all that we can very explicitly charge against him on this head is an unwillingness to submit absolutely to the

teaching of Scripture, to be contented with what God has been pleased to reveal as to the general rules that ordinarily regulate His procedure, and to leave everything else connected with the ultimate destiny of men in the hands of their righteous Judge. It is right that we should give all men all due credit for any valuable or useful qualities which they may have possessed, or for any services which in any department they have rendered to their fellow-men; but when we speak of their relation to God, and of their eternal destiny, we must take care that our views be regulated by God's own revealed will, and not by merely personal feelings or worldly influences; and that we do not under-estimate the importance and necessity, in its bearing upon men's eternal welfare, of that knowledge of Himself, of His character, and His plans, which He has been pleased to communicate to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The other error about free will seems more serious; but it is not very easy to say what were the precise views of Justin regarding it. It appears chiefly in exposing the fatalism of some of the Gnostic sects, and in defending the doctrine that God had foretold the future good and bad actions of men, from the charge of overthrowing men's responsibility. And although, in defending what all admit to be in substance true upon these points, he makes some statements about the freedom of the will and the grounds of human responsibility, which, when viewed in the light of modern controversies, Calvinists generally would disapprove of, it is not very certain that he had deliberately adopted any view that was fundamentally erroneous upon these difficult subjects. On the contrary, there is good reason to believe that he continued to hold in substance the scheme of doctrine clearly taught in the writings of the apostles, and universally assumed or asserted in those of the apostolical fathers; though it is not to be denied that, both in regard to this subject of free will, and in regard to the superior sanctity of a life of celibacy, we find in him some traces of that deviation from scriptural soundness which continued from this time to increase and extend, and exerted subsequently so injurious an influence both on the doctrine and practice of religion. And, of course, the early occurrence of such errors is fitted to show us, that there are no uninspired men, however ancient, however favourable their position may have been, and however deserving they may be of respect and esteem, whom we should follow as guides or

oracles.

One of the most interesting and important passages in the works of Justin, is that in which he gives a somewhat detailed account of the ordinary mode of conducting the public worship of the church in his time; an account which proves the non-existence of a liturgy at that period, and presents a picture of Christian worship very different in its simplicity from that which has been usually exhibited by Popish and Prelatic churches.

In regard to the doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ, it has been proved that Justin, though, in common with almost all the fathers who flourished before the great Arian controversy in the fourth century, he has made use of some expressions which are very liable to be misunderstood, and stand in need of a favourable interpretation, held in substance the common orthodox doctrine upon this subject; and that he held it upon the authority of Scripture, as a doctrine revealed by God in His word, though he has introduced some Platonic phraseology, and indulged in some unwarranted speculations in trying to explain and illustrate it. Satisfactory evidence has also been produced from the works of Justin, to prove that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was known and generally received in the church before he undertook the defence of Christianity, and that this fact was well known to the pagans, who were accustomed to adduce it as a charge against Christians, that they believed that a man who had been crucified was God.

I may mention, before leaving Justin, as a specimen of the difficulty of understanding precisely what was the doctrine of the fathers, and the real import of their statements, that near the end of his first apology there is a short passage about the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, which the Papists have adduced as a proof that he held the doctrine of transubstantiation, —the Lutherans, as a proof that he held the doctrine of consubstantiation, —and the generality of Protestants, as a proof that he held neither the one nor the other. An examination of the passage is sufficient, I think, to prove that there is room for an honest difference of opinion as to what Justin's doctrine upon the point really was; and that it is not very easy to say precisely what he held regarding it. -There is no difficulty, indeed, in establishing, notwithstanding the obscurity of this passage, the general

position, that neither transubstantiation nor consubstantiation was known in the church till long after Justin's time; but the passage certainly affords evidence of what is unquestionably true, viz., that the fathers began very early to talk about the subject of the sacraments in an exalted, mysterious, and unintelligible style, which was very far removed from the simplicity of Scripture, and which issued at length in that monstrous system of absurd and impious extravagance in regard to these ordinances which soon overspread the church, which contributed so largely to the destruction of true religion, and which is still exerting in many quarters its baneful influence.

II. Irenaeus

Irenaeus is the next author of eminence whose works have come down to us. He was a disciple of Polycarp, came from the East, settled in France, and became Bishop of Lyons; for in his time there was some distinction between bishops and presbyters, though it was very unlike the modern one, and though he continues, as I formerly had occasion to mention, to use the words in a great measure indiscriminately. He lived till the very end of the second or the beginning of the third century. We have already had occasion to mention that his principal work, which has come down to us, is a full account and confutation of the heresies that had been broached since the introduction of Christianity; and its real value must in a great measure depend upon the importance of acquiring a knowledge of these heresies— a topic which we have already endeavoured to explain. In confuting these heresies, however, Irenaeus has made a most abundant use of Scripture; and indeed it has been calculated, that he has quoted or referred to about nine hundred texts, and his work thus forms an important link in the chain of evidence for the authenticity and integrity of the canonical books. It is true, however, of him, as of the rest, that his writings afford us very little assistance in ascertaining and establishing the true meaning of any portion of Scripture, except, as formerly explained, indirectly, through the information they afford as to the precise nature of the heresies to which the apostles referred; and that they contain abundant proof that he could not by any means be safely followed as an expositor of Scripture. Although there are no plausible

grounds for charging Irenaeus with being led into error by a love of philosophical speculation, or by a predilection for heathen literature, as has been alleged in regard to Justin Martyr; and although there is no reason to doubt that he was a man of true piety, yet he seems to have deviated farther from scriptural doctrine, and to have embraced a larger number of erroneous opinions than Justin did; thus illustrating the almost regularly progressive corruption of the church. He was, like Justin, a believer in the doctrine of the Trinity, though, like him too, he has made some statements which have afforded a handle to the Arians. He has, more explicitly than Justin, asserted the doctrine of free will in what would now be called an Arminian or Pelagian sense; while he has also very explicitly contradicted himself upon this subject— i.e., he has laid down scriptural or evangelical principles which oppose it— thus apparently indicating that the great principles of evangelical truth which the inspired apostles taught, were still generally retained in the church, though they were beginning to be somewhat obscured and corrupted; and that the corruption was coming in at that point, or in connection with that topic, which has usually furnished one of the most ready and plausible handles to men whose perception of divine things was weak and feeble, and who have, in consequence, been the great corrupters of scriptural doctrine— viz., the alleged natural power of man, as he is, to do the will of God. Irenaeus, like Justin, indulged in some unwarranted speculations about angels, and the state of the souls of men after death; and he has put forth some unintelligible absurdities in the way of comparing Eve, the mother of us all, with Mary, the mother of our Lord, which have afforded to Papists a plausible ground for alleging that he ascribed to Mary a share in the salvation of sinners, and in consequence thought her entitled to a measure of honour and worship which the Scripture certainly does not sanction.

Irenaeus cannot be said, any more than any of the fathers who preceded him, to have conveyed to us any valuable information as to what the apostles taught or ordained, in addition to what is taught or ordained in the canonical Scriptures. He does indeed profess, upon several occasions, to communicate to us some information which he had received by oral tradition from the apostles; but it so happens providentially, that in the instances in which he does this most explicitly and most confidently, he

alleges in one case what clearly contradicts Scripture, and in another what is too absurd to be believed upon almost any testimony. Some Gnostics had asserted that Christ's public ministry lasted only one year. Irenaeus is answering this, and after adducing many foolish reasons to prove a priori that Christ must have lived longer on earth than thirty years, —such as that He came ' to save men of all ages, and must therefore have passed through old age as well as childhood, —distinctly avers that Christ lived on earth till He was nearly fifty years of age, and refers, in proof of this, first to the gospel, and then to the testimony of all the elders who conversed with John, the disciple of our Lord, —and who declared that John told them this; and he adds, that these men had not only seen John, but also others of the apostles, who had told them the same thing. Notwithstanding this somewhat imposing array of hearsay evidence, I am not aware that any of the more respectable worshippers of tradition has adopted Irenaeus' opinion as to the duration of our Saviour's sojourn on earth, which the gospel history so clearly refutes.

In the other case, he gives a very childish and ridiculous description of the abundance of luxuries, and of the fertility of the soil, especially in producing grapes and wine, to be enjoyed in the days of the millennium, —a description which he alleges had been handed down from the mouth of our Lord Himself.

Of course no one now believes that our Lord or His apostles ever said what Irenaeus ascribed to them on this subject; yet he evidently believed that they did. Irenaeus was a man quite equal to the generality of the fathers of the first three centuries in point of good principle and good sense; and these facts therefore show, not only how little reliance is to be placed upon any allegations of theirs as to the transmission of doctrines or appointments of the apostles by oral tradition, but also, more generally, how unsafe and uncertain a medium of transmission oral tradition is.

The same lesson is taught us very clearly and impressively by the circumstances connected with a discussion which broke out more than once in the course of the second century, in which Irenaeus was concerned, and which may be said to have been the first controversy which agitated the church. I refer to the well-known dispute as to the day

on which Easter should be kept, in which, on both sides, there was an appeal to the authority of the apostles conveyed by tradition. We find in the book of the Acts plain proofs that the apostles, and the Jewish converts generally, along with other Jewish rites, observed the passover, which is translated (Acts xii. 4) unfaithfully Easter. The keeping of the passover as such, does not seem to have continued after the destruction of Jerusalem, except by the Judaizing sects, the Ebionites and the Nazarenes; but instead of it, as a sort of substitute for it, there seems to have been gradually introduced the practice of commemorating the event of the institution of the Lord's Supper, —the original institution of this ordinance being identical in point of time with our Lord's last observance of the passover, and the ordinance itself having, in the Christian church, a place and a purpose analogous to those of the passover in the Jewish church. This again seems to have led to the commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection, the great direct subject of the apostolic testimony; and then the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper, identical in point of time with the Jewish passover, in the keeping of which the whole of these days of commemoration manifestly originated, seems to have been transferred to the day of His death, which was still regarded as the passover. It has always been, and indeed still is, a subject of controversial discussion, whether the day on which our Saviour kept the passover and instituted the Lord's Supper, or the following day, on which He was crucified, was the right legal day for observing the passover on that occasion; in other words, whether the Thursday or the Friday of that week was the 14th day of the first month. Many have contended that our Lord, on that occasion, anticipated by one day the ordinary time for observing it; and that the Friday, the day of His crucifixion, was that on which, according to the law, it ought to have been observed.

At any rate, the 14th of the first month was that on which, in the primitive church, first the Jewish passover as such, then, as coming in its place, the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and afterwards the commemoration of His death, was celebrated; and then, of course, the anniversary of His resurrection would fall to be celebrated on the third day thereafter. We find that, about the middle of the second century, a difference obtained in the practice of different churches as to the day on which the commemoration of the resurrection should be celebrated, and

that a dispute arose concerning it. From the very imperfect notices which we have of this affair, there is some difficulty in determining precisely what were the points involved in the discussion; and Mosheim has investigated this topic very fully and minutely.

But the main point of dispute was this, whether the anniversary of our Saviour's death and resurrection should be celebrated upon the 14th day of the first month, and the third day thereafter respectively, on whatever day of the week these might fall, — or should be celebrated upon the Friday and the following Lord's day, whatever day of the month they might fall upon. The churches in Asia generally adopted the former rule, and the churches of the West the latter. Thus stood matters about the middle of the second century, when some discussion arose concerning the accuracy of the different practices. About that time, Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, came to Rome and discussed the matter with Anicetus, bishop of that city. It could scarcely be alleged that there was anything in Scripture to warrant the observance of such anniversary days in the Christian church, or to determine the time of their observance; and the appeal accordingly was to the alleged practice of the apostles, —the Asiatics claiming in support of their rule the practice of the apostles John and Philip, and the Western churches that of Peter and Paul. Polycarp and Anicetus could not come to an agreement upon the question; but as there was still a large measure of brotherly love and forbearance among the churches, and no such sense as afterwards obtained of the importance and necessity of perfect uniformity in all outward rites and ceremonies; and as Anicetus, though Bishop of Rome, had no more idea that he was entitled to rule the universal church than Peter had that this prerogative was vested in him, they separated on friendly terms after uniting together in celebrating the Lord's Supper, at which Polycarp presided.

The diversity of practice continued, and about the end of the century gave rise to another dispute, involving the same principles and the same appeals to apostolic practice, but conducted with greater vehemence. Victor, Bishop of Rome, seems to have insisted upon the Eastern churches changing their practice, and agreeing to commemorate Christ's resurrection upon the Lord's day, on whatever day of the month it might fall; and, of course, regulating the keeping of any other days observed

about that season of the year by the fixing of what was afterwards called Easter Sunday instead of the 14th day of the month. The Asiatic churches disregarded his interference; and Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, wrote a letter to him in their name, part of which is preserved in Eusebius, in which, after appealing to the practice of the apostles John and Philip, and of the bishops who had succeeded them, he bases their refusal to adopt the Western practice upon no less sacred a principle than the duty of obeying God rather than men. Victor, who seems to have exhibited in embryo the spirit of pride and usurpation which ultimately produced the full-blown Papacy, —though he did not venture to put forth a claim to supremacy over the church, —issued, in consequence, a sentence of excommunication against the Eastern churches; and here it was that Irenaeus became connected with the controversy. Though an Asiatic by birth, and a disciple of Polycarp, he agreed with the Western church, in which he was now settled, about the celebration of Easter; but he wholly disapproved of the arbitrary and insolent conduct of Victor, and addressed to him a letter of earnest remonstrance upon the subject, which is also preserved, and is one of the most interesting documents that have come down to us bearing upon the history of the second century. It is from this letter that we learn of Polycarp's visit to Rome, and of the fraternal intercourse between him and Anicetus notwithstanding their difference of opinion and practice upon the subject; and the principal object of the letter is to urge Victor to follow the example of forbearance upon this point which his predecessors had set him. As it is certain that Victor's sentence of excommunication was wholly disregarded by the Asiatic churches and by the church in general, —as it was never cancelled, —and as yet the ecclesiastical standing of the Asiatic bishops and their successors was not in the least affected by it, — some Roman Catholic writers, seeing the inauspicious bearing of this fact upon the allegation that the Bishops of Rome have always been recognised as the vicars of Christ and the sources and centres of catholic unity, have maintained that Victor merely threatened to excommunicate the Eastern churches, but did not carry his threat into execution.

This question is not altogether free from difficulty, and there are both Protestant and Popish writers who have defended the opposite sides. Bellarmine assumes it as incontrovertible, that Victor excommunicated

the Asiatic churches, and adduces it as a proof of the then recognised right of the Bishop of Rome to exercise supremacy over the whole church; and the same use had been previously made of it by Pope Nicholas I., who flourished in the ninth century, and dealt largely in excommunications. But later Popish controversialists, shrinking from the difficulty of having no evidence to produce that the supposed sentence of excommunication was either regarded as valid at the time, or was cancelled afterwards, have thought it more expedient, even with the necessity of throwing Pope Nicholas overboard, to maintain, as is done boldly and learnedly by Natalis Alexander, that Victor merely threatened to excommunicate, but did not issue the sentence. Protestants have no temptation to deal unfairly by the historical evidence upon this point; for, whether the sentence of excommunication was issued or not, the history of this whole matter affords abundant proof that the idea that the Bishop of Rome was the vicar of Christ, or that it was necessary to be in communion with him in order to be in communion with the catholic church, was then wholly unknown. But I have no doubt that there is quite sufficient evidence in statements upon the subject found in Eusebius, Socrates, Nicephorus, and Epiphanius, that Victor did excommunicate the Asiatic churches, while the only evidence on the other side is the notorious fact, that the sentence was entirely disregarded, and did not take effect; and for a Romanist to found on this as a proof that the excommunication was never issued, is of course a mere *petitio principii*.

The bearing of these proceedings and discussions connected with the time of celebrating Easter, occurring as they did soon after the middle, and again near the end of the second 'century, upon the questions of the reliance that may be placed upon alleged apostolical traditions not recorded in Scripture, and the recognition and exercise of the alleged supremacy of the Pope, is too obvious to need to be pointed out; and it gives to them an importance in the history of the church that bears no proportion to the intrinsic importance of the subject, in itself very insignificant, to which they referred. We are to regard the work, and to notice the design, of God in this, as in all the dispensations of His providence; and we cannot but view these transactions as a great beacon erected near the commencement of the church's history, to warn men, first, that no reliance is to be placed upon any pretended apostolical

traditions, unless they are contained in the canonical Scriptures; and, secondly, that the Bishops of Rome are neither qualified nor entitled to govern the church of Christ. The warning on both points was disregarded; and the consequence was, that the great body of the professing church ultimately made almost entire shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, and became involved in thick darkness and deep degradation.

III. Clemens Alexandrinus

We have seen, in considering Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, that even in the second century there was, besides much very inaccurate interpretation of particular passages of Scripture, some tendency manifested to deviate from the simplicity of scriptural doctrine as taught by the apostles, though not yet carried out to any considerable extent. Since there is as much of this tendency manifested by Irenaeus, who was no philosopher, as by Justin, who was well acquainted with the literature and philosophy of paganism, we cannot trace the incipient corruption of doctrine wholly at least to the influence of philosophical speculation, or indeed to any one specific cause, except what is in some sense the proximate cause of all error and heresy, —viz., the want of due subjection to the authority of God's word, and of due diligence and impartiality in the use of the right means of attaining to a correct knowledge of its meaning.

It was at Alexandria, and through the labours and writings of Clemens Alexandrinus, and of Origen, who successively presided over the catechetical school of that city, that the progress of corruption in the interpretation of Scripture, and in the exposition of the scheme of divine truth, was most extensively promoted through the influence of false philosophy. Alexandria was at this period perhaps the most celebrated school of philosophy in the world; and in consequence of the attention there generally given to philosophical pursuits, and the great number of men of cultivated minds and speculative habits, it seems to have been thought proper, even at an early period in the history of the church, to seek to provide for young men instruction in the doctrines of Christianity of a higher kind, —i.e., of a more literary and philosophical description than was usually furnished in other places;— though there is no sufficient

ground for the tradition that the school was established by Mark the Evangelist. In adopting and carrying out this general idea, there was nothing that could be reasonably objected to. There is certainly no reason why Christians should not be just as well acquainted with literature and philosophy, according to their means and circumstances, as the generality of those around them; and there is no reason why their literary and philosophical knowledge should not exert some influence upon the way in which they expound and defend the truths of revelation. The danger arises only from giving to philosophy a place and influence to which it has no well-founded claim, and especially from employing it in such a way as implies, or leads to, a casting down of the word of God from the place of authority, which it ought ever to occupy. Men who are familiar with philosophical discussions, and who can speculate 372-416, Rose's translation; Gieseler, upon many topics connected with God, and man's duty and destiny, are very apt to think that they have a means of acquiring certain knowledge of these subjects, which is not open to mere readers of the Bible: they are very apt to over-estimate their privileges in this respect, to imagine that they do not need to restrict themselves to the constant application of the same standard as ordinary men; and at length they too often come to place their own speculations in the position of modifying at least, if not superseding, the informations of Scripture. This was what took place at Alexandria in the course of the third century; and this is what, under a variety of aspects, has been exhibited more or less extensively at all times when practical religion was low, and when literature and philosophy were flourishing. Christianity certainly does not discourage men from bringing all the powers of their minds to bear upon what may be called a philosophical examination of all the objects that come under their cognizance, including equally the material universe, and human beings, individually and collectively. The evils which literature and science may have inflicted upon the cause of true religion are to be prevented or cured, not by prohibiting and abandoning literary and philosophical pursuits, but by keeping them in their proper place, and especially by steadily and faithfully applying the great truths that the Bible is the word of God; that all that it contains is true; that it is the only source whence full and certain knowledge concerning God, concerning man's relation to his Maker, and his duty and destiny, can be derived. So long as these truths are held and faithfully acted upon, literature and

philosophy will do no harm to religion; and if it be alleged that an addiction to philosophical pursuits has a tendency to prejudice men against these truths, or to prevent them from fully following them out, even when they professedly admit them, we must deny that this tendency is inherent, and still more, that it is irresistible, and maintain that the temptation (for it is nothing more) may be, and should be, guarded against.

The evils to which we have referred were extensively manifested in the school of Alexandria; and Clement and Origen proved great corrupters of the word of God, and of the system of divine truth, and did permanent and extensive injury to the church of Christ. They themselves imbibed largely the principles of the eclectic or neo-Platonic philosophy, —a combination of the doctrines of Plato with the Oriental theosophy, as it is commonly called; i.e., in other words, they adopted on philosophical grounds views upon many points inconsistent with the doctrines of Scripture, and then sought to accommodate the Scriptures to their preconceived opinions, in place of seeking honestly and impartially for the true meaning of Scripture, and regulating their whole system by that standard. The great problem which the more respectable of the ancient philosophers proposed to themselves was, to show how human nature might be improved and brought to a state of perfection; and this they often did in the way of explaining how a perfect man— a good and wise man— might be formed. Clement took up this idea, and followed it out in its different stages or departments, in the three principal works of his which have come down to our times. He displays, undoubtedly, in these works, a good deal of talent and extensive learning. He has, indeed, presented to us some interesting information upon topics connected with the literature and philosophy of heathen antiquity, which is not now to be learned from any other source; though it may be said with truth that he manifests fully as accurate an acquaintance with profane as with sacred literature. His first work is addressed to the heathen, and is called “Λογος Προτρεπτικος”— a hortatory address; and, being directed to the object of showing that, in order to men being truly wise and good, they must renounce heathenism and embrace Christianity, and that there are quite sufficient grounds why they should do so, it partakes very much of the general character of the apologies written by some of the other fathers of

the second or third centuries. Its principal peculiarity is that, while exposing fully and eloquently the heathen mythology and religious worship, it is occupied to some extent in adducing the testimonies of heathen philosophers in favour of some of the great principles of natural religion, which are also embodied in the Christian revelation. This was very natural in Clement's situation, called as he was to recommend Christianity to men of education, who were versant in the literature and philosophy of heathen antiquity; and there was nothing in itself objectionable about it. There is certainly nothing wrong in noticing the testimonies of ancient philosophers or legislators, so far as they go, in favour of the great principles of natural religion; and it is quite obvious how they may be legitimately applied to good and useful purposes. But there is too much reason to fear that, in Clement's case, it indicated too much of a disposition to make advances towards the adherents of the old religions, and to accommodate Christianity, in some measure, to their views and principles. It is, indeed, when viewed in connection with other parts of Clement's system, something not unlike the germ of the notion which has been advocated by some latitudinarian writers of modern times, who have represented Christianity as little else than a more accurate, complete, and authoritative republication of the law or religion of nature.

His second work is called "Παιδαγωγός," and professes to unfold the instruction necessary for those who have been led to embrace Christianity, but who are still only in the position of catechumens, —only in the course of preparation for the ordinance of baptism; and in this part there comes out very clearly the lamentable deficiency of Clement's system, both in respect to doctrine and duty. He represents Christ as the "Paedagogus,"— the Great Teacher, —but he dwells much more upon the circumstances and manner of His teaching, than upon the matter or substance of it. And while he thus gives a very partial and defective view of Christ's office as a prophet, he almost wholly omits any reference to His offices as a priest and a king. And, thereafter, the greater part of the work is occupied, not with the exposition of truth or doctrine, but with practical directions for the regulation of conduct. The concluding work in the series is entitled "Ζητώματα" and is devoted to the object of bringing out the character of the confirmed believer— the γνωστικός, or wise man,

as Clement calls him; and here, too, as in the former work, we have to notice the deplorable deficiency of Clement's system, both of doctrine and duty. His scheme of doctrine is very meagre and latitudinarian, and his system of morality is characterized by very considerable errors and extravagances; and while great prominence is given to many points that are intrinsically insignificant and merely external, there is comparatively little said about those great essential internal principles of right action, on which the inspired writers principally insist. In regard to doctrine, there is no reason to suspect Clement of unsoundness upon the subject of the Trinity; but then it must be remembered that that truth has been always held in soundness so far as intellectual profession goes, though retained in unrighteousness so far as its proper practical application is concerned, even in the apostate Church of Rome; and that, therefore, however fundamentally important it is in itself, and however well adapted to contribute in its practical applications to the spiritual nourishment and growth in grace of the most advanced believer, a profession of it is no very stringent test of men's proficiency either in the faith or in the experience of divine truth.

The other peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the gospel seem to have been less clearly and firmly held by Clement than by Justin and Irenaeus; and the traces of deviation from sound doctrine which we had occasion to notice in them are somewhat more fully developed in him. He, more unequivocally than they, asserts the doctrine of free will in a sense which Calvinists in general would condemn. It cannot indeed be said that he denies or overturns the doctrines of grace; and he asserts explicitly, in opposition to some, heretics of the period, that faith is not natural — i.e., is not the product of the unaided efforts of men's natural powers— but is something supernatural and divine. Still it seems pretty plain that he had very inadequate views of what was necessary, and of what has been and is done on God's part, in order to the justification and sanctification of sinners; and ascribed to men's own powers a greater amount of influence in acquiring saving knowledge, and attaining to wisdom and righteousness, — in becoming first πιστοί, and then γνωστικοί, — than either Scripture or experience sanctions. Nay, his views upon this subject were so erroneous and confused, that, on one occasion he goes so far as to say, that Christ assumed human nature, and came into the world, in

order to show men that their own powers were sufficient to obey the will of God,— a statement very much resembling the Socinianism or latitudinarianism of modern times, and which scarcely admits of any such explanation or modification as to consist with the possibility of believing that its author rightly understood and apprehended the fundamental principles of the gospel. It is but too evident that Clement, in his anxiety to show to the cultivated and literary youth of Alexandria how, by embracing Christianity, they might become wise and good, accommodated to their preconceived notions the system which he enforced upon them, and represented it as leaving to themselves a larger share of the capacity of producing the desired result than was at all consistent with the reality of the case, as represented to us in Scripture.

Besides this tendency to leave out of view the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and to exalt the natural powers and capacities of man in virtual opposition at least to the grace of the gospel, another evil result that flowed from Clement's addiction to philosophical pursuits, and his desire to conciliate men of a similar character, was, that he applied to Christianity the principle or device, common among the old philosophers, of an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine, —the one adapted to beginners, and the other to the more advanced or initiated; and that, in correspondence with this, he advocated the existence of a higher and lower standard of duty as well as knowledge, —the lower binding upon all, and the higher to be applied only to some, and, of course, implying no ordinary share of merit on the part of those who attained it. Both these ideas are substantially implied in the distinction which Clement elaborates between πίστις, and γνῶσις. He seems to have been the first among the Christian teachers who gave any countenance to these distinctions, and must therefore be regarded as, to a large extent, responsible for the mischief wrought by them upon the mode in which both doctrine and duty were afterwards inculcated in the church. An allegorizing perversion of Scripture had been practised before this time by Christian writers; but to Clement attaches the responsibility of not only practising it, but of laying it down formally and explicitly, as a right and proper rule for the interpretation of Scripture.

Clement may be regarded as the earliest writer who has discussed in

detail the subject of Christian morality; for the epistle to Zenas and Serenus, ascribed to Justin Martyr, is of somewhat dubious origin, though its general character corresponds well enough with the interval between Clement and the apostolical fathers, i.e., with the period at which Justin lived. We have not, in any of the writings of the apostolic fathers, anything like a scheme or system of moral duty. We find in their writings nothing in this department but an earnest and affectionate pressing of the plain precepts of Scripture. Matters, however, were changed, and changed for the worse, before the end of the second century, when Clement wrote. His object and plan naturally led him to describe pretty fully the system of Christian morality, and to enter into the details of ordinary duty; and it is melancholy to notice what a grievous declension there is from the scriptural mode of treating of this subject. He exhibits plain traces of the operation at once of what have been called the ascetic and the mystic systems of morality. On the one hand, he prohibits indulgences which the Scriptures do not condemn (as second marriages); and, on the other hand, he releases men from obligations which the Scriptures impose, —as, for example, when he denies the necessity for regular times and seasons for prayer and religious exercises, upon the ground that men ought always to cultivate a devotional spirit. He maintains, in flat contradiction to Scripture, that Christ was a mere Stoic, who was wholly exempted from, or raised above, all the ordinary feelings and affections of the human heart, and under this fictitious aspect holds Him up as a model for Christians to imitate. One of the worst features of his system of morality is, that his instructions manifest a great neglect of the state of the heart and the affections, and are to a large extent composed of minute rules and directions about external and very trivial things. As he enters with much minuteness of detail into the subjects of eating, drinking, furniture, feasts, perfumes, chaplets, baths, female ornaments, etc., he furnishes some curious enough information about the domestic manners and customs of the period when he lived, while he does not convey a very high idea of the state of morality among the professing Christians of that age and country; and sets before us little or nothing that is at all fitted to promote the cause of genuine Christian holiness of heart and life.

Such was the most eminent and influential Christian teacher of the end of

the second, and beginning of the third, century, whose works have come down to us; and when we see what they contain, and what are their general character and tendency, we cannot but be impressed with the conviction that the church had already greatly degenerated, both in doctrine and in character. It is not surprising, and indeed rather creditable to the Church of Rome, that it has been made a matter of discussion among some of her writers whether Clement ever was canonized, i.e., whether he be legally entitled to the designation of a saint, and should in consequence be invoked and supplicated to intercede with God on our behalf. It is rather creditable that doubts should have been entertained upon this point; though, after all, there are many much worse men, and more heretical writers, in the Romish calendar of saints, than Clement of Alexandria.

IV. Origen

Tertullian, the first of the Latin fathers, would come next in point of time; but it may be better, in the first place, to say a few words about Origen, the pupil of Clement, and his successor as the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria. Origen occupied the first half of the third century; and though he was inferior to none of the fathers in talent and erudition, and rendered some very important services to the cause of Christian literature, yet we fear it must be said of him that he extended and propagated the corruption both of doctrine and morality which Clement had done a good deal to promote, and thus exerted a most injurious influence upon the church. Origen was a most voluminous -writer, and many of his works have come down to us; but there have been great controversies among learned men both as to their genuineness and their integrity. In regard to some of the works which have been ascribed to him, it is not easy to decide whether the evidence for or against their genuineness preponderates. Many of them have come down to us only in a Latin translation; and the translator Ruffinus has candidly informed us that he altered many of Origen's statements, in order to render them more intelligible and less objectionable. Hence it has happened that, both in ancient and modern times, there have been great controversies in the church as to the true opinions of Origen, and the extent of his deviations

from the orthodox faith.

A lengthened controversy took place upon this subject between Jerome and Ruffinus in the end of the fourth century, — Jerome attacking, and Ruffinus defending him; and in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, the question whether Origen was a heretic was discussed in several councils, and the decisions were generally adverse to him. At last he was conclusively pronounced to be a heretic by the fifth general council held at Constantinople in the year 553. The decision was unquestionably a right one, for there can be no reasonable doubt that Origen grievously perverted some of the most important doctrines of the gospel. He was more deeply imbued with the principles of the eclectic or neo-Platonic philosophy than Clement, and applied it more boldly and unscrupulously than his instructor had ventured to do, in many daring speculations about God and the creation of the world, about angels and demons, and about the souls and destinies of men, —very much as if he had thrown off all regard to the authority of Scripture, and thought himself at full liberty to indulge without restraint in his own baseless speculations, even in regard to subjects which are plainly revealed to us. He believed in the eternity of matter, upon the ground that God could not have existed for any period of duration without putting forth the creative energy; thus setting a paltry piece of metaphysical speculation, upon a point of which man can know nothing except what God has been pleased to reveal, in opposition to the plain declarations of what he still professed to regard as the word of God. He believed in the pre-existence of human souls, and taught that they were confined in human bodies as a punishment for sins committed in some previous condition; and he believed in the ultimate salvation of all God's intelligent creatures, devils as well as men. He has spoken sometimes about the Trinity and the person of Christ, in a way that has occasioned considerable difficulty to the defenders of the orthodoxy of the ante-Nicene fathers upon this point. Bishop Bull seems rather disposed to get rid of the necessity of investigating minutely the statements upon this subject contained in many of his other works, and thinks that his real opinion should be taken chiefly from his book against Celsus, because it was written when he was far advanced in life, —because it contains scarcely any of the extravagant and presumptuous speculations in which in his other works he so largely indulged, —and

because it seems to have come down to us with a purer and more uncorrupted text than many of his other writings. And in that very valuable work, —for such it undoubtedly is, —he very plainly asserts the divinity of Christ. It is certain, however, that Origen thought that the divine nature was united only with the soul, and not with the body of Christ; so that there was no proper hypostatical union, as it is commonly called, —no proper assumption by Christ of human nature. This groundless fancy led to his maintenance of what may be regarded as a still more serious and dangerous error, viz., a virtual denial that Christ offered any proper vicarious satisfaction to God, and thus made a real atonement for the sins of men. This, of course, overturns the Gospel of our salvation; and it is a melancholy instance of the extent to which an unwarrantable indulgence in mere philosophical speculations may lead men astray from the path of scriptural truth.

There is, however, another department in Origen's theology to which it may be more necessary to advert, not because it exhibits a more dangerous or deadly error, —for no error can be more dangerous or deadly than a denial of Christ's vicarious atonement, —but because Origen, while he received it in some measure from preceding writers, probably exerted more influence in diffusing it in the church than in propagating any of the other errors which he taught; and because it has enjoyed perhaps a wider diffusion in the church than any of them. We refer to what was afterwards called the Pelagian heresy. Jerome, who exerted himself so zealously and elaborately in the end of the fourth century to establish the heterodoxy of Origen in opposition to Ruffinus, has charged him with teaching the doctrines afterwards promulgated by Pelagius and his followers; and the charge, unlike some of Jerome's furious invectives, seems to rest upon a solid foundation. Origen, indeed, cannot be said to have taught the Pelagian system in expansion or in detail, —to have brought it out fully, and illustrated the relations or connections of its different parts; and it is not by any means certain that he would have subscribed to the doctrines of Pelagius, as it is not difficult to produce from his writings passages which have a more evangelical aspect, and are more accordant with the doctrines of grace. But it is certain that he has laid down principles which naturally, and by fair consequence, lead to the establishment of the Pelagian heresy, and

consequently to the overthrow of the scheme of gospel grace; and that he has done so more explicitly than any preceding Christian writer. His doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, condemned to dwell in human bodies as a punishment for sins committed in a previous state, is inconsistent with any right scriptural apprehension of the doctrine of original sin; and erroneous and defective views of the doctrine of original sin form the basis and foundation of Pelagianism. Besides, he has asserted the freedom of the human will, in the sense in which it has been commonly maintained by Pelagians, much more explicitly than Justin, Irenaeus, or even Clement; and his case is different from theirs with regard to this point, in this important particular, that he has made statements which enable us to see that what he has said about divine agency and divine grace, is not to be understood in such a sense as to favour what we believe to be the scriptural view upon this point, or as really implying more than Pelagians have commonly admitted. Pelagians can speak much and strongly about the universality and efficacy of God's agency, and about our dependence upon Him; and thus, when anything takes place or is effected which is regarded as a subject of joy or thanksgiving, they may ascribe it to the grace, or favour, or kindness of God. But it turns out, upon a careful investigation, that Pelagians, at least the more gross and open heretics among them, mean by this agency and grace of God, even when applied to spiritual results, effected upon men and by men, —to the renovation of their natures and the growing holiness of their hearts and lives, —nothing different in substance from what they understand by it when applied to the production of the ordinary events of Providence, by which the happiness of men is affected, or to the common actions of men produced by the ordinary operation of their faculties. They admit, of course, since they do not make a profession of atheism, that God's agency is in some way interposed in regard to all the actions of men as His creatures; that men are dependent upon this agency in all their bodily actions, and in all their mental operations; and are to look to Him as their sustainer, governor, and benefactor. But then they usually admit, or at least they may be driven to admit, that they do not hold that there is any difference in kind between the agency and grace of God as manifested in the production of their ordinary actions, and as manifested in the production of those which are spiritually good. In short, —for this is not an occasion for entering into detail upon the subject, —they virtually

refuse to make any distinction between the ordinary agency of God, viewed simply as the Creator and Governor of the world, in the production of all men's actions, and that special and peculiar agency in the production of actions spiritually good, which is ascribed in Scripture more immediately to the agency of the third person of the Godhead, in bringing men to Christ, and in preparing them for heaven.

We do not say that, where this distinction is not openly denied, there is no Pelagianism, —for many Pelagians, or at least semi-Pelagians, as they have been called, have involved their representations upon this subject in considerable obscurity by subtle discussions, —but we do say that there is undoubted and palpable Pelagianism wherever men give plain indications that this important distinction with respect to the divine agency in the production of men's actions is denied or disregarded. And this is what we fear applies to the case of Origen, and warrants us in regarding him as one of the precursors and promoters of the Pelagian heresy; for in commenting upon the declaration of the apostle, that God worketh in us, both to will and to do, of His good pleasure, he very explicitly lays down the principle, that as we have from God the power of moving, and are sustained or upheld by Him in the exercise of it, but determine of ourselves to move in one direction or another, so we have from God the power of willing, and are upheld by Him in the exercise of it, but have from ourselves the power of willing good or of willing evil.

It is not at all surprising, considering the daring and presumptuous character of many of Origen's speculations, and the Pelagian cast of his sentiments, that he should have expressed great doubts, at least concerning God's omnipotence. Pelagian views, indeed, result from, or may be run up to, a virtual denial of the omnipotence and omniscience of God; and thus terminate in practically withdrawing from Him that glory and honour which He claims to Himself, and will not give to another.

V. Tertullian

There are only two other writers among those who flourished in the first three centuries to whom we mean to direct attention; and we do so, both because they exerted a considerable influence upon the state of opinion in

the church, and because they were intimately connected with the principal schisms which broke the outward unity of the church during this early period, and which occasioned the principal controversies that then took place among those who could with any propriety be called Christians, even as to outward profession. I refer to Tertullian and Cyprian, —the one a presbyter, and the other the Bishop of Carthage; and thus connected with what has been called the North African Church.

Tertullian was the earliest of the fathers whose works are written in Latin. He was a man of very fervid and vigorous mind, though his works are commonly written in a very rough, abrupt, and obscure style. He flourished during the first twenty or thirty years of the third century, and was therefore intermediate, in point of time, between Clement of Alexandria on the one side, and Origen and Cyprian on the other. He has been regarded as marking a pretty distinct era in the declension of the purity of evangelical doctrine and evangelical feeling in the early church. Neander says of him, that he "stands on the boundary between two different epochs in the development of the Church." The leading characteristics of the system or state of things which Tertullian's works develop, and which he may be said to represent, as he no doubt did much to promote it, are, —first, that it does not, like that of the Alexandrian fathers, indicate the corrupting influence of philosophical speculations; and secondly, that notwithstanding this, it just as fully exhibits defective and erroneous apprehensions of the peculiar principles of the gospel; vehemently inculcates a morose, ascetic, and overstrained morality; and, both in regard to morality and religious worship, it manifests a most exaggerated sense of the importance of mere external things. With respect to Tertullian, as with respect to most of the fathers, there are some difficult and perplexing questions to be settled about the genuineness of some of the numerous and multifarious works which have been ascribed to him; and there is this additional peculiarity in his case, that when any attempt is made to estimate the value of his authority, attention must be given to the question, in some instances not easily decided, whether the particular treatise under consideration was written before or after he left the orthodox church, and joined the sect of the Montanists.

With regard to the views of Tertullian upon theological subjects, as collected from the works generally understood to have been written before he became a Montanist, the great general truth is, that he gives less prominence than any preceding writer to the peculiar principles of evangelical truth, and that he teaches some things rather more explicitly opposed to them. He entertained orthodox opinions, in the main, on the subject of the person of Christ, though he has made one very awkward statement about the eternity of the Son, which has afforded a handle to Arians, and has perplexed their opponents. But in regard to the offices and work of Christ, even about the atonement of Christ as the ground of a sinner's forgiveness, there are scarcely any clear, full, and satisfactory statements to be found in Tertullian's voluminous writings. He has asserted the power of man to do the will of God at least as explicitly, and to all appearance in as unsound a sense, as Clement of Alexandria. And, what is deserving of special attention, he has brought his views in regard to the natural powers of man, and the value and importance of the good works which he is able to perform, and does perform, to bear more explicitly than any preceding writer upon the great subject of the justification of a sinner. Although he has made statements on the subject of the justification of a sinner, which are pretty much in accordance with the general train of scriptural language, he has also made others which are clearly opposed to it. He has asserted the doctrine of justification by works; he has ascribed a meritorious bearing upon the forgiveness of sins to celibacy and almsgiving; and he has attaching to him the discredit of being the first to apply the word satisfaction to men's good deeds in their bearing upon the favour of God and the remission of sins; and though he certainly did not employ it in the modern Popish sense, he may thus be said to have laid the foundations of a mode of teaching— of a system of perverting Scripture— which, in the hands of the Church of Rome, has contributed so fearfully to the destruction of men's souls. He taught what may be called the common absurdities and extravagances of the fathers, in regard to angels, demons, and the souls of men departed. And in regard to this last point, it may be worth while to notice that he mentions and recommends— and he is the first Christian writer who does so— prayers for the dead, and offerings to them on the anniversaries of their deaths. He does not, indeed, connect these prayers and offerings, as the Papists do, with the doctrine of purgatory; and it must be admitted that

there have been many who advocated the lawfulness of praying for the dead, who did not either defend or practise it in the way, or upon the grounds, set forth by the Church of Rome. Still the practice in any form involves a clear deviation from the simplicity of Scripture, and is an indication of a state of mind unchastened and superstitious, and likely, — nay certain, as experience proves, — to lead to many other corruptions in the worship of God.

These are the chief things worth noticing in the theological views of Tertullian, so far as he may be fairly regarded as representing the opinions that then generally prevailed in what was called the catholic or orthodox church, as distinguished from the heretics or sectaries. Tertullian, however, ultimately joined the sect or schism of the Montanists, and we have now to advert briefly to their principles. Montanus flourished in Phrygia, soon after the middle of the second century; and though he did not deviate materially from the general system of doctrine usually taught by the church, he yet put forth such notions, and adopted such a course of procedure, as to have been justly separated from its communion. His position seems to have been in some measure the result of the reaction occasioned by the incipient attempt to give a more literary and philosophical character to the exposition of Christian subjects. Montanus and his followers professed to take the more spiritual views upon all topics, and even pretended to enjoy the supernatural and miraculous influences of the Holy Ghost. The opinions entertained, and the practices adopted, by Montanus and his followers, are fully stated in Mosheim. I direct attention to them as constituting an interesting feature in the history of the early church, more especially as being the first distinct manifestation of a fanatical spirit among persons who did not deviate materially from the standard of orthodoxy in doctrine, and many of whom, there is reason to think, were possessed of genuine piety. In this point of view, the history of Montanism is interesting, and is fitted to afford us some useful lessons. There is one circumstance which is fitted to make it peculiarly interesting to us, and it is this— that while there have been many subsequent instances, in the history of the church, of much folly and fanaticism manifested by persons who had fair claims to be regarded as possessed of piety, we have seen, in our own day, and in our own country, perhaps a fuller and more complete

reproduction of all the leading features of Montanism, than the church has ever before witnessed.

I do not recollect anything in the history of the church so like Montanism in all its leading features as one remarkable system which we have seen rise, decline, and in a great measure fall, in our own day, though it has not had any distinct or specific name attached to it. In both cases there was, along with a professed subjection to Scripture, and an attempt to defend themselves by its statements, a claim to supernatural and miraculous communications of the Spirit, and a large measure of practical reliance upon these pretended communications for the warrant and sanction of their notions and practices. In both there was the same great and offensive prominence of women as the chief possessors and exhibitors of supernatural endowments, and the same perversions of the same passages of Scripture to countenance these pretensions. In both there was the same assumption of superior knowledge and piety, the same compassionate contempt for those who did not embrace their views and join their party, and the same ferocious denunciations of men who actively and openly opposed their pretensions, as the enemies of God, and the despisers of the Holy Ghost; and the same tone of predicting judgments upon the community, because it rejected their claims. And, as if to complete the parallel, we find that as ancient Montanism, with all its follies and extravagances, received the countenance and support of Tertullian, who, though a man of powerful and vigorous mind, frequently appeals with all seriousness and reverence to the visions and revelations of gifted sisters, so the Montanism of our own day received the countenance and support of one noble-minded and highly-gifted man, who might otherwise have rendered important and permanent services to the church of Christ, but whose history now stands out as a beacon to warn men from the rocks on which he struck. These modern exhibitions of fanatical folly, and unwarranted pretensions to supernatural communications, would scarcely have excited so much surprise, or produced so great a sensation, as they did in this country in recent times, if men had been better acquainted with the history of the church, and with previous exhibitions of a similar kind; especially if they had been familiar with the history of ancient Montanism.

Montanism lasted as a distinct, but very obscure and insignificant, sect in Phrygia for two or three hundred years, though it exerted no influence upon the general condition of the church. The pretensions to the miraculous communications of the Spirit, indeed, soon ceased, —the experience of ancient, concurring with that of modern, times, in proving that such pretensions are very short-lived, that they are not easily supported, and uniformly disappear with the decay of the first blaze of fanaticism in which they have originated. The chief purpose to which the ancient Montanists applied their pretended communications of the Holy Spirit was, not the inculcation of new doctrines, but the improvement and elevation of the standard of morality, which they alleged that Christ and His apostles had left in an imperfect state. The chief improvements introduced by the Montanists into the moral system of Christianity were these: they made absolute the prohibition of second marriages, which were disapproved of, indeed, as we have seen, by other writers unconnected with that sect; they imposed a variety of fasts as imperatively binding at stated seasons; repealed the permission, or rather command, which Christ had given, to flee from persecution; and maintained the unlawfulness of absolving, or readmitting to the communion of the church, men who had once fallen into gross sins.

The last of these notions was brought out more fully by Novatian, about the middle of the third century, and made the ground of a schism. The way in which the errors of the Montanists about the imperative obligation of fasting were received in the church fully proves that up till that time it had been left free, as the Scripture leaves it, to be practised by individuals according to their own judgment and discretion. And this consideration affords a conclusive objection against the apostolicity of the laws about fasting, which are now, in the Church of Rome, embodied among what are called the commandments of the church, and which are made binding upon all her subjects, under pain of mortal sin.

VI. Cyprian

Cyprian became Bishop of Carthage about the middle of the third century, and suffered martyrdom in the persecution of the Emperor

Valerian, 260. He was a great reader and admirer of Tertullian, but he was a man of a much more amiable and beautiful character, as well as a much more pleasing and interesting writer,' than his master, as he used to call him. Cyprian is altogether one of the finest characters we meet with in the history of the early church; and his letters may still be read with profit, both by private Christians prosecuting the work of sanctification in their own souls, and by ministers of the gospel desiring to cherish the spirit in which their arduous and often very difficult and trying work ought to be carried on. Milner gives a very full and interesting account of Cyprian, and some edifying and impressive extracts from his letters, all well worthy of perusal; and he subjoins to all this a very full, elaborate, and, in the main, just and judicious comparison between him and his great cotemporary, Origen. Cyprian seems to have taken his views of divine truth somewhat more purely and simply from the Scriptures than many of the early writers; to have had less tendency than many of them to mix up scriptural truth with philosophical speculations, or to invent mere fancies of his own without any scriptural warrant; and to have had somewhat more of at least the spirit of the gospel. He was, indeed, far from being free from error; for while he ascribes the conversion of sinners, and the remission of all sins previous to conversion, to the grace of God through Christ, he does talk as if he thought that their subsequent sins might be washed away by penitence, almsgiving, and other good works. Neither can it be denied that, with all his personal and ministerial excellences, he did contribute to the propagation of unsound and dangerous errors upon some points. He gave some countenance to certain honours being paid to martyrs and confessors, which led at length, though not in his time, to their being invoked and worshipped. He was a zealous inculcator of obedience to ecclesiastical authorities, and is usually regarded as having done something to elevate the standard of episcopal domination, though even the Cyprianic bishop was very different from the modern one; and he advocated some notions about the absolute necessity and ordinary effects of baptism, which tended to corrupt the doctrine of the sacraments, and to accelerate the progress of superstition.

The works of Cyprian are the great battle-field of the Prelatic controversy, so far as the testimony of the first three centuries is concerned; and there

are several important works upon both sides of this controversy, whose very titles are taken from Cyprian's name: as, for example, on the Prelatic side, Bishop Sage's "Principles of the Cyprianic Age," and, a much larger and more important work, his Vindications of them; and, on the Presbyterian side, Principal Rule's "Cyprianic Bishop Examined," and a more valuable work, Jameson's "Cyprianus Isotimus," both of them written in answer to Sage. The principal controversies in which Cyprian himself was engaged, —the principal, indeed, which agitated the church in his time, —were, first, the schism which Novatian made in the church of Rome, in which Cyprian strenuously supported the Roman bishop Cornelius; and the other about rebaptizing those who had been baptized by heretics, in which he came into open collision with Stephen, one of Cornelius' successors. It is very certain, from a variety of statements in Cyprian's works, that even before the middle of, the third century, very many had joined the church who were not really believers in Jesus Christ, and that it contained not a few whose outward conduct even was far from adorning the profession they made. Accordingly, in the persecution under the Emperor Decius, a great many professing Christians apostatized from the faith, and offered sacrifice to heathen idols. After the persecution ceased, and these persons— the lapsed, as they were called— asked readmission into the church, great difficulties arose as to the way in which their case should be disposed of. Cyprian, and the church in general, were inclined to receive them, provided they made a credible profession of penitence, and submitted to the ordinary penitential discipline. The number of the lapsed, however, was so great, that it was not easy to enforce these regulations. A device was fallen upon, which is curious, as indicating the gross ignorance and inconsideration which then prevailed, and the formal and superstitious spirit that was brought to bear upon ecclesiastical arrangements. Men who had suffered something in the persecution without lapsing, and were in consequence called confessors, were applied to by the lapsed to ask for them readmission into the church, without submitting to public penance. Many of these confessors— under the influence, there is reason to fear, of vanity and self-conceit— complied with these requests; and, as a compliment to these confessors, very many of the impenitent lapsed were readmitted into communion. The absurdity of this is too gross to need any exposure, and its prevalence affords a very unfavourable indication of the internal

state of the church. Cyprian opposed this device, and though in some respects he gave undue and unwarranted honour to martyrs, he severely censured these confessors for this gross and senseless abuse of the respect that was entertained for them.

This practice, however, was extensively acted upon in the church; and it seems to have driven Novatian, who was one of the presbyters of the church of Rome, into the opposite extreme, and led him to maintain, as the Montanists had done, that the lapsed, and other persons who had been guilty of heinous crimes, should be for ever excluded from church communion. They did not deny that they might be forgiven by God, but they thought they ought never to be forgiven by the church, —a notion manifesting great ignorance of the church's duty and functions, but yet based apparently upon a perversion of sounder views than then generally obtained of the elements of which the church ought to be composed. Novatian and his supporters, however, went further than this; and, by a process of exaggeration and extravagance which has been often similarly exemplified since his time, he contended, not only that the church ought for ever to exclude the lapsed from her communion, but also, moreover, that the church which admitted the lapsed, even upon a credible profession of penitence, became thereby so polluted, that her communion ought to be renounced. Accordingly, upon this ground, he himself and his followers renounced the communion of the church of Rome, and set up a rival communion of their own in the same city, of which Novatian became the bishop, or, as the Romanists call him in the style of a later age, the antipope. These views of Novatian had not in themselves any foundation in Scripture, but being opinions which are rather apt to spring up in the minds, and to commend themselves to the feelings, of pious men, when the communion of the visible church has fallen into a condition of laxity and impurity, they received a considerable measure of support; and it is in some respects creditable to the church that they did so. They have at various times been in substance brought forward, though most commonly by men who were more distinguished for pious feeling than for soundness of judgment. Cyprian strenuously opposed Novatian, and by his high character and great influence in the church afforded important assistance to Cornelius in his contest with his rival. This controversy is interesting chiefly as casting some light upon the state of doctrine,

sentiment, and practice in the church at the period at which it took place. Mosheim, in his Commentaries, gives a full view of the grounds taken by the different parties, and of the manner in which they defended them; and Neander, in treating of this subject, has some very beautiful and striking observations on the measures of truth and error exhibited by both parties on the two general subjects that might be said to be involved in the controversy, —viz., first, the principles of penitence; and secondly, what it is that constitutes the idea and essence of a true church.

The other controversy, in which Cyprian took an active part, and in which he came into open collision with Stephen, Bishop of Rome, was upon this point, —whether persons who had been baptized by heretics should, or should not, on applying for admission into any branch of the orthodox or catholic church, be baptized again. The doctrine and practice of the churches upon this point varied. The Asiatic churches in general held that the baptism of heretics was null and void, and that person coming from heretical communions should be baptized, just as if they had never received baptism at all. The church of Rome, and most of the Western churches, took the opposite side, and maintained that the baptism of heretics was valid, and that those who had received it should not be re-baptized. Cyprian took the side of the Eastern churches, and strenuously supported the necessity of re-baptizing those who had been baptized in the communion of the heretical sects. Both parties were of one mind, in holding the general position that baptism should not in any case be repeated; but the question was, whether baptism, administered by heretics, was really baptism, and served the purposes for which baptism was instituted. Stephen appealed to the tradition of the church in opposition to re-baptizing; but Cyprian, in reply to this appeal, gives us a noble testimony to the perfection and supremacy of the Scripture, as the only standard by which the controversy ought to be decided. Even Scripture, however, cannot be said to furnish any very direct or decisive evidence upon the subject. We find on both sides of the question, as then discussed, many very injudicious and unsatisfactory attempts to extract from scriptural statements a direct and precise decision upon the point. Scripture plainly enough sanctions the opinion, that baptism, in order to be valid, i. e., in order to be what ought to be held and reckoned baptism — whatever may be the effects resulting from it— ought to be

administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Beyond this it does not appear that, there are any very clear or satisfactory materials in Scripture for laying down any other definite proposition on the subject except this, —that baptism, in order to be valid, and to be held and received as such, so that it should not be repeated, must be administered in a solemn and orderly way, in a communion which is entitled to be regarded as in some sense a branch of the church of Christ. Those who believe that infant baptism is unlawful, of course, in consistency, regard it as null and void. But, irrespective of this peculiarity, there does not seem to be clear scriptural ground for laying down any other doctrines upon this subject than the two which have been stated; and the second and most important of them, viz., that it must be administered in the communion of a society which, however erroneous in doctrine and corrupt in practice, is yet regarded as a church of Christ, leaves the whole subject on a footing very loose and undetermined. This general principle does not seem to have been formally denied by either party in the controversy; but there were peculiarities in the way in which it was necessary then to apply it which have not commonly existed, and no very clear or definite views then obtained as to what the unity of the church consisted in.

The generality of what were then called the heretical sects might with truth, and without any breach of charity, be denied the character of churches of Christ; so that whatever we may think of the abstract original principle, Cyprian was right in denying that these baptisms, with which they had then actually to do in practice, should be held as valid. If there were any heretical sects at this period subsisting in distinct communions in addition to the Gnostic sects— and upon this point we have no very certain information— they must have consisted of persons who denied the divinity of our Saviour, under the name of Ebionites and Artemonites; and they might be justly denied to be churches of Christ. It is not very wonderful that Cyprian, in maintaining, in these circumstances, the necessity of re-baptizing, was led into some notions upon the unity and catholicity of the church, which are of an unscriptural and dangerous character, and which, though on this occasion employed by him in opposing the Bishop of Rome, have been since very largely employed by that church in the construction and defence of her hierarchic and

exclusive system. It was the fact at this time, that the great body of the churches throughout the world were living, so far as they had the means and opportunities of knowing and holding intercourse with each other, in terms of friendly communion; and that they were, upon the whole, warranted in regarding these heretics who were not united with them as not entitled to the character of churches of Christ. This, which was merely true de facto at the time, was converted by Cyprian into a sort of general principle or doctrine, in unfolding which he brought out, for the first time, with anything like clearness or distinctness, the idea of a catholic church, comprehending all the true branches of the church of Christ, and bound together by a visible and external unity. This was Cyprian's grand contribution to the progress of error and corruption in the church, and the ultimate growth of the Papacy; and we must not allow our esteem for the personal piety and excellence of the man to blind us to the magnitude of the error, —a temptation to which, in this case, Milner has very manifestly yielded.

Cyprian's views about the re-baptizing of heretics did not generally prevail in the church; but, on the contrary, soon lost ground, —chiefly, we believe, from the rise and growth in subsequent generations of other sects which deviated less widely from the general doctrines of the church, and which, therefore, men shrunk from denying to be in any sense churches of Christ. The general feeling and practice of the great body of the church has been decidedly opposed to re-baptizing, both in ancient and in modern times. And no Protestant church has ever denied the validity even of Popish baptism, until this was done recently by the most influential and respectable section of the Presbyterian church in the United States of North America. But though, upon the particular topic of re-baptizing, Cyprian's views have been generally rejected both by Papists and Protestants, the principles he laid down in defending his cause have had a wide and general currency, and have been carried out to applications which he never dreamed of. He may not unfairly be regarded as the author of the idea of the necessity of the whole church, and all its branches, being connected together in an external visible unity, —an idea which forms the very basis of the Papal system. Cyprian, indeed, did not hold the necessity of one visible head of the church, possessed of authority or jurisdiction over all its branches; and nothing can be more

clear and certain, from the way in which the controversy between him and Stephen was conducted, than that neither Cyprian nor anybody else at that time regarded the Bishop of Rome as the sovereign ruler of the church. Cyprian regarded the visible unity of the church as embodied in the unity of the episcopate, or the combination of bishops, each independent in his own sphere, all equal to each other in point of power and authority, and all to be regarded as equal colleagues in the government of the church. These views are stated by Cyprian so fully and so clearly, that they cannot be misunderstood or explained away; and of course they are manifestly inconsistent with the idea that he would ever have sanctioned the modern pretensions of the Papal See.

But it cannot be denied that, in unfolding his idea of visible unity, he has put forth some obscure and unintelligible statements about a certain primacy of rank or order, though not of power or jurisdiction, given to Peter over the other apostles, as the symbol, type, or embodiment of the unity which Christ imposed upon His church; and of these statements the Church of Rome has not been slow to take advantage. It is quite certain, however, that Cyprian held that all bishops had equal power and authority, each being in his own sphere independent of any other bishop; that he denied to the then Bishop of Rome any jurisdiction over the churches of Africa; and that he did not ascribe to Peter any jurisdiction over the other apostles, but merely a certain primacy of rank or order. Nay, it can, we think, be proved that he ascribed to bishops only a similar primacy of rank or order above presbyters, without regarding them as possessed by divine authority of any real, superior, inherent power or jurisdiction. On these grounds, Presbyterians, Prelatists, and Papists have all confidently appealed to Cyprian in support of their respective opinions. All these three parties have something plausible to allege in their behalf from the writings of Cyprian; though the Papists, as usual, have had recourse to forgery and interpolation in order to increase the strength of their evidence. The real and the whole truth upon this point— and it is of considerable importance in the history of church government — I am persuaded may be embodied in the three following propositions: —First, There is enough in the writings of Cyprian to prove that, down even till the middle of the third century, the substantial identity of bishops and presbyters was maintained; and that the idea of the

episcopate being, by divine appointment, a distinct, independent, higher office than the presbyterate, was yet not generally received; Secondly, There is enough to prove that in Cyprian's time, and in a great measure through his exertions, an important distinction between bishops and presbyters, implying some superiority, not well defined, of the one over the other, became prevalent; and Thirdly, That he has laid down, though very vaguely and obscurely, some principles which, when fully carried out and applied, lay p, good foundation for maintaining that there should be one visible head of the whole church, and for vesting some kind or degree of primacy or supremacy in the Bishop of Rome.

VII. The Church of the First Two Centuries

After having given a brief account of the most eminent writers of the first three centuries, and of the theological views which they entertained and inculcated, we proceed now to take a brief general survey of this period, viewed as a whole; especially in its bearing upon those subjects connected with the doctrine, government, and worship of the church, which still give rise to differences of opinion, and to controversial discussions. To some subjects of this description I have already adverted, in considering the leading writers individually, and I need not now enlarge upon them. Enough has been said to show the grounds on which all true Protestants have ever refused to admit that the authority of the fathers should be held to be binding and conclusive, either in the interpretation of particular passages of Scripture, or in the exposition of the scheme of divine truth.

The obligation which all Roman Catholic priests have undertaken, —viz., that they will never interpret Scripture except according to the unanimous consent of the fathers, —is one which cannot be discharged, except by abstaining wholly from interpreting Scripture; for the unanimous consent of the fathers about the interpretation of scriptural statements, except those in the explanation of which all sane men are agreed, has no existence; and every Papist of any learning must be fully aware of this. Many of the patristic interpretations of Scripture are now universally rejected, and this applies to some cases in which their consent was at least as general as in regard to any passages that could be specified. What has been called a catholic consent, —and this must imply at least a general concurrence of the great body of the early writers in the exposition of doctrines, —is just about as difficult to be found as their unanimous consent, in the interpretation of Scripture. Indeed, the unreasonableness of the principle of resting upon the authority of the fathers in the interpretation of Scripture, or in the formation of our theological opinions, is so clear, and has been so fully demonstrated, that there is a very strong temptation, in adverting to it, to give expression to feelings both of contempt and indignation towards those who profess to

maintain it. It is not very easy to look upon them, as a body, in any other light than as being either weak and silly men, with whom it would be a sort of degradation to argue, or as daring and deliberate corrupters of the truth as it is in Jesus; although in this, as in almost every case of error, there are special instances of exception in men, whom it would be unfair to rank in either class, and in regard to whom we must be contented with expressing our unqualified surprise that they should have been deceived by such an illusion.

Bishop Bull, for instance, undoubtedly a great man, solemnly declared, when writing in defence of the Arminian and anti-scriptural view of the doctrine of justification, that " if there could but be found any one proposition that he had maintained, in all his Harmony, repugnant to the doctrine of the Catholic and primitive Church, he would immediately give up the cause, sit down contentedly under the reproach of a novelist, openly retract his error or heresy, make a solemn recantation in the face of the Christian world, and bind himself to perpetual silence ever after." Now, if the learned bishop had meant by this extraordinary statement merely to declare his thorough conviction that he was quite able to establish the opinions he had actually taught by an appeal to the catholic and primitive church, it would not have been so objectionable in point of principle, though it is not an easy matter to find out any definite standard in what might, with anything like propriety, be called the teaching of the catholic primitive church upon the subject he was discussing. But he evidently meant something more than this, —viz., first, that de facto there is a definite standard of the teaching of the primitive catholic church, with respect to the points controverted among modern theologians, which may be ascertained; and secondly, that de jure this primitive catholic teaching, when once ascertained, is an authoritative standard by which men are bound to regulate their opinions. Now, few things have been more conclusively established than the utter falsehood of both these positions; and sufficient materials have, I think, already been afforded to prove this.

These sentiments of Bishop Bull are in substance the same as those commonly propounded by the Tractarians, who talk much of catholic consent, as they call it, as an infallible standard of faith; while they

arbitrarily and unwarrantably limit the sources from which this catholic consent is to be ascertained to the writings of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. There is a mode of speaking upon this subject that is very common among Prelatic writers, even those who do not go so far as the Tractarians upon the subject of catholic consent, or on the existence and authority of the pretended rule, —" quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,"— that ought to be adverted to and guarded against. They admit the supreme authority of Scripture as the only standard of faith, and deny any proper authority in religious matters to the fathers, or to the teaching of the early church; but still they are fond of talking about the fathers in such a way as seems to imply that they do ascribe to them authority, or something like it, after all. They talk much of the importance and necessity of studying the fathers, and investigating the doctrines of the early church; and of the great assistance thus furnished in ascertaining the meaning of Scripture, and the truth of doctrine. Much, of course, may be said truly and justly to this effect; but it is often said in such a way as seems to imply that, in some, vague sense, the fathers, or the early but post-apostolic church, have some authority in matters of faith and practice; and hence the importance of forming clear and precise ideas of the distinction between what is authoritative, properly so called, and what is merely auxiliary, —of seeing and remembering that the difference is not in degree, but in kind, —and also of forming a pretty definite conception of the nature and amount of the assistance which the fathers do afford. Men sometimes talk as if they had a vague notion of the early fathers having had some inferior species of inspiration, —some peculiar divine guidance differing from that of the apostles and evangelists in degree rather than in kind, —and somehow entitling their views and statements to more deference and respect than those of ordinary men. All notions of this sort are utterly baseless, and should be carefully rejected. Authority, properly so called, can be rightly based only upon inspiration; and inspiration is the guidance of the Spirit of God, infallibly securing against all error. When men can be proved to possess this, it is of course our duty to regard all their statements as invested with authority, and to receive them at once with implicit submission, without any further investigation, and without appealing to any other standard. Where there is not inspiration, there is no proper authority, —there should be no implicit submission, and there must be a constant appeal to

some higher standard, if such a standard exist. The fathers, individually or collectively, were not inspired; they therefore possess no authority whatever; and their statements must be estimated and treated just as those of any other ordinary men. And when we hear strong statements about the absolute necessity of studying the fathers, —of the great assistance to be derived from them in interpreting Scripture, and in fixing our opinions, —and of the great responsibility incurred by running counter to their views, we always suspect that the men who make them are either, unconsciously perhaps, ascribing to the fathers some degree of inspiration, and some measure of authority; or else are deceiving themselves by words or vague impressions, without looking intelligently and steadily at the actual realities of the case. We have seen, in surveying the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries, that they were not in general judicious or accurate interpreters of Scripture; that most of them have given interpretations of important scriptural statements which no man now receives; that many of them have erred, and have contradicted themselves, and each other, in stating the doctrines of the Bible; and that, in so far as their views are accordant with Scripture upon subjects that have been, and still are, controverted, they are not brought out more fully or explicitly than in Scripture itself, or in a way in any respect better adapted to convince gain-sayers, even if they were admitted to be authoritative.

A vague notion seems to lurk in men's minds that the fathers must have transmitted to us much which they had learned from the apostles, and which may thus be fairly regarded as invested with some authority. Now this notion can be applied with any measure of plausibility only to those who themselves associated with the apostles, and who are commonly called the apostolic fathers; although many, from inconsideration or confusion of thought, are in the habit of applying it indiscriminately to the fathers of the second, the third, and even the fourth centuries; and yet it is remarkable, as we have shown, —first, that the apostolic fathers do not give, and do not profess to give, us any information as derived from the apostles about the meaning of scriptural statements, or the true import of Christian doctrines; and secondly, that in the writings and transactions of the second century we have the most conclusive proof that there was then no apostolical tradition not contained in Scripture (for the

fathers of that age usually meant by tradition what was actually contained in the Bible) on which any reliance could be placed, —positions which, if true, utterly subvert the notion that any very material assistance of a peculiar kind is to be derived from the fathers either of the earlier or of subsequent centuries. But enough has been said upon this subject; more, perhaps, than its importance deserves.

Whatever weight may be ascribed to the opinions of the fathers, and on whatever grounds the weight that is ascribed to them may be made to rest, no one disputes the propriety and the importance of ascertaining, as far as we can, what their views really were; and most theologians in modern times, whatever opinions they may entertain upon the general question of the deference to be paid to the fathers, have shown some desire to exhibit in their own behalf the testimony of the early church, whenever it could with any plausibility be adduced; and this has given rise to a great deal of learned, voluminous, and often intricate and wearisome discussion. We have seen that in the third century, and even before the end of the second, there were controversies in the church as to what were the doctrines and practices of the apostles upon some points; and that both parties appealed to the tradition of the church, as well as to Scripture, without being able to convince each other by the arguments derived from the one source any more than by those derived from the other. This was still more extensively the case in the fourth and fifth centuries, when, in the Arian and Pelagian controversies, both parties appealed to the testimony of the primitive church. Both in these more ancient and in more modern times, men have acted upon a notion, more or less distinctly conceived, and more or less earnestly maintained, that the fact of a doctrine or system of doctrines having been held by the early church, afforded some presumption that it had been taught by the apostles. As a general position, this may, perhaps, be admitted to be true; but it needs to be very cautiously applied, and to be restricted within very narrow limits. Could we fully and exactly ascertain, as we certainly cannot, the doctrine that generally prevailed in the church at large in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, we would confidently expect that it would be to a great extent the same as that which they taught; and could the prevailing views of that age be distinctly and unequivocally ascertained upon some particular point in regard to which

Scripture had spoken so obscurely that we had great difficulty in making up our minds as to what is really taught, we might be disposed to allow the testimony of the immediately post-apostolic age, if we had it, to turn the doubtful scale. This may be admitted to be true abstractly; but it does not, in point of fact, apply to any of the actual realities of the case. And when we look more at things as they are, we see the necessity of much caution and circumspection in this matter.

The history of the church abundantly confirms what the Scripture gives us reason to expect, viz., that errors and heresies may creep in privily, — the enemy sowing the tares while men are sleeping. The history of the church fully proves, moreover, that very considerable changes may be effected in the prevalent opinions of a church or nation, and of course of many churches or nations, in a comparatively short period of time; and without, perhaps, our being able to trace them to any very definite or palpable cause. Many instances might be adduced of the prevalent theological views of a church or nation undergoing a very considerable change, even in the course of a single generation, and this too without calling forth much public opposition; and considering how very scanty are the remains we now have of the writings and documents of the first three centuries, — what a contrast there is in this respect between the first three centuries of the Christian era and the last three, — it is by no means certain that important changes of doctrine may not have taken place in what is called the early church, without our having any very specific evidence regarding them.

Indeed, it is certain, in point of fact, that there was a gradual change going on more or less rapidly in the church, even from the time of the apostles, in regard to matters of doctrine, as well as of government and worship. It is not possible, with the evidence before us, to believe that the views of the apostolical fathers were in all respects precisely the same as those of the second century, or those of the second precisely the same as those of the third. We can trace a progress, — and the progress is generally in an unsound direction, — in the direction of greater deviation from Scripture, of adding what Scripture wants, and of keeping back or perverting what Scripture contains. It is not, as Papists allege, a fuller development, — a bringing out more fully and explicitly, as circumstances

demanded, —of what is contained in Scripture, and was taught at least in its germs or rudiments by the apostles. The actual features of the progressive change are inconsistent with this theory. We see scriptural principles more and more cast into the background. We see many things brought out, professed, and practised, which not only are uncountenanced by Scripture, but are plainly inconsistent either with its express statements or with its general spirit and principles. That a change was going on, and that this was its general character, is too obvious and certain as a matter of fact to admit of its being disproved, either by the general theory of the Papists as to Christ's promises and His superintendence over His church, or by general presumptions founded upon the character of the men, and their supposed means of acquiring an accurate knowledge of divine things. If we are to take the word of God as our standard, and if it be at all fitted to serve the purposes of a rule or guide, this is a conclusion which may be fully established, and which we are not only warranted, but bound, to hold fast. Still, with all these drawbacks, and with very great practical difficulties, in regard to many questions, of arriving at a very satisfactory result, it is important and interesting to ascertain, as far as we can, what was the system of doctrine, government, and worship that prevailed in the church in early times. The chief discussions which have taken place in modern times with respect to the views of the early church, and which are still carried on in the present day, have been directed to the objects of ascertaining what were the opinions that then generally prevailed in regard to what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; in regard to the multifarious topics involved in the controversy between Protestants and Papists, and the government of the church in general; and in regard to the doctrine of the sacraments and worship, and to the testimony of the primitive church upon these different subjects. And to the discussions which have taken place in more modern times with respect to the true import of that testimony, I propose now to advert in succession.

I. The Doctrines of Grace.

By the doctrines of grace are commonly understood those great fundamental truths in which churches, usually reckoned evangelical,

agree; and more especially the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man by the fall; justification by faith alone without works, on the ground of what Christ has done and suffered in our room; and regeneration and sanctification by the special operation of the Holy Ghost. The doctrines of absolute personal election and the perseverance of the saints, are sometimes spoken of as peculiarities of the Calvinistic system, as distinguished from the more general system of evangelical truth; and it is no doubt true, in point of fact, that many men have held—though, as we think, inconsistently, and without following out their own professed principles to their proper legitimate results—the doctrines usually called evangelical, without admitting what have been described as Calvinistic peculiarities. But in speaking of the doctrines of grace in connection with the testimony of the primitive church, we take the expression in the wide sense of the doctrines of the Reformation, or the Calvinistic system; especially as it will scarcely be disputed that the testimony of the early primitive church is as favourable to the Calvinistic peculiarities, as they are often called, of predestination and perseverance, as to any of the other doctrines commonly designated as evangelical, — with the exception, perhaps, of the doctrine of original sin, the evidence for which in antiquity is usually admitted to be strong, even by those who deny the force of the evidence adduced from this source in favour of any of the other doctrines of the evangelical system. Calvinists and anti-Calvinists have both appealed to the early church in support of their respective opinions, although we believe it cannot be made out that the fathers of the first three centuries give any very distinct deliverance concerning them. These important topics did not become subjects of controversial discussion during that period; and it holds almost universally in the history of the church, that until a doctrine has been fully discussed in a controversial way by men of talent and learning taking opposite sides, men's opinions regarding it are generally obscure and indefinite, and their language vague and confused, if not contradictory. These doctrines did not become subjects of controversial discussion till what is called the Pelagian controversy, in the beginning of the fifth century. At that time, Augustine, the great defender of the truth against Pelagius and his followers, while appealing to the early writers in support of the doctrines which he had established from Scripture, and which he has the distinguished honour of having first developed in a

connected and systematic way, admitted that many of them had spoken without due care and precision upon these points, but contended that in the main they concurred in his opinions. It is very certain that they were not Pelagians, for they almost universally admitted that there was a corruption of man's moral nature introduced and spread among mankind by the fall, which Pelagius denied. That they were wholly free from what was afterwards called semi-Pelagianism, or that they held fully and explicitly the Augustinian or Calvinistic system, is not by any means so clear.

The substance of the matter is this: The apostolical fathers generally use the language of Scripture upon these subjects, while they scarcely make any statements which afford us materials for deciding in what precise sense they understood them. They leave the matter very much where Scripture leaves it, and where, but for the rise of errors needing to be contradicted and opposed, it might still have been left. He who sees Augustinian or Calvinistic doctrines clearly and explicitly taught in the Bible, will have no difficulty in seeing also plain traces of them at least in the works of the apostolic fathers; and he who can pervert the statements of Scripture into an anti-Calvinistic sense, may, by the same process, and with equal ease, distort the apostolic fathers. This at least is certain, that while it has been often asserted with great confidence, that Calvinistic principles are utterly opposed to the doctrine of the ancient church— that they were never heard of till invented by Augustine— there is nothing in the writings of any of the immediate successors of the apostles in the least opposed to them; nothing which, even abstracting from the clear testimony of Scripture in their favour, affords any presumption that they were not taught to the churches by the apostles. There is, to say the least, nothing whatever in this primitive antiquity, in the writings of those who associated with the apostles, to weaken, even if we were to admit that anything derived from any other source could weaken, the testimony which they have given in their own inspired writings. If corruption was to find its way into the church, these, it might be expected, would be the doctrines which it would first assail, more openly or more covertly, because they are most decidedly opposed to the leading tendencies of man's natural character, to the ungodliness and pride of the human heart. These were the doctrines which were most thoroughly expelled from all

the pagan religions, even although in some other points they retained some traces of the religion of nature, or some remnants of a primitive revelation; and they were the doctrines which were most thoroughly corrupted in the system of later Judaism, —the Judaism of our Saviour's days, —and so, accordingly, we find it to have been in the Christian church.

We have already had occasion to notice that the point where erroneous and defective views upon the doctrines of grace seem to have first insinuated themselves, was in regard to the freedom of the human will, explained and applied in such a way as to lead ultimately at least to an obscuration, if not a denial, at once of the doctrine of the total depravity of man, and of the necessity of the special operation of the Holy Ghost, in order to the production in man's character or life of anything spiritually good. There is some difficulty, as I have mentioned before, in understanding precisely what is the full bearing and import of many of the statements of the fathers of the second and third centuries upon this subject, because they occur commonly in the course of observations directed against the fate or stoical necessity which was very generally advocated by the Gnostic sects. This circumstance renders it very difficult to determine whether at first, at least, they really meant to ascribe to free will an αὐτεξουσιον, more than Calvinistic divines have generally conceded to it. But there can be no doubt that error steadily increased in this direction, and that many of them came to entertain views upon this subject plainly inconsistent with what the Scripture teaches as to the natural impotency of man, and the necessity of divine agency; and that, though never wholly abandoning the doctrine of original sin, they soon came to overlook two distinctions of fundamental importance on this subject, —viz first, the distinction between the power or ability of man in his fallen and in his unfallen condition; and, secondly, the distinction between man's power or ability in matters external or merely moral, and in matters purely spiritual; that is, which have respect to real obedience to the law which God has imposed, and to the doing of those things which He requires, that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for our sins. These two distinctions, I have said,, are of fundamental importance. They were, however, generally overlooked by the early fathers. Augustine, of course, understood them, else he could never have rendered such

important services as he did to the cause of sound doctrine. They were brought out fully and prominently by the reformers. They are distinctly set forth in the standards of our church; and I am persuaded that, where they are not distinctly admitted and fully applied, it is impossible to give a complete and accurate exposition of the system of Christian theology, as taught in the sacred Scriptures. Some modern writers have contended, not only that the fathers of the second and third centuries taught anti-Calvinistic doctrines, but also that the Gnostic heretics, against whom they contended, taught Calvinism. This, however, proceeds upon a misrepresentation of Calvinistic doctrines, as if they really made God the author of sin, and took away from man that freedom of will which is necessary to moral agency, —charges which have been often adduced against them, but have never been established.

On most of the other points involved in the evangelical or Calvinistic system, it can scarcely be said that the fathers of the second and third centuries have given any very distinct or explicit testimony. That these great doctrines were not very thoroughly understood, were not very prominently brought forward, and were not very fully applied, is but too evident. That they had been wholly laid aside, and that an opposite set of doctrines had been substituted in their room, is what cannot be established. Calvinists and anti-Calvinists have produced sets of extracts from the writings of the fathers, professing to find in them full support for their respective opinions. But upon a careful and impartial survey of this matter, it is evident that all that these collections of extracts, when taken together and viewed in combination, really prove, is that these fathers had no very clear or definite conceptions upon the subject, that they did not very well understand what they meant to teach, and that from ignorance and confusion they not unfrequently fell into contradictions. All this, however, — which is clearly the true state of the case as a matter of fact, —does really, when viewed in connection with the fact that, with the progress of time, the Calvinistic testimonies became less full and clear, and the anti-Calvinistic ones more so— i.e., till we come down to the era of the Pelagian controversy— furnish presumption in favour of Calvinism; for there can be no doubt that the tendency, from the apostolic age downwards, was to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel, to introduce into the doctrines of the church mere human speculations,

and to accommodate them to the tastes and prejudices of irreligious men.

The process was somewhat similar to what took place in the Church of Scotland, and in other churches, in the course of last century, when personal religion was decaying, when sound evangelical doctrine was disappearing, and when very defective and confused notions of scriptural principles were extensively prevailing; while, at the same time, it must be observed that the general opposition which Pelagianism encountered, and the general favour which Augustinianism met with, even in the early part of the fifth century, afford satisfactory proof that the progress of erroneous and defective views in regard to the doctrines of grace was not in the early church so rapid and so complete as it has sometimes been in modern churches. I have no doubt that, towards the middle or end of last century, a majority of the ministers of the Church of Scotland were quite prepared to have adopted a Pelagian creed, had it not been that a Calvinistic one was established by law, and that therefore the adoption of a different one might have endangered their State connection, and the enjoyment of their temporalities; while the church of the fifth century, under the guidance of Augustine, decidedly rejected Pelagianism.

The testimony, then, of the church of the first three centuries cannot be said to be very clear or explicit either for or against the doctrines of grace. But these doctrines are far too firmly established by the testimony of God's own word, and by the experience of His people, to be affected by a circumstance so insignificant as this. In place of the uncertainty and ambiguity of the testimony of the early church, with regard to the doctrines of grace, shaking our confidence in their truth, it only proves that no reliance is to be placed upon the testimony of the fathers, and of the early church, as a rule or standard in the formation of our opinions; for, finding clear evidence in Scripture that these doctrines were taught by our Lord and His apostles, and finding clear evidence in ecclesiastical history, viewed in connection with Scripture, that they have been embraced in substance by the great body of those who, in every age and country, have given the most satisfactory evidence that they were living under the influence of personal religion, we are fully warranted in holding that the measure of the extent to which men individually or collectively have enjoyed the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and have been

guided to a correct knowledge of God's revealed will, is to be tested substantially by the clearness, fulness, and firmness with which they have maintained these fundamental doctrines.

II. The Sufficiency of Scripture

In explaining the general subject of the deference due to the sentiments of the fathers, and of the church of the first three centuries, I had occasion to refer to the fact— of essential importance upon this question — that a process of declension or deterioration, both in respect of soundness of doctrine and purity of character, commencing even in the apostles' days, continued gradually to advance; and that it met with no effectual or decided check during the first three centuries, though there were occasionally individuals, such as Cyprian, who rose somewhat above its influence. This fact, when once fully established, is fatal to the authority, properly so called, of the fathers, and of the pretended catholic consent, as it is designated. The only thing that gives any plausibility to the claims, set up on behalf of the fathers and of the early church, whether by Papists or semi-Papists, is the imagination— for it is nothing else— that there was a constant unbroken tradition, or handing down of sound doctrine and sound practice in regard to the government and worship of the church, carried on, according to the Papists, in the Church of Rome till the present day; but according to the Tractarians, stopping— i.e., becoming somewhat corrupted— about the fifth or sixth century. When it is once ascertained that there was a gradual but unceasing change in matters of doctrine, government, and worship, this at once overturns the only ground on which any claim can be put forth on behalf of the early church to anything like authority, properly so called, in regulating our opinions or our practices, even without taking into account — what, however, is also important, and can be easily established— viz., that the change was wholly in a direction that was not only unsanctioned by Scripture, but opposed to it.

There is, however, a remarkable exception to this constant tendency to deterioration observable during the second and third centuries, to which, before proceeding further, I think it right to direct attention: I mean the

constant maintenance, during the first three centuries, of the supremacy and sufficiency of the sacred Scriptures, and the right and duty of all men to read and study them. There is no trace of evidence in the first three centuries that these scriptural principles were denied or doubted, and there is satisfactory evidence that they were steadily and purely maintained.

The fathers of that period were all in the habit of referring to the sacred Scriptures as the only real standard of faith and practice. They assert, both directly and by implication, their exclusive authority, and their perfect sufficiency to guide men to the knowledge of God's revealed will. They have all more or less explicitly asserted this, and they have asserted nothing inconsistent with it. There are men among them who have, in point of fact, given too much weight, in forming their opinions, and in regulating their conduct, to oral traditions, and to the speculations of their own reason; but, in so far as they did so, they were acting in opposition to their own professed principles, —they were disregarding or deviating from the standard which they professed to follow. Whatever may be said of their practice in some instances, we have certainly the weight of their judgment or authority, so far as it goes, in support of the great Protestant principle of the exclusive supremacy and sufficiency of the written word. This, of course, is denied by Papists and Tractarians; but we are persuaded it can be, and has been, proved, that while they appeal to the authority of the fathers and the early church in support of the authority which they ascribe to them, these parties themselves disclaim all such pretensions advanced on their behalf, and give their testimony in favour of the exclusive authority of Scripture.

We cannot enter into the detailed evidence of this position. It is adduced at length, cleared from every cavil, and established beyond all fair controversy, in the very valuable work to which I have had occasion to refer, —Goode's " Divine Rule of Faith and Practice." In the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries— and the same may be said of the writings, without exception, of many succeeding centuries— there is not the slightest trace of anything like that depreciation of the Scriptures, that denial of their fitness, because of their obscurity and alleged imperfection, to be a sufficient rule or standard of faith, which stamp so

peculiar a guilt and infamy upon Popery and Tractarianism. There is nothing in the least resembling this; on the contrary, there is a constant reference to Scripture as the only authoritative standard. There are many declarations to the same effect, not indeed expressed always with such fulness and precision as to preclude the assaults of cavillers, just because these topics were not then subjects of controversial discussion, but sufficiently full and explicit to satisfy every impartial person as to what their views really were. They speak, indeed, often of tradition, and traditions; but then it has been conclusively proved, that by these words they most commonly meant the sacred Scriptures themselves, and the statements therein contained. They sometimes appealed, in arguing against the heretics, to the doctrines and practices which had been handed down from the apostles, especially in the churches which they themselves had founded. But besides that there was more, not only of plausibility, but of weight, in this appeal in the second century than there could be at any subsequent period, it is evident that they employed this consideration merely as an auxiliary or subordinate argument, without ever intending, by the using it, to deny, or cast into the background, the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture; and that they employed it, not so much to prove the absolute and certain truth of their doctrines, as to disprove an allegation very often made then, as now, in theological discussion, that they were new and recently invented.

It has, indeed, been alleged by Papists, —and the allegation has been repeated by Tractarians, —that it was the heretics of the early ages who were accustomed, like Protestants, to appeal to the Scriptures; and that the orthodox fathers, in opposition to this, appealed to tradition, in the modern sense of the word. But it has been proved by evidence that is unanswerable that this allegation is wholly false in fact: it has been proved that the heretics were accustomed to decline or evade an appeal to the Scriptures, by denying their genuineness and authenticity, or by alleging that they were corrupted or interpolated; and that, besides this, they were accustomed to appeal to a secret tradition which they alleged had been handed down from the apostles, and gave their views more fully and correctly than the received Scriptures. All this has been demonstrated, and the proof of it not only disproves the Popish allegation, but throws back upon themselves the charge of treading in the

footsteps of the ancient heretics; and moreover explains fully the real import and foundation of the appeal which the orthodox fathers sometimes make to tradition as well as to Scripture. They sometimes appealed to tradition, because the heretics refused to acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures; they appealed to the public tradition of the apostolical churches, because the heretics appealed to a private tradition, alleged to have been secretly handed down from the apostles. About the end of the fourth century, in the writings of Jerome and Augustine, we find some traces of a sanction given to an appeal to tradition on points of ceremony and outward practice, though these fathers, in common with all those who preceded them, are full and explicit in asserting the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture in all matters of faith or doctrine. We have already admitted that, long before this time, many ceremonies and practices had been introduced into the worship and government of the church which had no foundation or warrant in Scripture; but the introduction of these seems to have been based upon the alleged power of the church to decree rites and ceremonies, rather than upon any allegation that they had been authentically handed down by tradition from the time of the apostles. At any rate, we have no clear indication, till the end of the fourth century, of its having been held by any orthodox writers as a doctrine or principle, that the Scripture was not the sole and sufficient standard in matters of ceremony and ecclesiastical practice, as well as in matters of faith or doctrine; and even then the statements made to this effect by Jerome and Augustine are not very full and explicit, and are not easily reconciled with declarations they have made in other parts of their writings, in which they have recognised the exclusive supremacy and perfect sufficiency of Scripture in matters of practice as well as of opinion. The principle that the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies which have no warrant or sanction in the sacred Scriptures, as maintained and acted upon by Lutheran and Prelatic churches, we believe to be erroneous in itself, and dangerous in its application, —a principle which the word of God contains sufficient materials to disprove, and which can appeal to no more ancient authority in its support than that of Jerome and Augustine in the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century. But still it must not be confounded with the denial of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Scripture as the only rule of faith, especially as it does not set up tradition as a rival standard, does not

assume that the rites and ceremonies adopted are to be received as having come down from the apostles, and does not even impose an obligation to adopt all which have been so handed down, but merely vests in the church of any age or country a certain measure of authority to introduce some rites and ceremonies, which it may judge to be for edification.

There is one other topic of some interest and importance connected with the right appreciation and application of the word of God, in which there is no trace of deterioration or corruption during the first three, nor indeed for several subsequent centuries, and with respect to which there lies especial and pre-eminent guilt upon the apostate Church of Rome, and upon its modern imitators, the Anglican Tractarians. The fathers of the third, and even of the fourth and fifth centuries, zealously inculcated, without any exception and without any reserve, upon all the ordinary members of the church the duty, as far as they had the means and opportunity, of reading and studying the sacred Scriptures; and exerted themselves to afford to them the means of discharging this duty and enjoying this privilege, by getting the Scriptures translated into different languages, and diffusing them as widely as the circumstances of the time, when printing was unknown, admitted of it. The Tractarians, indeed, have attempted to make something of the obscure and perplexing topic called the *disciplina arcani*, as practised in the ancient church, to defend their own doctrine of reserve in the communication of religious knowledge, just as the Papists assign it as the reason why we find no trace of a great number of their doctrines and ceremonies during the first three centuries. This principle does not seem to have been originally anything else than the exercise of a reasonable discretion in the exposition of the doctrines of Christianity, with a due regard to circumstances and to men's capacities; and to have been gradually, from a foolish affectation of imitating the heathen mysteries and the practice of heathen philosophers, corrupted into something like an exoteric and esoteric doctrine. But whatever it may have been, and in whatever way it may have been practised, at different times, —and on these points our information is very meagre and defective, —however objectionable it may have been, and however injurious may have been its consequences, the fact is unquestionable, that all the fathers continued, even in the fourth century,

to urge upon all their hearers to read and study the sacred Scriptures; and that no restraint or discouragement was put upon the possession, the use, and the circulation of them.

The early church, then, down even to the Nicene and the immediately post-Nicene age, with all the errors and corruptions which had by this time infected the body of professing Christians, has escaped the special and peculiar guilt of the apostate Church of Rome, and is free from the fearful responsibility of professedly and avowedly labouring to withhold and withdraw from men that word which God has given them to be a light unto their feet and a lamp unto their path; and has transmitted a clear and unequivocal testimony in favour of the right of all men to have free access to the sacred Scriptures, and of their obligation to study them for themselves, with a view to the formation of their opinions and the regulation of their conduct.

III. Rights of the Christian People

Another topic, forming a remarkable exception to the progressive declension of the early church in point of doctrine and soundness of ecclesiastical practice, even during the first three centuries, is not one of such comprehensive magnitude and such commanding importance as that which we have already considered; still it is one of no small moment, not only in its bearing upon the right constitution and administration of the affairs of the church, but also, as experience proves, upon the interests of spiritual religion and vital godliness: I mean the steady maintenance, both in doctrine and in practice, of the right of Christian congregations to an effective and decisive voice in the appointment of their own pastors. Here, as in the former case, it is to be observed that the topic did not become a subject of formal controversial discussion during the first three centuries, nor for many centuries afterwards; and that, therefore, the testimonies upon the point are not so specific and precise as to preclude all cavilling, though quite sufficient to satisfy any honest inquirers after truth. Indeed, I know very few questions in regard to which more elaborate and unceasing efforts have been employed to silence or pervert the testimony of Scripture and of primitive antiquity, as

well as of the Reformers, than on this subject of the appointment of ministers. Papists, Prelatists, and Erastians have all laboured with unwearied zeal in attempting to overturn the evidence in support of the rights of the Christian people in the appointment of their pastors. Some! Papists and Prelatists have brought no small share of learning and ingenuity to bear upon this subject, though without success; while it is more gratifying to notice that not a few even of these men have yielded to the force of truth and evidence, and have, in argument at least, abandoned the cause which their principles and position naturally inclined them to support.

The main direct and formal proofs of the doctrine and practice we have ascribed to the primitive church upon this subject, are to be found in the testimonies of Clemens Romanus, the friend and companion of the apostles, in the first century; and of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, soon after the middle of the third. These testimonies are full and satisfactory: there is not a vestige of evidence to be produced from the first three centuries that even seems to point in an opposite direction; while there are many collateral statements and incidental notices of the ordinary practice of the church to be found in the authors both of the intervening and subsequent periods, which decidedly confirm them. The testimony of Clement is very brief, but altogether conclusive: it is, that the apostles were accustomed to settle ministers— with the cordial consent of the whole church; and the statement, moreover, is adduced by Clement as a reason why the people should submit to the authority of their pastors, and not endeavour factiously to remove or expel them, since they had themselves consented to their appointment. There is no fair or even plausible method of explaining away this statement. It unequivocally implies that, at the very least, the deliberate opposition of the congregation to the person, who might have been suggested or recommended as their pastor, was held by the apostles as of itself quite a sufficient reason why his appointment should not take place. There is not the slightest ground to doubt that this practice of the apostles was uniformly observed, not only during the first three centuries, but for several centuries afterwards; and, on the contrary, there is a great deal that confirms it.

In the apostolical constitutions, —which, of course, are not the work of Clement, to whom they have been ascribed, but which have been thought by many to have been compiled about the end of the third century, and are universally admitted to contain many interesting notices of the practices of the early church, —there is a minute account of the procedure usually adopted in the appointment of a bishop, in which precisely the same place and influence are assigned to the people as to the clergy, and in which not only the word *συνευδοκέω*, but several others of similar import, —some of them perhaps more strong and specific, such as *ἐκλέγω* and *ἰσχυρίζομαι*; and others of them somewhat more vague and indefinite, such as *αἰτέω*, —are all equally applied to the joint or common acts of the clergy and the people in this matter. Blondell, who in the latter part of his great work, entitled "Apologia pro sententia Hieronymi"—usually reckoned the' most learned work ever written in defence of presbytery— has collected all the evidence bearing upon this subject, and proved that the people continued generally to have a real and effective voice in the appointment of their ministers for nearly 1000 years after the foundation of the Christian Church. After quoting this remarkable passage from the so-called apostolical constitutions, he adds the following inference as manifestly established by it, and confirmed by all other collateral authorities: "unde constare potest Clerumque plebemque convenire, eligere, nominare, gratum habere, postulare, testari, annuere, rogari, consensus decretum edere, ante Constantiniani Magni tempora ex aequo consuevisse."

The testimony of Cyprian is to the same effect. He was consulted by some people in Spain, whether they might forsake or abandon their bishops who had fallen into heresy: he answered that they might; and one reason he assigns for this is, "quando ipsa plebs maxime habeat potestatem vel eligere dignos sacerdotes, vel indignos recusare" and then he proceeds to prove that this is a principle fully sanctioned by the sacred Scriptures, and based *jure divino*. These scriptural principles continued to be professed and acted on long after a large amount of error and corruption had been introduced into the church; and this, too, although the whole tendency of the changes which were going on in every other department of ecclesiastical administration ran in the opposite direction, —i.e., tended to depress the influence of the people and to exalt the power of the

clergy, and latterly of the civil authority, until in the dark ages they, too, were brought into almost entire subjection to the Papacy. The preservation in purity of this 'doctrine and practice for so long a period, in opposition to the whole stream of influences which was sweeping over the church and polluting it, affords a strong confirmation of the position, that it was firmly grounded on scriptural authority and apostolic practice.

We have some traces of the system of patronage, or of something like it, in the fifth and sixth centuries, in country parishes, though not in towns, originating as it did in the practice of landed proprietors building and endowing churches for the accommodation of their dependants, and then, upon this ground, claiming some influence on the appointment of the ministers (a statement however, let it be observed, not in the least inconsistent with Beza's account of its origin— viz., that it was concocted in Satan's kitchen). Patronage, even in its infant form, seems soon to have led, through the corruption and subserviency of the clergy, to the intrusion of ministers upon reclaiming congregations; and, in consequence, we find that in the fifth and sixth centuries enactments were passed by councils and other eminent ecclesiastical authorities against intrusion contrary to the will of the people; and it is very remarkable, and quite conclusive, that all of them contain, in gremio, clear and explicit proof that the principle of non-intrusion was then understood in the same sense in which we understand it, —viz. this, that the opposition of a congregation in the full enjoyment of church privileges was of itself quite a sufficient reason why the person proposed should not be settled as their pastor. These enactments were embodied in the canon law— the law of the Church of Rome— and statements and practices founded upon them continued to hold a place in the public rituals of that church till the time of the Council of Trent, when it was proposed, though not agreed to, that they should be expunged, as giving a handle to the Reformers, who had restored, not only the doctrine, but, so far as they could, the practice of the primitive church on this subject, and were all strenuous supporters of the rights of the Christian people.

Perhaps it may be asked, What do Papists, Prelatists, and Erastians, who withhold from the Christian people their lawful rights in this matter, make of these facts— of all this evidence? The more candid among them

admit that it cannot be answered; and then, if their other principles allow of it, assert that the authority of the primitive church is not binding, or that the practice followed in this respect was not one that could not be changed. The defenders of the Gallican liberties— the most respectable class of writers, along with the Jansenists, whom the modern church of Rome has produced— concur with the Greek Church in maintaining theoretically, upon grounds of Scripture and primitive antiquity, the same principles, so far as intrusion is concerned, as we do. Many of the most able and learned writers of the Church of England have admitted— and their admissions may be fairly regarded as the concessions of opponents wrung from them by the force of truth— that these were sound and primitive principles. It is sufficient to mention the names of Hooker, Bishop Wilson, Bishop Andrews, Dr Field, and Mr Bingham.

But still it may be asked, What is said by the more bold and unscrupulous, who do not admit that the doctrine and practice of the primitive church were as we have described them? They have laboured to the best of their ability in obscuring and perverting the testimony of the primitive church, and especially by trying to show that it does not necessarily mean what they can scarcely deny that it naturally and obviously means. Cardinal Bellarmine has attempted it, and the substance of his evasion is just that which has been employed ever since, down to our own day, in all the efforts which have been made to pervert or set aside, not only the testimony of the primitive church, but that also of the Reformers, upon this question. The one point which they all— Papists, Prelatists, Erastians, and Infidels— labour to establish is this, that the power or influence which the testimonies quoted ascribe to the people, is merely a right of stating objections to the person proposed, of the validity of which another party is to judge; this other party, whether bishops or presbyteries, being entitled ultimately to dispose of the matter, i.e., to settle the person or not, according to their own judgment of the validity of the people's objections; and the one process by which they all strive to effect it is this: they select the weakest and vaguest term which any of the authors quoted has employed in describing what the people do, or are entitled to do, in this matter; they pare down this term to the lowest sense of which, in any circumstances or in any connection, it is capable; and then they put forth this diluted and perverted sense of the

weakest and vaguest word employed as being the true and real meaning of the far stronger, more definite, and more specific words which are also employed. Thus Cyprian, in discussing the question, happens in one sentence to speak of the necessity of the people being present, and giving their testimony. This is immediately laid hold of, and is said to mean merely, or not necessarily to mean more than, a right of stating objections; and then at once the inference is drawn, that the power of choosing and rejecting which Cyprian unequivocally ascribes to them must also mean this, and nothing more than this. This, of course, is in plain contravention of the most obvious principles of sound and honest interpretation; but this one artifice, variously modified, according to the ingenuity, the learning, the sense, or the courage of the men who may have been tempted to employ it (from Cardinal Bellarmine to Sir William Hamilton), is all that has ever been brought to bear against the clear, unequivocal, unassailable testimony, at once of the primitive church and the whole body of the Reformers, in favour of the right of the Christian people to a real, honest, and effective voice, as opposed to a mere right of stating objections, in the appointment of their pastors.

Such is the testimony of the primitive church in regard to these two important principles. Almost everything else in the profession and practice of the primitive church, with the exception of the doctrine of the Trinity, underwent changes and modifications even during the first three centuries; and the tendency of the changes was almost universally to the worse—to a greater deviation from apostolic doctrine and practice. But, while almost everything else was changing, and changing for the worse, and while there was even a strong under-current running against the Bible and against the people, it is interesting and encouraging to see that these great Protestant principles of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the rights of the Christian people in the choice of their pastors, continued to be openly and universally professed, and that no one ventured to deny them, or to propose to lay them aside. We do not, of course, attach anything like authoritative or binding weight to this consideration. We believe these great Protestant principles on the testimony of God's word; and upon that ground we would have believed them as firmly as we now do, even though, as was not improbable, they had been as much corrupted in primitive times as were some other

departments of the doctrine and practice of the church. But the fact which we have established, is at least sufficient to disprove the charge of novelty, which, strange as it may seem, Papists, Prelatists, and Erastians have sometimes ventured to adduce against the holders of one or both of these principles; and considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, and the general tendency of the influences then undoubtedly at work, the professed maintenance of them for so long a period in purity, may be reasonably regarded as of itself a presumption— were presumptions needed when we have proofs— that, by divine authority and apostolic influence, they were deeply wrought into the ordinary train of men's thoughts, into the constitution of the church, and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. Their influence was no doubt salutary and beneficial. They did not, indeed, prevent, though we are persuaded they retarded, the growing corruption of the church; and the whole subsequent history of the church proves that, whenever the Lord has been pleased to send times of reviving and refreshing, He has also brought out into prominence these great principles, where before they had been overlooked and disregarded. So it was at the period of the Reformation; and so it has been in our own church, and in our day: and most assuredly we are honoured by God to tread in the footsteps of the primitive church, and to take up an important branch of the testimony of the Reformation from Popery, when we are called upon, as we have been, by His Spirit and in His providence, to contend for the exclusive supremacy of His word as the only law or rule by which the affairs of His church ought to be regulated, and for the right of Christian congregations to a real and important influence, —an effective and decisive voice, —in the appointment of their own office-bearers.

IV. Idolatry

We proceed to consider the testimony of the church of the first three centuries— the bearing of the information which the writers of that period afford us— on some of the topics involved in the controversies between Protestants and Papists. We have already explained the nature and bearing of the testimony of the early church upon the subject of the doctrines of grace; and these doctrines form an important part of our

controversies with the Church of Rome, which has grievously corrupted them.

The adherents of the Church of Rome are the greatest admirers of the fathers, and profess implicit deference to their authority. Their controversial works abound in quotations from ancient writers, in support of all their peculiar opinions, and in opposition, as they allege, to all the doctrines of Protestantism.

It is the universal practice, indeed, of Popish controversial writers to produce extracts from the writings of the fathers, very much as if they were texts of Scripture, and possessed of conclusive weight in proving or in disproving doctrines. Bellarmine, for instance, through the whole of his great work on the controversies against the heresies of the time, labours to establish all his leading positions— first, from Scripture, then from the decisions of councils; next, from the statements of the fathers; and he commonly proceeds continuously from the Scriptures to the councils, and from the councils to the fathers, just as if proofs from all these different sources were possessed, indiscriminately, of equal validity. Papists have been in the habit of boasting that all their peculiar opinions are supported by the fathers, and are confirmed by the catholic consent of the early church; and they wish this to be received as proof that, though not all originally committed to writing, or found in the canonical books, they were handed down by tradition from Christ and His apostles.

Protestants have been accustomed, on the other hand, to maintain that the fathers of the first three centuries do not countenance the leading peculiarities of the Popish system, and afford sufficient evidence that these were not then generally held by the church. This has led to a great deal of wearisome and unprofitable discussion, turning often upon the precise meaning of obscure and ambiguous phrases, of clauses and sentences frequently involved in gross darkness and inconsistency. There have been long and learned discussions between Protestants and Papists about the meaning of passages in the writings of the fathers, with respect to some of which it is more than probable that even their authors, if we could subject them to interrogation, would be unable to tell us what they meant when they wrote them! A great deal too much importance has been attached to the testimony of the fathers; and a great deal of talent and

learning has been wasted in investigating the precise import of their statements. But still, as these discussions form a considerable department of theological literature, and as the adduction of authorities, in the shape of extracts from the fathers and other ancient writers, commonly enters largely into theological controversies, it may not be unprofitable to make a remark or two upon this topic.

The common practice of controversialists, and especially Popish ones, in adducing authorities from the fathers, is just to collect brief extracts from their works, which, taken by themselves, and apart from the context or scope of the passage, seem to countenance the principles they advocate. This process is, however, in its general character, unfair, and in its ordinary results, unsatisfactory and deceptive; inasmuch as experience abundantly proves that it is an easy matter to produce from the writings of almost any author, brief and garbled extracts, which, taken by themselves, would ascribe to him views which he never entertained. The objects to be aimed at, in adducing the testimony of the primitive church, or the authority of the fathers, are these two: to ascertain, first, what was the mature and deliberate judgment of the men upon the point under consideration; and, secondly, what can be clearly learned from them as to the general belief and practice of the church in the age and country in which they lived.

These are two distinct objects, which ought to be separately considered, and require distinct evidence applicable to the precise point to be established. Now, to ascertain the mature and deliberate judgment of an author upon a particular point that may be controverted, is, as experience proves, a very different thing from producing from his writings one or two brief extracts that may have dropped from him inadvertently, or when the topic in regard to which his authority is adduced was not present to his thoughts, or was not fully and formally considered. The first thing, therefore, which in fairness ought to be attended to, in an investigation of this sort, is the question, whether or not the author ever had the precise point controverted present to his mind— whether or not he has really formed and expressed a deliberate judgment regarding it. If the precise point under consideration was never really present to his thoughts, or if it was not formally and deliberately entertained by him,

then, as experience proves, it will probably be no easy matter to ascertain with certainty what his views regarding it were; and, even if they could be certainly ascertained, they would be entitled to no weight; or deference as an authority, while they might still be of some value, indirectly, in ascertaining, in combination with other evidence, the views that then generally prevailed. This obvious dictate of common sense, confirmed by manifold experience, has been far too much overlooked, especially—though not exclusively— by Papists in adducing the testimony of the fathers; and, in consequence, there has been a great deal of most unprofitable and frequently most unfair discussion about the meaning of many obscure and confused passages, often terminating without leading to any very satisfactory or decisive result on either side. When Papists have adduced passages from the fathers in support of their tenets, the way in which Protestants have usually met them is by laying down and establishing such positions as these: that the words adduced do not necessarily require the sense which the Papists put upon them; that a careful examination of the con' text and scope of the passages proves that this was not in fact their meaning; and then particularly, that, from an examination of the whole writings of the author adduced, it can be proved that he held, not the Popish, but the Protestant view upon the point— or, at least, that he has given no clear or explicit deliverance regarding it. Protestants have fully established these positions, or some of them, in regard to a very large proportion of the passages commonly quoted by Papists from the writings of the early fathers; though the labour that has been spent upon this subject has been immeasurably greater than its intrinsic importance deserved, and though in this way a vast amount of learned lumber has been bequeathed to the world, especially by divines of the Church of England.

These observations, however, apply chiefly to the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, or the Nicene age; which principally forms the debateable ground in this controversy with the Church of Rome. It is not till the fifth century, or the end of the fourth, that the Popish writers can find materials for making out a case that has anything like plausibility in support of almost any of the definite peculiarities of the Romish Church; and a large portion of what they commonly adduce from writers of these two centuries is but plausible, rather than solid. The Protestants have in

the main successfully established, in regard to most of the writers of that period, one or more of the positions formerly stated. There is, however, good reason to believe that some of them have gone further than the evidence warranted, in denying that the germs or rudiments of many Popish doctrines were sown in the Nicene and immediately subsequent age, though they were not yet fully expanded and developed. But it is with the first of these centuries that we have at present to do; and here it has been established, upon a full and deliberate investigation of the whole materials, that the cause of Popery has nothing solid, scarcely anything even plausible, to rest upon; while, on the other hand, it cannot be fairly disputed that even in that early period there are plain traces of the "mystery of iniquity" being at work— indications of some of the germs of the system which was afterwards fully developed, and which operates so injuriously both on the temporal and spiritual welfare of men.

We cannot enter into a minute and detailed discussion of the various points involved in the Popish controversy, or into an investigation of the particular testimonies from early writers, which have been the subjects of so much useless discussion. We can merely state briefly and generally how the case stands. With respect to the worship paid to angels, saints, and images, and the adoration of the host, on which Protestants have based the heavy charge of idolatry against the Church of Rome, it is a matter of unquestionable certainty, and is admitted by learned Papists, that there is no authority to be produced for their doctrine and practice during the first three centuries. Thus one most important department of the mystery of iniquity is at once cut off from all pretence to the countenance and support of primitive antiquity.

There was no idolatry in the 'primitive church, so long as she was engaged in contending against pagan idolatry, invested with civil authority and with power to persecute; and nothing is more certain than that, in the discussions between the Christian fathers of this period and the defenders of pagan idolatry and polytheism, the latter had recourse to the very same sophistry in vindication of their undoubted idolatry as Papists now employ in defence of theirs, and that the former (the fathers) clearly and fully exposed its utter futility. It has been fully proved that the whole substance of what the Papists are accustomed to adduce, in defending

themselves from the charge of being guilty of polytheism and idolatry in the worship they pay to angels, saints, and images, was brought forward by the advocates of paganism, and answered by the Christian apologists.

We have seen, indeed, that even in the third century there were plain traces of undue and extravagant honours being paid to martyrs and confessors, such as anniversaries instituted of their deaths in the case of martyrs, and conceding to their influence, in the case of confessors, a sort of right to modify what were believed to be scriptural principles in regard to penitence and admission into the communion. All this was wrong and injurious, and may perhaps be justly regarded as the germ or rudiment of the excesses and impiety that were afterwards introduced. But there is no evidence of the existence during this period of anything in doctrine or practice that was justly chargeable with being idolatrous or polytheistic. Even the addresses to these men, with which the works of some of the fathers of the fourth century abound, are rather exhibitions of foolish rhetorical declamation than prayers or invocations based upon a definite belief, such as the Church of Rome inculcates, that they were to be worshipped in any sense, or that they could exert any influence in procuring for men temporal or spiritual blessings. This, however, was a step in advance in the development of the mystery of iniquity, and led the way to the prevalence of Popish or antichristian polytheism, which became pretty general, and was introduced into the public service of the church in the course of the seventh century. It is deserving of notice that in this way the worship of saints and angels crept into the church very gradually, without exciting much opposition, or calling forth much controversial discussion.

It was otherwise with the worship of images, to which we shall afterwards have occasion to advert, which was established only towards the end of the eighth century, at what is called the Seventh General Council, or the Second Council of Nice, and after a severe and protracted struggle. During the first three centuries, the church was in open antagonism with paganism, and this contributed to preserve it in purity from an important class of errors. It was not till the altered circumstances of the church, taken under the protection of the civil authority, and freed from the necessity of openly contending with paganism, afforded a favourable

opportunity, that Satan set himself to corrupt it, having recourse to his old expedient of fostering polytheism and idolatry, so natural to fallen man, and of overwhelming true religion under a mass of rites and ceremonies, and a crowd of external observances. It might have been supposed that, under the light of the Christian dispensation, the re-introduction of polytheism and idolatry was impracticable. But Satan knew better; and no sooner did the termination of the open contest between Christianity and paganism afford him a favourable opportunity, than he made an attempt to revive them under a Christian form, —an attempt which was crowned with the most marvellous success, and involved the great body of the professors of the Christian church for many centuries in the deepest guilt and degradation. The pagans of the first three centuries were accustomed to charge the Christians with atheism, because they had no splendid temples, no sacrifices, no images, no gorgeous dresses, no array of ceremonies and processions. This reproach, however, was in due time fully wiped away by the introduction of all the leading features of paganism, under a Christian form, indeed, but without losing any thing of their essential nature, or operating less injuriously than before upon the interests of true religion. Had the primitive church borne even the slightest resemblance to the Church of Rome, the reproach of atheism on this ground never would have been adduced against it.

V. The Sacraments

One very important department of our controversy with the Church of Rome is that which respects the sacraments; and in regard to some of the doctrines and practices which may be comprehended under this head, they make somewhat more confident and plausible appeals to antiquity than in regard to that to which we have last adverted. Protestants in general have freely conceded that the doctrine and practice of the church in regard to the sacraments was at an early period, and even during the first three centuries, considerably corrupted; but they do not admit, and it cannot be proved, that almost any of the peculiar doctrines of Popery had been invented during the period referred to, though the seeds of some of them had been sown, and were largely developed during the

fourth, the fifth, and subsequent centuries. In the fathers of the third, and even of the second centuries, there are plain enough traces of a disposition to make great mysteries of the sacraments, —to indulge in vague and unintelligible representations of their nature and their consequences. The earliest symptoms of corruption or declension in the church are to be found, first, in the rise and growth of Prelacy; secondly, the introduction of confused and erroneous views upon the doctrines of grace; and, thirdly, of erroneous and exaggerated notions of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments: and the progress of error and declension upon the two last topics, which are by far the most important, exerted a powerful reciprocal influence. It was mainly by the spread of erroneous and extravagant notions upon the subject of the sacraments, that the fundamental doctrines of the gospel were set aside and perverted; and it has been true ever since, in every age of the church, that both among mere formalists, who were satisfied with outward observances, and among men who had some earnestness about religion, but who were ignorant of, or opposed to, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the sacraments, erroneously understood, have been substituted for the weightier matters of the law— the sign has been substituted for the thing signified.

In the New Testament, certainly, the sacraments do not occupy any very prominent place; and nothing is said concerning them that gives any countenance whatever to what Papists and semi-Papists are accustomed to assert concerning their nature, objects, and results. Baptism is, indeed, said to save us, and men who receive the Lord's Supper are said to partake of the body and blood of Christ; but there are abundant materials in Scripture to prove that these outward ordinances are but signs and seals of spiritual blessings, which may, indeed, be said ordinarily to apply these blessings, but the efficacy of which in applying them is wholly dependent upon the presence and operation of faith in the recipient; while faith, wherever it exists, confers and applies all spiritual blessings irrespective of any external ordinances whatever. The symbolical character of the sacraments was soon more or less obscured or lost sight of, and some traces of the Popish principles of the *opus operatum*— i.e., some inherent power or efficacy of the ordinances themselves, irrespective of the faith and character of the recipient— began to make

their appearance, which, in the progress of ignorance and corruption of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, were gradually more and more developed.

The first step in the progress of error in this matter was a confounding, more or less thoroughly, of the sign with the thing signified; and this gradually expanded into an ascription to the sacraments of a power of producing or conferring, by something like an inherent efficacy of their own, what they merely represented or symbolized. Before the end of the third century, the fathers were accustomed to speak of baptism as being at once the remission of sin and the renovation of the moral nature; and though this mode of speaking was originally adopted upon the assumption, that the faith which unites men to Christ, and is the instrumental cause of justification, and, in the full sense of the word, of moral renovation, existed, and was expressed or embodied in the reception of baptism, yet this consideration was gradually lost sight of, and they began to talk as if baptism of itself necessarily implied all this. Hence baptism came at length to comprehend, and thereby to shut out or abolish, so far as the professed doctrinal system was concerned, the great fundamental principle of justification by faith, and to be received as a substitute for that great change of moral nature indispensable to salvation, which is effected by the Holy Spirit through the belief of the truth. It is a very remarkable thing, that the great doctrine of justification by faith excited no formal controversy in the church, and can scarcely be said to have been even fully expounded and enforced, from the time of Paul to that of Luther. Satan's policy was to undermine it, rather than to assail it openly and directly; and this object was pursued and effected chiefly by throwing the doctrine of justification, in the scriptural sense, and according to the scriptural views of it, into the background, by giving prominence to the sacraments, and by encouraging extravagant notions of their nature and efficacy. It was chiefly baptism that was employed for this purpose; and, accordingly, there are few subjects in regard to which the Papists can produce from the fathers a more plausible array of testimonies to countenance their tenets than in regard to this sacrament. Not that either the principles of the *opus operatum*, or the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation, can be shown to have been generally and distinctly held by the leading writers of the third century, though the

latter was maintained explicitly by many before the end of the fourth; but that considerable advances were made towards these errors, and still more towards what has since been called baptismal regeneration, —an error, the maintenance of which may be confidently regarded as indicating an entire ignorance of the fundamental principles of the gospel.

It was common in the third century, and even in the fourth, for men who professed to have been converted to the faith of the gospel to delay their baptism till they thought that death was at hand; and this they did under the influence of a notion which then prevailed, that baptism conferred the remission of all past sins, and thus, as it were, cleared off all scores, and prepared them for death and heaven. This erroneous and most dangerous notion was not, indeed, directly countenanced by the doctors of the church, but there must have been something in the common mode of stating and explaining the nature and efficacy of baptism which naturally led to the adoption of it. The practice of delaying baptism gradually gave way before the doctrine of the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation both in infants and adults, which had become prevalent before the end of the fourth century. But the Church of Rome still teaches, both that baptism cleanses from all past sins, —freeing infants from all original sin, —and that it is indispensably necessary to salvation; and she can produce fully as good authority from the fathers for these as for any of the other errors by which she has corrupted the doctrines of the gospel.

The Lord's Supper forms a very prominent feature in the system of the Church of Rome. Everything about this ordinance she has most grossly corrupted. She has explained and applied it in such a way as virtually to overturn or neutralize the fundamental principles of gospel truth, —the great doctrines of the vicarious atonement of Christ, justification by faith, and sanctification by the Spirit of God; and she has embodied in her system of doctrine and practice concerning it, her principal provisions for crushing the exercise of all mental independence and freedom of thought, and for subjecting the understandings, consciences, and the purses of men to the control of her priesthood. She has laboured with unwearied zeal and activity, to procure for her doctrines and practices upon this important subject the countenance and support of the primitive church,

but without success. One of the most elaborate and voluminous controversies, in the form of a single combat, that ever took place, turns upon this question, — the controversy between those two noble combatants, Amauld the celebrated Jansenist, and Claude the great champion of the French Protestant churches in the latter part of the seventeenth century. In that great controversy on the perpetuity of the faith of the church concerning the Eucharist, as it was called, everything bearing upon this topic was searched out, and applied with great ability and ingenuity on both sides. The practical result of this controversy concerning the Eucharist is very much the same as that which has been stated in regard to baptism. The Church of Rome has nothing solid, and little that is even plausible, to stand upon during the first three centuries, — nothing but a tendency manifested to talk in pompous and mystical language about the solemnity and efficacy of the ordinance, and to fail in distinguishing very accurately between the sign and the thing signified. It has been proved that the progress of obscure, unintelligible, and extravagant phraseology upon this subject advanced, but that it was not till the ninth century that we have any clear and unequivocal indication of the modern Popish doctrine of transubstantiation. It is very certain that, during the first three centuries, there was no adoration of the host; no altar, and no proper sacrifice; and that, of course, the mass, that great idol of Popery, was utterly unknown.

With respect to transubstantiation, or the alleged conversion of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, on which the whole doctrine and practice in regard to the mass is founded, they have nothing to adduce from this period in support of it, except that the fathers call the bread and wine, as Scripture does, the body and blood of Christ, — the question, however, remaining in both cases to be determined, whether such statements mean, and were intended to mean, that the one was actually converted, by a change of substance, into the other; or merely that the one was a figure, or symbol, or emblematical representation of the other. There is, as we have said, a good deal of confusion and obscurity in the language occasionally employed upon this subject, quite enough to prove the utter unfitness of the fathers to be authorities or guides; but there are sufficient materials to prove that not only for three, but for more than twice three centuries, though the obscurity and

confusion of the language employed were increasing, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation had not been broached.

Papists usually make this matter of transubstantiation the leading instance of a principle which they are in the habit also of applying to other topics, —that, viz., of the impossibility of a new doctrine being invented and broached subsequently to the time of the apostles, without attracting attention and calling forth opposition. We deny the soundness of the principle as a rule or standard for judging of the truth of doctrines. The perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures prove that it is quite enough to show from the word of God, that from the beginning it was not so; while the history of the church suggests many considerations which evince that the principle, if true at all, is true only to a very limited extent. But, irrespective of all this, Protestants do not hesitate to undertake, in regard to this particular topic of transubstantiation, to prove that there was a long and gradual process of preparation for its fabrication in the growing corruption and declension of the church, and in the growing confusion and obscurity of the language employed upon this subject; that it was not till the ninth century that the doctrine of transubstantiation was clearly and unequivocally developed; that, notwithstanding the peculiarly favourable circumstances in which it was broached, from the corruption and ignorance which then prevailed, it did meet with decided opposition, and was not finally established as the public and recognised doctrine of the church for several centuries afterwards. Gieseler, in his very valuable "Text-Book of Ecclesiastical History," states this point with his usual brevity, accuracy, and comprehensiveness, in this way, supporting his statement, as usual, with an abundance of satisfactory quotations and references: ec Paschasius Radbertus, a monk, and from A.D. 844-851 abbot, of Corbey (A.D. 865), first reduced the fluctuating expressions long in use concerning the body and blood of Christ in the holy supper, to a regular theory of transubstantiation. His doctrine, however, met with very considerable opposition. Rabanns Maurus rejected it entirely; Ratramnus" (known also by the name of Bertram), "in the opinion for which he was called upon by the emperor, and which has been often erroneously attributed to John Scotus, declared decidedly against it, and all the most respected theologians of the day adhered to the more reasonable view. Still this mystical doctrine, which had probably

existed for a long time amongst the common people, though never before theologically developed, was not without its advocates, and it was easy to foresee that it needed only a time of greater darkness and ignorance, such as soon followed, to become prevalent."

VI. The Papal Supremacy

We cannot enter upon the numerous innovations and corruptions in doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, which have been obtruded upon the professedly Christian community by the Church of Rome. The great mass of them have no countenance, and scarcely pretend to have any countenance, from the fathers of the first three centuries; and when we have once got beyond this period, no inferior antiquity, alleged to attach to any doctrine or practice, can be held to afford even the slightest presumption that it had an apostolic origin; and, therefore, all discussions about the origin of doctrines and practices, which first appeared in a later age, possess a merely historical interest, and have no real bearing upon the question of even the probability of their being true or binding. Romanists have been much perplexed as to what course they ought to take in order to procure an apostolic sanction for their innumerable innovations. Some assert that all the doctrines and practices of the modern Church of Rome have existed in the church from the time of the apostles downwards, and endeavour to account for the want of any trace of them in the remains of ancient times, by the *disciplina arcani*, or the alleged habit of the ancient church to conceal some of her tenets and ceremonies. Others abandon altogether the attempt to establish the antiquity of matters of outward order and discipline, and found a great deal upon the erroneous and dangerous principle, —which has also received the sanction of the Church of England, —that the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies.

But the difficulty remains still in regard to doctrines, in the more limited sense of the word, which cannot be established from Scripture. Now, in regard to this subject, their general principles about the unwritten, as distinguished from the written, word, would ' seem, in all fairness, to tie them down to the necessity of proving a catholic consent with respect to

all doctrines which they impose I upon men's faith, —i.e., of proving, by competent evidence, that they have been generally held by the church at large in every age since the apostles' days. But though this is a burden which their professed general principles manifestly impose upon them, and though they have made great efforts to sustain it, not only by means of sophistry and misrepresentation, but of forgery and interpolation, they have found the task impracticable. It has been proved that there are not a few doctrines taught by the Church of Rome, with respect to which not only no proof, but no presumption exists, that they were known at all during the first three or four centuries. They rather shrink from asserting openly and explicitly the right of the church, —infallible though she be, — to form new articles of faith confessedly not delivered to the church by Christ and His apostles, and imposing them upon men's consciences; and, therefore, they have devised two expedients by which they think they can evade the necessity of maintaining this startling claim, though, in fact, they are, both of them, just assertions of it in a somewhat disguised and mitigated form. The first is, that in consequence of the difficulties attaching to the investigation of this catholic consent, as a historical question or matter of fact, they ascribe to the existing church— i.e., to the Romish authorities for the time being— the right of determining finally and infallibly, whether any particular doctrines that may have been broached, have or have not been handed down in the church from apostolic times. But, as they could not fail to see that men could not easily be persuaded to believe an affirmative declaration to this effect made by the existing church, unless she had some evidence to produce of the antiquity of the doctrine, they have been led to have recourse to what is the favourite expedient now-a-days, and is known as the Theory of Development. It is based upon a principle or idea, the truth of which is admitted by Protestants, viz., that the church is warranted, and may be called upon, according to the circumstances in which she is placed, and especially the errors against which she may have to contend, to bring out more fully, and to define more precisely, the doctrines which the apostles delivered to the church; and then they add to this sound principle the unsound one, that the church— i.e., the Church of Rome— has the right of authoritatively determining what tenets ought to be received as true and sound developments of apostolic doctrine, and what ought to be rejected as errors or corruptions; and from all this they deduce the inference, that

what Protestants call Romish innovations in doctrine are true and just developments of doctrines which indeed were contained in substance in those taught by the apostles, orally or in writing; but were not developed, because there was no call for this till the broaching of errors required it. And while they rest this conclusion, and the truth of the particular doctrines which it respects, mainly upon the right of the church to develop and define, they also do their best, in regard to each particular doctrine, to bolster it up by any evidence they can derive from perverting Scripture and the testimonies of antiquity.

It is this theory of development that is advocated in Dr Newman's work, giving an account of his reasons for joining the Church of Rome. He virtually abandons the theory of tradition and catholic consent, about which he and his followers used to prate so much. The way in which true Protestants should meet it is plain enough. They will investigate the true and honest meaning of development, as distinguished from mere invention or fabrication, and mark out the limits and conditions of the principle fairly and judiciously, so as to guard against tenets being called developments of previously existing and professed doctrines, when they are manifestly new inventions, which had previously no basis to rest upon; they will deny, and, if needful, disprove, the pretended right of the Church of Rome to decide authoritatively and infallibly as to what tenets are true and just developments of previously existing doctrines, and what are new inventions and corruptions; they will insist that all these questions be decided by the sacred Scriptures, interpreted in the exercise of common sense; and then, having thus cleared the ground, they will adduce direct proof, as has been often done, that all the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome are opposed to Scripture and primitive antiquity, or at least are wholly unsanctioned by them; and that in either case, men are not only warranted, but bound, to reject them.

The causes which have led to the promulgation of this theory of development in the present day, are manifestly these: first, that in consequence of the profound investigations into the history of doctrines or dogmas, as it is commonly designated, which have recently taken place in Germany, it had become palpably absurd and impossible to maintain any longer the old Romish position, that all the doctrines of the Council

of Trent could be traced back by anything like a plausible chain of evidence to the apostolic, or to any portion of the ante-Nicene, age; and, secondly, that the theory was in substance identical with that of the infidel Rationalists, who represent the Christian system, as taught by Christ and His apostles, as containing, indeed, some germs or rudiments of truth, but as very defective and imperfect, and admitting of great improvement; and that the adoption of it was thus a specimen of Rome's skilful adaptation to the prevailing sentiments and tendencies of the age; while Satan, who must always be taken into account as an influential party in all Romish schemes, has the advantage of men being, by the exposition of this theory of development, led into infidelity, or confirmed in it, if they should not be convinced of the right of the Church of Rome to determine authoritatively on the legitimacy of alleged developments.

When we consider the various shifts to which the defenders of the Church of Rome have been thus obliged to have recourse, in discussing the general subject of the fathers and antiquity, and recollect what we have already adduced as to the testimony of the first three centuries on some of the leading peculiarities of Popery, it can excite no surprise that some of the most eminent Popish controversialists — as, for example, Cardinal Perron and the Jesuit Petavius, than whom the Church of Rome has produced no men more eminent, at once for erudition and controversial skill— have virtually given up the first three centuries, and have tried to take their stand, as the Tractarians do, upon the fourth and fifth centuries. Upon all these grounds, we do not intend to dwell at any greater length upon the bearing of the testimony of the first three centuries upon the points involved in the Popish controversy, with this exception, that we mean to make some observations upon the supremacy of the Pope, or the claim which he puts forth to be acknowledged and obeyed as the vicar of Christ upon earth, and the monarch of the universal church. This may be regarded as being in some respects the great leading characteristic of Popery, by which it is distinguished from all other professedly Christian communities, whether more pure or more corrupt.

We do not dwell upon the differences of opinion existing among Romanists themselves, as to what the Pope's supremacy implies— as to

the kind and degree of power and authority that ought to be ascribed to him— although their internal controversies upon this subject afford important arguments against the whole of the Papal claims. There is a very considerable gradation of opinion upon this topic, even among men who have lived and died in the communion of the Romish Church— from those who ascribe to the Pope, as such, personal infallibility in all matters of doctrine and even of fact, and direct jurisdiction in temporal matters, down to some of the extreme defenders of the Gallican liberties, as they are called, who have represented him as being just the patriarch of the West, occupying, indeed, the highest place, both in point of rank and power, among the bishops of the Western Church, but not invested with any very large measure of authority or jurisdiction, to be exercised according to his own discretion, and independently of the synods or councils in which he might preside, and of the canons already received by the church. It is admitted, however, that almost all Romanists, including even most of the defenders of the Gallican liberties, maintain the supremacy of the Pope, as implying that he is invested with some measure of authority or jurisdiction over the whole church of Christ. Bossuet indeed, and other defenders of the Gallican liberties, object to the position that the Pope has the power of ruling or governing the universal church, inasmuch as this might be held to imply that he was entitled to rule, and, of course, was superior to an oecumenical council, which is the universal church representative, — a doctrine which the Gallican church has always strenuously opposed; and those of them who might hesitate to deny that the Council of Florence, in the fifteenth century, which ascribed to the Pope the right of ruling and governing the universal church, was oecumenical, and of course infallible, endeavour to get rid of its decree upon this subject, by saying— rather a nice distinction — that the universal church, which the Pope is declared by the council to have the power of ruling and governing, is to be understood, not collectively, as comprehending the whole church in the mass, or an oecumenical council as representing it, but only distributively, as including all the faithful, and all the different churches, separately considered, which may be spread over the earth. But we need not enter into details as to the differences among Romanists with respect to the extent either of the Pope's spiritual or temporal supremacy, and must just regard it as implying in general, and by almost universal admission, a right to exercise jurisdiction or

authoritative control over all the professing people and churches of Christ, if Yiot over the universal church. Although it cannot, perhaps, be proved that the Church of Rome, as such, is committed to any precise definition of the kind or degree of power implied in the Pope's supremacy, —the meaning, as well as the authority of the decree of the Council of Florence, which looks most like a formal definition of anything that can be produced upon this point, being a subject of controversial discussion among themselves, —yet it can be proved that she is committed to this position, that it is indispensable to the salvation of any human being that he be subject to the Bishop of Rome: for this startling doctrine was not only inculcated in bulls issued by Pope Boniface VIII. and Pope Leo X., but confirmed by two of the Lateran Councils; and Bellarmine, accordingly, does not hesitate to say that the supremacy of the Pope involves the sum and substance of Christianity.

If it be indeed true that the Bishop of Rome is the foundation of the Christian church, the pastor of the whole flock of Christ, the commander of the whole Christian army, the sun among the stars, the head of the body, it must be of some importance that individuals and churches should know this, and be suitably affected by the relation which he holds to them. If he be the vicar of Christ, and authorized by Him to govern His church— and upon no lower ground than this can the claims he puts forth be even entertained— he must produce Christ's commission, he must show Christ's authority for all the powers he claims; and this he professes to do, adducing Scripture proofs in support of his supremacy. It is true, indeed, that (as has been conclusively proved) these claims were never explicitly put forth in their modern dimensions, as resting upon a scriptural basis, till about the middle of the fifth century; and this upon general, and much more upon Popish, principles, furnishes a very strong presumption against their validity. But still, every claim that professes to rest upon scriptural authority is entitled to a deliberate examination, at whatever time or in whatever circumstances it may have been advanced.

The positions on which the Pope's claim to supremacy over the Christian church is based, may be reduced to two, though they may also be expanded into a larger number. The defenders of the Pope's supremacy are bound, and do indeed undertake, to establish these two positions—

first, that Christ invested Peter with a primacy or superiority, not only of rank, honour, or dignity, but of actual authority or jurisdiction, over the rest of the apostles, and over all His church, so that he, by Christ's appointment, became their rightful ruler or governor, he being entitled to exercise authority over them, and they being bound to obey him; and that this supremacy was not personal to Peter, but was to be enjoyed by an unbroken succession of individuals to the end of the world; and, secondly, that, by Christ's authority and direction, Peter became and died Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to all his successors in that see the same authority or jurisdiction over the church which Christ had conferred upon him. Unless both these positions can be established, and established from Scripture, the Pope's claim to supremacy must manifestly fall to the ground.

Now, it is evident, even at first sight, that the important points embodied in the second of these positions do not admit of being established by scriptural evidence. There is manifestly nothing in Scripture which, with any plausibility, can be advanced in support of them; and, indeed, the Papists scarcely venture to allege that there is, and usually under this head have recourse to general considerations, to far-fetched inferences, to vague probabilities, and mere human authorities, instead of specific Scripture proofs. It is otherwise, however, with the first position, or at least the first part of it, which asserts that a supremacy over the other apostles, and over the whole church, was vested in Peter by his Master. In support of this they do profess to produce positive Scripture proofs, and these are not altogether destitute of a certain measure of prima facie plausibility, especially our Lord's address to Peter after the apostle had confessed his faith in Him as the Son of God, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My church." We cannot enter upon anything like a minute and detailed examination of the import of particular statements of Scripture. It is enough at present to observe that the Papists are, by their own principles, precluded from basing upon this text a proof of the supremacy of Peter, inasmuch as they cannot produce in support of their interpretation of it the consent of the fathers; nay, inasmuch as it is certain that a great proportion of the most eminent of the fathers, even in the fourth century, understood the rock on which the church was to be built, to mean, not the person, but the faith of Peter, —the great truth

which he had just confessed, and which is evidently the foundation and main topic of the whole conversation. This is an interpretation which certainly cannot be disproved, and which is rendered all the more probable by the considerations, that Christ is represented in Scripture as being alone properly the rock on which the church is built; while, in the improper or subordinate sense in which alone any creature could be said to be the rock or foundation of the church, the designation is elsewhere applied equally to all the apostles, who were also, all of them, subsequently invested with the power of the keys, with the power of binding and loosing, in the same terms as Peter was.

There is no ground in the New Testament for believing that Peter was invested by Christ with jurisdiction or authority over the other apostles and over the church; and there is no ground there for believing that he assumed or exercised any such jurisdiction. On the contrary, there is much declared and recorded in the New Testament which tends to prove — first, in general, that there was no proper superiority or subordination among the apostles, as rulers and governors of the church; and, secondly, and more specifically, that Peter was not invested with any jurisdiction over the rest of them, and that, —notwithstanding his eminent qualities, his distinguished services, and the signal honour which Christ put upon him by making him so prominent an instrument of extensive good, —he was not then regarded and treated as the vicar of Christ and the ruler of the church. With respect to the second part of the first position— viz., that the supremacy vested in Peter over the apostles, supposing it proved, was to be enjoyed by an unbroken succession of individuals in all future ages— it is scarcely pretended that there is any direct specific evidence in Scripture in support of it. It is a mere inference, resting, at best, upon vague general probabilities, and may be regarded as fairly precluded by the absurdity which it implies in its very first stage, —viz., that Peter's immediate successor must have been the lord and master of the apostles who survived him, including the apostle John, who survived all the rest. The dignity of Prince of the Apostles, which the Papists assign to Peter, if it ever existed, may have, for anything that can be shown, disappeared with the apostolic office.

It is, however, the second of the positions on which the supremacy of the

Pope is founded— viz., that Peter, by Christ's orders, became and died Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to all his successors in that see the same jurisdiction over the church which Christ had conferred on him— that comes more immediately within our province. Unless this position be also thoroughly established, nothing whatever has been done towards proving the Pope's supremacy; and unless it be established from Scripture, there can rest upon no man an obligation to admit it. Now, it is perfectly manifest that there is nothing whatever in Scripture that has even the appearance of bearing upon any of the points involved in it; and this single consideration is conclusive against the whole claim. If there be any doctrines which we are required to believe as resting upon God's authority, and if these doctrines are in some measure involved as to the grounds on which they rest in matters of fact, we must have these matters of fact recorded in Scripture itself, else they can be of no force or validity in establishing a *jus divinum*. The informations of ecclesiastical history may be of some use and weight in establishing the true meaning and import of some scriptural statements, as we formerly showed in the case of the heresies of the Docetae and the Corinthians; but this has no analogy with the present case: for here the facts alleged are made the real and the sole basis of doctrines, which it is admitted are not, as doctrines, taught in Scripture. Conceding, for the sake of argument, first, that Peter was invested with jurisdiction over the whole church; and, secondly, that he was to have a continued series of successors in the possession and exercise of this universal headship, —neither of which positions assuredly can be proved; yet all this avails nothing whatever towards establishing the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, unless and until it be further proved that Christ intended them to be His successors in this universal headship. Now, as confessedly it is not stated in Scripture, either directly or by implication, that the Bishops of Rome were to be Peter's successors in the exercise of this supremacy, Papists have been constrained to admit that the only, the indispensable medium of probation by which they must establish this link in their argument, is the matter of fact that Peter became Bishop of Rome, and continued to occupy that see till his death. Even if this were proved, it would be no sufficient ground of itself for the important and weighty conclusion based upon it, as we would still be entitled to demand distinct and specific proof for the connection between the facts and the Popish inference drawn from them; i.e., proof that

Peter's becoming and dying Bishop of Rome was intended by Christ as an indication of His purpose that all the subsequent Bishops of Rome were to be His vicars on earth. Yet, on the other hand, it is manifest that unless this can be proved, and proved from Scripture, the whole argument for a *jus divinum*, or scriptural proof in support of the Pope's supremacy, at once sinks in the dust.

Accordingly, we find that Bellarmine is involved in great confusion and perplexity, and is constrained to make some important concessions in regard to this branch of his argument. He thinks he has proved— and we are at present conceding this, for the sake of argument— that Peter was appointed by his Master to be the ruler and governor of His church, and even that Christ intended that Peter should have a perpetual series of successors in the exercise of the same jurisdiction. But he admits that he is further bound to prove that Peter became Bishop of Rome by Christ's orders, and died there by His appointment in the exercise of that office, and that this was intended to indicate that his successors in the see of Rome were also to be his successors in the government of the universal church; and when these points came up before him as positions to be proved, he saw, and was constrained to admit, that nothing like scriptural authority or a *jus divinum* could be pleaded in support of them. Having produced a testimony from one of the forged decretal-epistles of the Popes, —a series of documents acknowledged by himself in other parts of his works to be forgeries, —and two similar testimonies from Athanasius and Ambrose, fathers of the fourth century, to the effect that Peter came to Rome, and suffered martyrdom there, by Christ's orders, he founds this conclusion upon them, having nothing else on which to rest it: "Non est improbable, (not a very confident statement) *Dominuin etiam apert jussisse, ut sedem suam Petrus ita figeret Romae, ut Romanus episcopus absolute ei succederet.*" It is, then, on a mere non improbable that he bases this important step in the argument, —viz., that Christ directed Peter to become Bishop of Rome, that He might thus indicate who were to be his successors in the government of the church. Again he admits, that perhaps "*forte non est de jure divino, Romanum pontificem, ut Romanum pontificem, Petro succedere;*" while, at the same time, he maintains that, though perhaps it is not of divine right, yet it pertains to the Catholic faith, —meaning by this distinction, that, though perhaps it

cannot be proved from Scripture— the only source from which a proof, valid in the estimation of Protestants, his opponents, can be derived— yet it can be proved by arguments, the validity of which Catholics, as such— i.e., Romanists— are bound by their principles to admit, —a point with which we need not concern ourselves. And the ground of this position he explains, repeating again the same important concession, though with evident marks at once of caution and trepidation, in this way: "Etsi autem Romanum pontificem succedere Petro, non habeatur express in Scripturis, tamen succedere aliquem Petro, deducitur evidenter ex Scripturis; ilium autem esse Romanum pontificem habetur ex traditione Apostolica Petri, quam traditionem Concilia generalia, Pontificum decreta, et Patrum consensus declaravit." Thus it appears that, after a good deal of shuffling and hesitation, the concession at length comes clearly out, that for anything beyond these two positions— which, even though proved or admitted, are manifestly and confessedly far from being sufficient of themselves to establish the doctrine of the Pope's supremacy, —viz., first, that Peter was invested with supremacy or jurisdiction over the church; and, secondly, that it was Christ's intention that Peter should have a series of successors in the office of universal monarch, and in the exercise of the jurisdiction which it implies— its advocates are dependent entirely upon general councils, the decrees of Popes, and the consent of the fathers. No materials derived from these sources could establish a jus divinum, even if more full and relevant than any which Papists have been able to produce from them. And, accordingly, most subsequent Popish controversialists have taken warning from Bellarmine's perplexity upon this point, while they have failed to imitate his candour, and have usually omitted to bring forward this branch of the argument, as if it were unnecessary for the establishment of their cause.

In this argument about the succession of the Popes to Peter, and the nature and amount of the evidence in support of Christ's having directed him to fix his see at Rome, and having intended thereby to indicate that his successors in that see were also to be his successors in the government of the universal church, Bellarmine assumes it as proved that Peter had been at Rome, that he became bishop of that church, and died in the occupation of that office; and it is important to remember that, essential as the proof of these matters of fact is to the establishment of the Pope's

supremacy, there is not a vestige of evidence in support of them in Scripture, while the facts that enter into the necessary proof of a *ius divinum* can be admitted upon any lower authority. Here is a fatal defect which cannot be repaired. The general conclusion to which an examination of all the materials in Scripture bearing upon the point would lead, is the improbability that Peter ever was at Rome; while the common Popish averment, that he held the Roman see for twenty-five years after having been for seven years Bishop of Antioch, may be fairly regarded as disproved by Scripture;— and yet this averment forms a portion of the earliest authority we have for Peter being Bishop of Rome at all, —viz., a statement of Jerome's in the end of the fourth century.

Though there is no certainty, no evidence in Scripture, that Peter ever was at Rome, and though the presumption from Scripture is rather against it, yet there is a considerable amount of historical evidence, of ordinary human testimony, that he suffered martyrdom in that city; and though, even as a mere question of historical evidence, it cannot be said to be thoroughly established, yet Protestants have generally admitted it as being, upon the whole, most probable. As to the position that he was Bishop of Rome, in the modern sense of the word, there is not a vestige of anything like evidence in support of it in Scripture. On the contrary, there is much in Scripture to prove— first, that no apostle became, in the modern sense, bishop of any particular church, —a thing as absurd, as Dr Isaac Barrow says, "as if the king should become Mayor of London, or the Bishop of London should become Vicar of Pancras;" and, secondly, that no such, functionaries as modern bishops existed in the apostolic age. This second position goes to the root of the matter, while it suggests the consideration that the firmest basis on which to rest our assaults upon Popery, so far as church government is concerned, is the Presbyterianism of the New Testament. There is, then, no Scripture evidence that Peter was invested with jurisdiction or authoritative control over the other apostles and the whole church, or that he was to have a series of successors in the exercise of this jurisdiction; there is no Scripture proof that he ever was at Rome, or held the office of bishop of that church; and, lastly, there is no indication in Scripture that it was the mind and will of Christ that the Bishops of Rome should succeed him in the possession of any of the powers and prerogatives which he enjoyed. All these positions

must be established, and established from Scripture, in order to lay the foundation of a *ius divinum* in pleading for the Pope's supremacy; while not one of them can be proved from the word of God, and most of them can be disproved by conclusive scriptural evidence. Surely Luther was well entitled to his joke, when, adverting to the entire want of Scripture evidence for this sweeping and presumptuous claim, he put this question, "Where is it written, except perhaps at Rome, in the church of St Peter's, in the chimney with a bit of coal!"

I have still to advert to the testimony of the first three centuries upon the claim of the Bishops of Rome to supremacy over the whole Church, —a claim which, as formerly explained, implies, and is based upon, these two positions: first, that Peter was invested by Christ with authority or jurisdiction over the other apostles and over the whole church; and, secondly, that by Christ's directions he became, and died, Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to his successors in that see the jurisdiction over the whole church which he himself possessed. If such a right had been conferred upon Peter and the Bishops of Rome, this must have been well known to the church, and their knowledge of it must have appeared palpably in their statements and proceedings. This is so evident from the nature of the case, as not to require illustration. A negative argument from antiquity— if there be, indeed, materials on which to rest it— must evidently be at once legitimate and powerful in opposition to Papal claims; i.e., in other words, if there be no clear traces in primitive antiquity of Peter and the Bishops of Rome claiming this supremacy, and having the exercise of it conceded to them, this must be, to say the least, a very strong presumption that no such right was ever conferred upon them.

Accordingly, the defenders of the Papal supremacy have commonly laid down this position, and have virtually admitted that it was necessary for them to prove it in order to make out their case, — viz., that ever since the formation of the Christian church, the Bishops of Rome, as Peter's successors, have claimed and exercised jurisdiction over the whole flock of Christ. They have not been able to produce anything whatever in support of this position that has even the appearance of evidence, though they have certainly displayed the most extraordinary diligence and

ingenuity in distorting and perverting the statements of early writers, and the 'facts and incidents of ancient history, in order to extract from them something in support of their claims. Every phrase or expression that has ever dropped from any ancient writer in commendation of Peter or of the Church of Rome, or of any of its bishops; every instance in which the Bishops of Rome were applied to by any one for advice or assistance; every case in which they interfered in the discussion or arrangement of any subject, and seem to have contributed in any way, or to any extent, to its adjustment;— everything of this sort is put down as a proof, not of the possession of excellence or of influence, but of proper jurisdiction or authority over the church. But as it may be confidently asserted that not only there is nothing in Scripture which asserts or implies that Peter exercised, and was recognised as entitled to exercise, jurisdiction over the other apostles and the church at large, but much which shows that no such right was then imagined to exist, so the same assertion may be made with equal confidence in regard to the first three centuries, and for a considerable period beyond them.

We have shown that Bellarmine was forced to admit that the position, essential to the establishment of the Papal supremacy— viz., that Christ, by arranging that Peter should die Bishop of Rome, intended to indicate His will that his successors in that see should also succeed him in the government of the whole church— could not be proved from Scripture, and therefore was not based *jure divino*; while he contended that it was founded upon what he called " the apostolic tradition of Peter." By this, of course, he meant, first, that Peter himself had made known to the church' that this was his Master's will; and, secondly, that the knowledge of this important fact— viz., that he had done so— rested upon tradition. He then proceeds to specify more particularly what proof there was of this tradition, on which so much depended; and therefore, in support of it, cites general councils, the decrees of Popes, and the consent of fathers; and he goes on to produce proofs from these different sources.

As to the general councils, none were held during the first three centuries; so that their authority by itself, as a proof of v apostolical tradition, is of no value, while at the same time they do not come under the limits of our present subject. We may merely remark, in passing, that

the first four general councils, — which were held, two in the fourth, and two in the fifth century, — whose doctrinal decisions upon points of faith are generally admitted by Protestants to have been sound and orthodox, neither said nor did anything which affords the slightest countenance to the claim of Papal supremacy; that many things in their history and proceedings afford arguments against the Papal supremacy, which its most learned and ingenious defenders have been unable satisfactorily to answer; that, in several instances, these councils passed decrees or canons which were opposed and protested against by the Bishop of Rome or his agents, as manifestly inconsistent with claims which he then advanced, even though short of universal supremacy or headship over the whole church; and that the first general council which really asserted the Papal supremacy with anything like explicitness, though no doubt it had been practically established and exercised long before, was the fourth Lateran Council, held under Pope Innocent III., in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Of course no evidence can be derived from general councils in support of the position that Peter taught the church that his successors in the see of Rome were to possess universal supremacy: that is, no evidence which can be regarded as having any weight until after it has been proved that all these assemblies, which the Church of Rome calls general councils, were possessed of infallibility.

The second head of evidence to which Bellarmine refers in support of the apostolicity of this pretended tradition, is the decrees of Popes; and here, too, we would need a previous proof of their infallibility, before we can receive their testimony as valid, especially in their own cause, —in a matter in which their own claims and interests are so deeply involved. He does not pretend to produce anything in support of this claim from any of the Popes of the first three centuries, and this is enough to show the futility of his appeal to this source of evidence. The first Pope he produces is Julius, who held the see of Rome about the middle of the fourth century, at the time of the famous Council of Sardica, and was probably the author of the canon, —if, indeed, the Council of Sardica ever passed such a canon, —which three of his successors so unsuccessfully employed to reduce the African church to subjection to Rome in the beginning of the next century. But, in truth, he has no testimonies even from Bishops of Rome which bear explicitly upon the point of a claim to proper

universal jurisdiction, derived by succession from Peter, till the time of Pope Leo I., about the middle of the fifth century; while there is no evidence that this claim was generally conceded, even in the Western Church, till a much later period.

The third source of evidence to which Bellarmine refers is the consent of the fathers; and the only fathers to whom he refers during the period we are at present considering, are Irenaeus, Origen, and Cyprian: to Irenaeus, as asserting the supremacy of the Church of Rome; to Origen, as asserting the supremacy of Peter; and to Cyprian, as asserting both. We formerly had occasion to remark, that Romanists could not produce the consent of the fathers, even of the fourth and fifth centuries, in support of their interpretation of those passages of Scripture on which they found the supremacy of Peter. In regard, for instance, to the passage which affords the only support to the claim that is possessed of anything like plausibility— viz., "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My church"— some of them interpret the rock to mean Christ Himself; most of them, to mean the faith which Peter confessed on that occasion; while the few of them who regard it as referring primarily, and in the first instance, to Peter himself personally, do not interpret it as conferring upon him any power or jurisdiction which was not either then or afterwards conferred upon the other apostles. Now, all that can be justly alleged in regard to Origen is, that he seems to have taken the last of these views of the meaning of this passage; while the fact that he was not a believer in Peter's supremacy, in the Popish sense of it, is established beyond all fair controversy, by his having repeatedly, and most explicitly, asserted the full and perfect equality of the apostles in point of power or authority. In regard to Cyprian the case stands thus: in discussing the subject of the unity of the church— and we formerly had occasion to mention that he made considerable advances towards developing the Popish doctrine upon that subject— he makes some statements about Peter's being appointed by Christ to be the symbol or representative of unity, and about the Bishop of Rome still continuing to serve a similar - purpose. What he meant by this notion it is not easy to say; and the probability is, that if we could interrogate him upon the subject, he would himself be unable to tell us clearly what he meant. Barrow calls it "subtle and mystical," and adds, "I can discern little solidity in this conceit, and

as little harm."But it is certain that he did not mean by it to ascribe to Peter and the Bishops of Rome a right to govern the whole church; and the conclusive proof of this is to be found in these three facts: first, that he has repeatedly asserted, in the plainest and most unequivocal terms, that all the apostles were invested with equal power and authority, no one having jurisdiction over another; secondly, that he has asserted with equal plainness, that all bishops are possessed of equal power and authority, each being entirely independent of any other bishop in his own diocese; and, thirdly, that he distinctly and boldly acted upon these principles in his controversy with Stephen, Bishop of Rome, about re-baptizing heretics, —Stephen, indeed, not demanding submission upon the ground of any supremacy which he claimed, and Cyprian making it very manifest, by the way in which he treated Stephen and his arguments, that if any such claim had been put forth, it would have been openly denied and strenuously resisted. Irenaeus is the only other authority produced during this period. It is not alleged that he has asserted the supremacy of Peter, but it is alleged that he has asserted the supremacy of the Roman Church; and, in proof of this, .a passage is produced from him — or rather the Latin translation, for we have not the original Greek of this part of his book against heresies— in which he ascribes to it, *potiorem principalitatem*, —a passage which, since it is the only plausible testimony which the first three centuries afford in support of the Papal supremacy, is much boasted of by Popish writers, and has given rise to a great deal of learned discussion. It would be a waste of time to give even an abstract of the arguments by which Protestant authors have proved that this passage is utterly insufficient for the purposes to which the Romanists apply it, especially as they could not be stated within any short compass. The import and bearing of the passage are fully discussed in Mosheim's Commentaries. It cannot be denied that the statement gives some apparent countenance to the Papal claims; but even if it were much more clear and unequivocal than it is, it would be utterly insufficient, standing as it does alone, to support the weight which the Church of Rome suspends upon it. Mosheim, after investigating the meaning of the passage, and setting forth what he regards as the most probable interpretation of the *potior principalitas*, one which gives no countenance to the Papal claim of supremacy, concludes in this way: "*Dedecet profecto viros eruditos et sapientes ex verbis obscuris et incertis privati hominis et*

unius pusillae ac pauperis ecclesiae episcopi, boni quidem et pii, verum mediocri acumine ac ingenio praediti, jus publicum totius ecclesiae Christianae atque formam gubernationis ejus a Christo praescriptam elicere."

The negative argument, which is manifestly one of great power and weight in a case of this sort, stands untouched and unbroken, with nothing that can be alleged on the other side except a single obscure and ambiguous passage in a barbarous Latin translation of Irenaeus, made we know not when or by whom. And the argument is not wholly negative, for there is much in the history of the church during the first three centuries which affords positive and conclusive proof that the claim of the Bishops of Rome to rule or govern the universal church was not then advanced or acknowledged, and, indeed, was utterly unknown. In surveying the history of this period, with the view of ascertaining from the events which occurred, and the course of conduct pursued, whether the Bishops of Rome were regarded and treated as the rulers of the church, the following considerations must be kept in view. The supremacy of the Pope must necessarily imply these two things: first, that the Bishops of Rome are, and have always been acknowledged to be, the highest ultimate judges in all theological and ecclesiastical controversies, at least when there were no general councils; and, secondly, that communion with the Roman Church, and subjection to the authority of its bishop, were held necessary in order to being regarded as being in the communion of the catholic or general church. All Romanists admit that the exercise and acknowledgment of the Papal supremacy imply these things. It is because Protestants, both in theory and in practice, deny them, that Papists denounce them as throwing off the authority of Christ's vicar, and as putting themselves beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, and thereby excluding themselves from salvation. Keeping these things in view, and then surveying the history of the early church, we shall meet with much that affords conclusive proof that the Papal supremacy was utterly unknown, —that the idea of any such right as supremacy implies being vested in the Bishop of Rome had not then entered into men's minds. If Clement had ever imagined that he, as the successor of Peter, was invested with supremacy over the church, he could not have written such a letter as he did to the church of Corinth, in which, when they were

indulging in a spirit of faction and turbulence, he contented himself with labouring to persuade them by scriptural considerations to respect and obey their own presbyters. The facts connected with the two discussions concerning the time of observing Easter— the one about the middle, and the other near the end, of the second century— not only afford conclusive proof, as we formerly showed, of the utter baselessness of all claims, even then, to authentic apostolical tradition, but also of the utter ignorance of the whole church of any right vested in the Bishops of Rome to rule or govern it; while the facts connected with the controversy about the re-baptizing of heretics, in the third century, and many others that might be mentioned, establish the same important position.

Indeed, it is an easy matter to trace the whole history of the rise and progress of the Papal supremacy, from its first faint dawns till its full establishment; and it is certainly by far the most extraordinary instance of successful imposture and iniquity the world has ever witnessed. It was an object prosecuted for a succession of ages with unwearied zeal: every incident was most carefully improved for promoting it, and no scruples of conscience, no regard to truth or veracity, no respect for the laws' of God or man, were ever allowed to stand in the way of extending this usurped dominion over the church. Popish writers delight to dwell upon the permanency and extensive influence of the Papacy, as contrasted with the comparatively brief duration of empires and kingdoms that have risen and passed away; and some of them have really made a striking and impressive picture of this topic, one rather fitted to touch the imagination, and to call forth feelings of solemnity and veneration; but when, instead of being satisfied with a mere fancy sketch, we examine it with care and attention, —when we consider the utter baselessness of the ground on which the Papal supremacy rests, and the way in which this power has been secured and exercised, —we cannot but be persuaded that, though in some respects beautiful outwardly, it is within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

VIII. The Constitution of the Church

We proceed now to advert to the testimony of the first three centuries on the subject of church government, and especially of Episcopacy, or, as it should rather be called, of Prelacy. Prelatists have been usually very loud and confident in appealing to the testimony of the primitive church in support of their principles; and if the primitive church meant the church of the fourth and fifth centuries, they could, no doubt, produce a great body of testimony in their favour—testimony, however, which becomes feebler and feebler during every generation as we go backwards, until the truly primitive New Testament period, when it entirely disappears.

The substance of what we are persuaded can be fully established upon this point is this: That there was no Prelacy in the apostolic age; that there is no authentic evidence of its existence in the generation immediately succeeding that of the apostles; that the first faint traces of Prelacy, or rather of something like it, are to be seen about the middle of the second century; and that the power of Prelates continued gradually to increase and extend, until, by the end of the fourth century, it had attained a condition pretty similar to that which modern Prelatic churches exhibit, though there was not even then the same entire exclusion of presbyters from all share in the government of the church, which the practice of the Church of England presents. If there be anything approaching to accuracy in this general statement, it would seem very like as if Prelacy were a feature or part of the great apostasy from scriptural truth, and order, which so early began to manifest itself in the church, and which was at length fully developed in the antichristian system of the Church of Rome; in other words, it might seem as if Prelacy were a branch or portion of Popery. The question, whether it be so or not, is not one of great practical importance, for, perhaps, at bottom it may resolve itself very much, in one sense, into a dispute about words; and the question, whether a Prelatic government ought to exist in the church, must be determined by an appeal to Scripture. But as the general question which this particular point suggests, —viz., as to the grounds on which an allegation with respect to any doctrine or practice, that it is

Popish, should rest, and the weight due to such an allegation, —is one of some importance in theological discussions, it may not be unseasonable to take this opportunity of making a few remarks upon it.

It has long been a common practice among controversialists to charge their opponents with holding Popish views and sanctioning Popish practices, and to adduce this as a presumption, at least, against them. The charge has been sometimes adduced by men of very scanty intelligence and information, upon very insufficient grounds; and that, again, has afforded a sort of excuse to others who could not easily defend themselves against such a charge for scouting and ridiculing, rather than answering, it. For instance, some of the ignorant and foolish sectaries, who sprung up in such numbers in England during the period of the Commonwealth, were accustomed to allege that Presbytery was just as Popish as Prelacy was; and Episcopalian controversialists, down to the present day, are in the habit of quoting some of the statements of those persons to this effect, as if they were proofs of the folly of such a charge against whatever it might be directed. Some persons in our own day have asserted, that the doctrine of the obligation of civil rulers to employ their civil authority, with a view to the promotion of religion and the welfare of the church, is Popish; while others, going to the opposite extreme, have adduced the same charge against the doctrine of the entire independence of the church of all civil control; though it can be proved, I am persuaded, that both these doctrines are taught in Scripture, and though it is certain that they were maintained, but in a much purer form, by the Reformers as well as by the Church of Rome. These are specimens of the inconsiderate and reckless way in which this charge is often bandied about by ignorant and foolish men; but these, and many other specimens of a similar kind, afford no sufficient proof that the charge is universally ridiculous, or that it is impossible to discriminate between the cases in which it does, and those in which it does not, rest upon a satisfactory foundation.

At a very early period, we see plain traces of corruption and declension in the church of Christ. This continued to increase and extend age after age, until it reached its full development in the matured system of the apostate Church of Rome. The leading features which this progress of declension and corruption assumed, and the principal results to which it tended, are

sufficiently discernible: the obscuration and perversion of the doctrines of grace; the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the worship of God, and the ascription to them, as well as to the divinely appointed sacramental ordinances, of an undue importance and efficacy; the invention of new orders and offices in the government of the church, —all tending to depress and to reduce to slavery the Christian people and the office-bearers whom Christ appointed, and terminating at length in a system which leads men to build upon a false foundation for salvation, and to submit implicitly to the tyranny of their spiritual superiors. Such is Popery fully matured; but the seeds of the system were early sown, and were very gradually developed. Everything which really enters as a component part into this great system of error and corruption, may be fairly enough called Popish; and the fact, if it can be established, that it does enter into this system, and may therefore be fairly called Popish, forms, no doubt, a very strong presumption against it.

But everything which has been and is held by the Church of Rome, must not be regarded as Popish in this obnoxious sense. She has retained a profession of some important scriptural doctrines and principles, though there are none which she has not, more or less extensively, and more or less directly, corrupted. She has retained an orthodox profession upon the subject of the Trinity, while she has corrupted the doctrine and worship of God by polytheism and idolatry. But we must not, either because of her having retained so much truth, or of her having joined so much error with it, concur with the Socinians in setting aside the doctrine of the Trinity as Popish. She has retained the truth of the entire independence of the church of Christ of civil control, though she has sometimes practically sacrificed this truth to some extent in her unprincipled prosecution of her selfish interests (as, for example, in tolerating patronage), while she has corrupted it by claiming for the church control over the civil authorities; but we should not, either because of her holding this truth, or of her having to some extent corrupted it, concur with infidels and Erastians in denying the independence of the church, or in subjecting it to the civil power, as if everything else were Popery. In order, then, to warrant us in calling any doctrine or practice Popish, and urging this as a presumption against its truth, it is not enough that it has been held by the Church of Rome; it

should also have been rejected by the great body of the Reformers— those great men to whom the Holy Spirit so fully unfolded the mind of God as revealed in His word, and whom He raised up and qualified for restoring His truth and purifying His church. When both these positions can be fully established in regard to any doctrine or practice, —viz., first, that it is held by the Church of Rome; and, secondly, that it was denied or rejected by the great body of the Reformers, —we are fairly entitled to call it Popish, and we may fairly regard the proof of these two facts as establishing a strong presumption against it.

Still it must never be forgotten that there lies an appeal from all human authorities, from fathers or reformers of every age and of every church, to the only certain and unerring standard, the word of the living God; and that neither the allegation nor the proof that a doctrine or practice may be fairly called Popish exempts us from the obligation to examine whether its claims, if it put forth any, to the sanction of the sacred Scriptures be well founded or not, and to regulate our treatment of it by the result of this examination. Prelacy has been often designated by Presbyterian writers as Popish; and if it be a sufficient foundation for such a charge to prove that it is held both theoretically and practically by the Church of Rome— that it was rejected by the great body of the Reformers, as well as by those who, in the middle ages, were raised up as witnesses against antichrist— that its introduction formed a step in the process of the corruption of the early church, —and that it afforded some facilities for the growth and development of the Papal system, —then the charge is well founded, for all these positions can be established against Prelacy by satisfactory evidence. The Church of Rome has much more fully and more explicitly asserted the doctrine of Prelacy than the Church of England has done. All that the Church of England has ventured to lay down upon this point is contained in the following vague and ambiguous declaration in the preface to the Ordinal for ordination: "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons;" whereas the Council of Trent has set forth the doctrine much more explicitly, and has required the belief of it, because it was generally denied by the Reformers, tinder an anathema. The two following canons were passed in the twenty-third

session of the council, and, of course, form the standard doctrine of the church: "Si quis dixerit, in ecclesia catholica non esse hierarchiam divina ordinatione institutam, quae constat ex episcopis, presbyteris, et ministris: anathema sit;" and again: "Si quis dixerit, episcopus non esse presbyteris superiores, vel non habere potestatem confirmandi et ordinandi; vel eam, quam habent, illis esse cum presbyteris communem, anathema sit." The adoption of these canons by the Council of Trent not only proves that Prelacy is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, but also proves indirectly what can be conclusively established by direct evidence, —that it was generally rejected by the Reformers.

It is an insufficient defence against the allegation with respect to a particular doctrine or practice that it is Popish, to prove that it existed in the church before what we commonly call the Popish system was fully developed. The germs or rudiments of that very system can be traced back to the apostolic age. There were men then in the church who loved to have the pre-eminence, who were for imposing ceremonies and establishing will-worship; and it should not be forgotten that the introduction and establishment of a new office, held by men possessed of higher rank and authority than other office-bearers (presbyters and deacons) whom the apostles appointed— and such we believe Prelacy to have been— runs precisely in the line which ultimately terminated in a universal bishop, and, no doubt, contributed to extend and strengthen it. At the same time, it is perhaps more proper and becoming that, out of regard to the valuable services which many prelates and Prelatists have rendered to the cause of Protestantism, we should abstain from the application of the term Popish to Prelacy, and content ourselves with asserting and proving that it has no warrant in Scripture or primitive antiquity, and therefore should not exist in the church of Christ. But still, when Prelatists open their case, as they often do, by asserting that Prelacy prevailed over the whole Christian world for 1500 years, and was found obtaining over the whole church at the period of the Reformation, and adduce this as a presumption of its truth, it is neither unbecoming nor unreasonable to remind them that, if it prevailed generally till the time of the Reformation, it was rejected by the' great body of the Reformers as a Popish corruption: that we can cut off two or three centuries from the commencement of their 1500 years; and that then we can show that some

other Popish corruptions can be traced back, at least in their germs or rudiments, to as venerable an antiquity, and enjoyed thereafter as general a prevalence, as Prelacy can claim.

I. Prelacy;— State of the Question

The position which the advocates of Prelacy commonly lay down upon this subject is to this effect: We find from the writings of the early fathers, that from the apostolic age bishops are to be found in all the churches, recognised and obeyed as the highest ecclesiastical office-bearers;— this state of things could not have existed so early and so generally, unless it had been introduced and established by the apostles themselves: whence we infer that Episcopacy is of apostolic origin and authority. When the subject is presented in this form, the question naturally and obviously occurs, whether or not the argument, founded on the alleged earliness and universality of the existence of bishops, is expected to be receded as a proof of a *jus divinum*, —a proof of what the apostles did, and of what, therefore, the church is still bound to do; or merely as a presumption in favour of a certain mode of interpreting some portions of Scripture, bearing, or alleged to bear, upon this topic. Both views have been held by different classes of Episcopalians. Some High-church Episcopalians— as, for example, the Tractarians— have admitted that the divine right of Prelacy could not be fully established from Scripture, but, agreeing in substance with the Church of Rome on the doctrine of tradition, or the principle of catholic consent, they regard the testimony of the early church as sufficient to prove it; and, indeed, they expressly adduce this matter of Prelacy as a proof of the imperfection of Scripture, alleging that we are dependent upon tradition for conclusive evidence in support of it. Other Episcopalians think they can establish Prelacy from Scripture, and they refer to the testimony of the primitive church merely as affording some corroboration of the scriptural argument; while not a few seem to hover between these two points. Most of them, indeed, seem to have a sort of lurking consciousness that the Scripture evidence for Prelacy is not of itself very conclusive, and stands much in need of being corroborated by the testimony of the early church; while they vary among themselves in their mode of stating formally the value and importance of

the evidence they profess to produce from antiquity, according to the soundness and clearness of their convictions and impressions with respect to the sufficiency and perfection of the sacred Scriptures, and the necessity of a scriptural proof in order to support a jus divinum.

It is, however, of the highest importance, that, in the investigation of all such subjects, we retain right impressions of the clear and unchangeable line of demarcation between the testimony of Scripture and all merely human authority; that we do not forget that we are bound to believe and to practise nothing as of divine authority, the proof and warrant of which cannot be deduced from the word of God; and also that, —as we had occasion more fully to explain in treating of the Pope's supremacy, —if, in order to establish any conclusion which is professedly based upon some scriptural statements, the proof of any matters of fact be necessary to complete the argument, these matters of fact must also be established from Scripture, else the evidence of a jus divinum falls to the ground. The facts may be established sufficiently by ordinary human testimony; but if the argument from Scripture cannot be completed conclusively without them, then we are entitled to say, that since God has not been pleased to make them known to us through the medium of His word, He does not require us to receive, as a part of His revelation, and as binding by His authority, the conclusion to the proof of which they are indispensable. Episcopalians often plead their cause as if they had some vague notion of its resting partly upon Scripture, and partly upon antiquity, or upon some indescribable compound of the two, which is neither the one nor the other. It is, however, indispensable that these two things be kept distinct, each having its own proper province and function assigned to it: that if Scripture be indeed the only rule of faith and practice, its due and exclusive prerogative be always fully maintained; and that nothing be allowed to interfere, theoretically or practically, directly or indirectly, openly or latently, with its paramount and exclusive authority. It is of some importance that, if possible, the doctrine and practice of the primitive church upon this point, and upon all points, should be ascertained; but the importance of this sinks into nothing when compared with that of ascertaining the doctrine of Scripture and the practice of the apostles from the original and only authentic source of information. If it should turn out that the doctrine and practice of the

primitive church, after the apostles' time, are in favour of Prelacy; and if it be further alleged, as is often done, that there is something peculiar in this case, which renders the post-apostolic practice a more certain proof of what the apostles established than in the case of other alleged apostolic traditions, —perhaps this alleged peculiarity may be entitled to consideration, though we think enough has been said to show that, as a general position, the prevalence of a doctrine or practice in the second and third centuries affords of itself but a very feeble presumption that it was taught or prescribed by the apostles. The truth, however, is, that antiquity affords no stronger evidence in favour of Prelacy even in degree, to say nothing of the vast difference in kind, than Scripture does.

In order to estimate aright the bearing of the testimony of antiquity upon the subject of Prelacy, it is of importance to attend, in the first place, to the true and proper state of the question between its advocates and its opponents; for I am persuaded that a considerable proportion of the evidence which Prelatists are accustomed to adduce from antiquity derives its whole plausibility from the tacit and insidious influence of the sophism called *ignoratio elenchi*, or a mistake as to the precise import of the point to be proved; and I need scarcely remark that the investigation and settlement of the status questionis is equally important, whether we are trying to estimate the amount of the scriptural or of the historical evidence. The general question may be correctly stated in this way: Should there exist permanently in the church of Christ, a separate and distinct order of ordinary office-bearers superior to pastors, invested with jurisdiction over them, and possessed of the exclusive right of performing certain functions which are essential to the preservation of an organized church, and the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs? So far as the scriptural argument is concerned, the proper question is, Have we in Scripture any sufficient intimation that it was the mind and will of Christ that this separate and distinct order of office-bearers should exist? and so far as the historical argument is concerned, the question is, Did this superior order exist in the early church? and if so, does this fact afford any proof or presumption that it was the mind and will of Christ that it should exist permanently in His church? or does it, upon any other ground, impose upon the church an obligation to have it?

The proof that it is the true state of the question which has now been given, is this, that unless Prelatists are prepared openly and manfully to take up the affirmative of these questions, Presbyterians have no real controversy with them, while they can have no material objection to adduce against Presbyterianism. The substance of the fundamental allegation of the Episcopalians is this, that Presbyterians want an important and divinely authorized order of office-bearers, which they have; and that, in consequence of the want of this order, there are certain necessary ecclesiastical functions, such as confirmation and ordination (exclusively appropriated to this higher order), which cannot be validly, or at least regularly, executed in Presbyterian churches; and, on the other hand, the substance of the fundamental allegation of the Presbyterians is, that they have all the classes of ordinary office-bearers which the apostles instituted, —that the ordinary pastors are fully authorized to execute all the functions which are necessary to the right administration of the affairs of the church, —and that the Episcopalians have introduced a new, unauthorized, and unnecessary order of office-bearers. No Presbyterian contends that the presbyters should not have a president, or that the president should not have, in virtue of his appointment, a certain measure of superior power or authority. No Presbyterian contends that there is any very definite standard of the precise degree of power or authority which the president or moderator should possess, or of the precise length of time during which he might be allowed to continue in office, or that, in settling these points, there is no room for the exercise of Christian wisdom, and a regard to times and circumstances. Many Presbyterians would admit that the main objection even to a perpetual moderatorship, or the presbyters appointing one of their number to fill the chair, *ad vitam aut culpam*, while he still continued a mere presbyter, with no exclusive right to perform certain functions, which could not be executed without him, and rendered wholly subject to their jurisdiction, is the general injurious tendency of such an arrangement, —its tendency, as established by melancholy experience, in the history of the church, to introduce a proper Prelacy. Calvin was moderator of the presbytery of Geneva as long as he lived, probably just because no other man would take the chair while he was present. But after his death, Beza, to whom a similar mark of respect would then have been conceded by his colleagues, declined it, and insisted that the practice of having a constant moderator,

as our forefathers used to call it, should be abandoned, as likely to lead to injurious results. Presbyterians, too, would generally admit, that special and extraordinary circumstances might warrant the church in extending somewhat, for a time, the power of a president or moderator, and, more generally, in delegating extraordinary powers to individuals. All this goes to prove that the one essential subject of controversy is a proper prelate, holding a distinct ordinary office, higher than that of the presbyters, having jurisdiction over them, in place of being subject to their control, and possessed, in virtue of his superior office, of an exclusive power of performing certain functions which they cannot execute without him.

Many Prelatists dislike to have the true state of the question brought out distinctly in this way, from a sort of vague consciousness, which is certainly well founded, that much of the evidence which they are accustomed to adduce in support of their principles, does really not touch the point in dispute, as we have now explained it; and many of them have laboured to obscure and perplex it. These persons would fain represent the real subject of controversy as turning merely upon this, viz., parity or imparity among ministers; and they are accustomed to talk in this strain, that they do not contend for any certain measure of superior power or authority in bishops, or about the name by which they may be called, but merely for some such imparity, or superiority, and subordination, as may prevent confusion and disorder. One might be tempted, when listening to some of them discussing the state of the question, or rather evading and perplexing it, to believe that the difference was very slight, —that Episcopacy was a very harmless thing, and might be tolerated without much danger, or much disturbance of the ordinary scriptural arrangements. The history of the church abundantly refutes this notion, as far as the general tendency of Prelacy in any form or degree is concerned; and the whole history of this controversy, as it has been conducted upon both sides, clearly proves that the real point in dispute is not the vague question of parity or imparity, but the warrantableness and obligation of having a distinct class of ordinary office-bearers, with inherent official jurisdiction over pastors, and an exclusive right in themselves to execute certain necessary ecclesiastical functions.

And here we may remark, that the settlement of the true state of the

question, settles also the onus probandi, and throws it upon the Episcopalians. It is admitted on both sides, that the apostles instituted the presbyterate and the diaconate, and have sufficiently manifested their intention, or rather that of their Master, that these offices should continue permanently in the church. The question is, Did they also, in addition to these, institute another ordinary, distinct, and higher office—viz., that of prelates— which was to enjoy the same permanence? Episcopalians affirm that they did, and are manifestly bound to prove it. Presbyterians deny it, and are merely bound, according to all the rules of sound logic, to answer the Episcopalian arguments, —to prove that they are insufficient to establish the conclusion in support of which they are adduced. This is all that can be justly demanded of Presbyterians, and is quite sufficient, when accomplished, to give them the victory, and to leave them in entire possession of the field; but they have never hesitated to undertake to prove, ex abundantly that no such permanent office as that of prelates has been instituted by any competent authority, and that the pastors of congregations are the highest ordinary functionaries in the church, and are fully warranted to execute all the functions, including ordination, necessary for the preservation of the church and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs.

While it is important, in order to a right comprehension of this subject, and a fair estimate of the evidence commonly brought to bear upon it, both from Scripture and from antiquity, that we should see and remember that the real point in dispute is a permanent order of office-bearers distinct from, and superior to, pastors or presbyters; yet it should not be forgotten that there have been some, calling themselves Episcopalians, who have never maintained the affirmative of the question, as we have explained it; and who, not to serve a merely controversial purpose, and to diminish the difficulty of their position in an argumentative point of view, but in all honesty and sincerity, have reduced the difference between bishops and presbyters to a very narrow compass. Such a man was the great and good Archbishop Usher, and several others of the most excellent and most eminent men in the Church of England, who have commonly made use, in explaining their views, of an old scholastic position, in support of which many authorities can be produced even from Romish writers who flourished before the Council of

Trent, —viz., that bishops and presbyters differunt tantum gradu non ordine. We may not be able to see very clearly the meaning, or the solidity and value, of the distinction which they employ, and may be somewhat surprised that they should continue to call themselves supporters of Prelacy; but we should not disregard the great importance of the concession which they make to truth: we should give them credit for the comparative soundness of their views; we should ever be willing to manifest courtesy and kindness towards them, and seek rather to diminish than to widen the distance between them and us, especially because the men who have supported this view of the question have usually been greatly superior to other Episcopalians, both in respect to general orthodoxy of doctrine, and to general worth and excellence of personal character. Episcopalians of this class all admit that Presbyterian ordinations, performed without a prelate, are valid, though they usually regard them as irregular; and it is not possible but that Presbyterians should view these men and their principles with very different feelings from those with which they contemplate the bigoted High Churchmen who regard all Presbyterian ordinations as null and void, and all Presbyterian ministers, though ordained, as Timothy was, by the laying on of hands, as unwarranted intruders into the sacred office, and profaners of sacred things, —a class of men in regard to whom history testifies that very few of them have given any satisfactory evidence of their living under the influence of genuine Christian principle, and that very few have been honoured with any considerable measure of Christian usefulness.

There have been some Episcopalians who have virtually abandoned all claim to a jus divinum in favour of Prelacy in any sense, and who have contented themselves with labouring to prove that Prelacy, though not established by the apostles, was a warrantable arrangement which the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities might lawfully introduce into the church, and to which, when thus introduced, men might lawfully submit; while they think it has many considerations, derived from its antiquity and usefulness, or from its accordance with the civil constitution and social arrangements of the particular country, to support it. This was in substance the view of the matter taken by many of the Reformers of the Church of England, as well as by some Lutheran divines, many of whom,

like the Anglicans, have manifested a good deal of an Erastian and latitudinarian spirit in matters of outward order. Our dispute with these persons does not properly involve a discussion of the truth of Prelatic principles, or the obligation and necessity of a Prelatic government, but must be settled by an investigation of the more general and comprehensive question, — whether or not it be lawful to introduce into the government of the church of Christ, offices and arrangements which have no scriptural warrant or sanction? This, however, is not the object which I have more immediately in view, which is to explain the true state of the question in the Prelatic controversy, as an indispensable preliminary to a right estimate of the evidence commonly adduced on both sides, in order to its decision. In regard, then, to all the various and abundant materials usually produced and discussed in this controversy, the only proper question is, — Do they, or do they not, furnish evidence in support of a distinct order of office-bearers, superior to presbyters, and authorized to execute certain ecclesiastical functions which presbyters cannot perform? All the various arguments usually adduced and discussed in the Prelatic controversy, should be brought face to face with this question, on which the whole controversy hinges. The only point of very great importance is just to determine whether or not they contain anything that requires, or contributes to require, us to answer this question in the affirmative. The habitual recollection of this would greatly aid us in discerning and establishing the insufficiency of the Prelatic arguments, whether derived from Scripture or antiquity.

If this be the true state of the question, then all the elaborate attempts in' which some Episcopalian controversialists have indulged themselves in order to establish the general position, that there ought to be an imparity among the office-bearers of the Christian Church, —especially those derived from the constitution of the Jewish Church, and from our Saviour sending out seventy disciples as well as twelve apostles, —are at once swept away as irrelevant. They do not affect the real point in dispute; and we say further, that a proof of the general position of the propriety, expediency, and probability of an imparity or gradation among ecclesiastical office-bearers, concludes nothing against us, for we have imparity in the two distinct offices of presbyters and deacons, the one subordinate to the other. Some Episcopalian have thought they could

deduce arguments both from Scripture and antiquity in favour generally of a threefold order among ecclesiastical office-bearers. Could they prove generally a threefold order among pastors, or three different ranks or gradations among men all equally entitled to preach the word and administer the sacraments, this would be something to the purpose; but they do not pretend to produce any proofs or presumptions of a general kind in favour of this position; and as to any general consideration, whether of arguments or authorities, that may seem to tell in favour of a threefold order among ecclesiastical office-bearers, we say, in addition to the general allegation of irrelevancy, that they conclude nothing against us; for we too have a threefold order, inasmuch as the fundamental principles of Presbyterian church government may be correctly stated in this way, —first, that two distinct classes of permanent office-bearers were instituted by the apostles, viz., presbyters, to perform spiritual offices, and to administer the spiritual affairs of the church, and deacons to manage its temporal or secular affairs; and, secondly, that the general class of presbyters is divided by good scriptural warrant into two ranks or orders, commonly called teaching and ruling presbyters, thus making a threefold order among ecclesiastical office-bearers.

The other arguments commonly employed by Episcopalians are founded upon the alleged fact that James (whether this James was an apostle or not, is still a matter of controversial discussion) was settled by the apostles as bishop of the church at Jerusalem; upon the angels of the Asian churches, to whom our risen Saviour addressed epistles by His servant John; and upon the cases of Timothy and Titus. In regard to the first of these arguments from the alleged episcopate of James, it is disposed of at once, in so far as it professes to be a scriptural argument, by the consideration formerly adverted to, —viz., that the fact, if fact it be, that James was in the modern sense Bishop of Jerusalem, is not asserted, either directly or by implication, in the Scripture itself; for it is little better than ridiculous to adduce, in proof of it, anything contained in the scriptural account of the Council of Jerusalem in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts. As to the Asian angels, even admitting, for the sake of argument, that they were single individuals, though this cannot be proved, and though we think that it is highly improbable— i.e., we think that the preponderance of evidence is against it— yet the very utmost it proves is,

that there was some one man in these churches who occupied a somewhat prominent or outstanding place as distinguished from others, who was in such a sense the representative of the church as to render it a proper and becoming thing that any communication intended for the church, as our Lord's epistles unquestionably were, should be addressed to him. After it is proved that these angels were literally single persons, then this further may be regarded as proved, but most assuredly nothing more. And here, again, we have to remark, that this does not come up to the point in dispute. There is not a vestige of evidence, not even a presumption, that the angel was a prelate, that he belonged to a higher class or order than the presbyters, that he had singly any jurisdiction or authority over them, that he could execute any functions to which they were incompetent; in short, there is not a vestige of evidence, not even a presumption, that he was anything more than the moderator of the presbytery.

The argument founded upon the cases of Timothy and Titus, and the power or jurisdiction which they exercised, is the only one adduced in favour of Prelacy from Scripture which appears to me to rise even to the rank of plausibility. "The Unbishops of Timothy and Titus," to adopt the title of a valuable work of Prynne's, filled with curious and varied learning, requires a mode of discussion that does not lie within the range of my present object. It is to be effected chiefly by proving, what can be conclusively established, that the office which they held was that of an evangelist, and not that of a prelate or diocesan bishop; and that the office was an extraordinary one, and not intended to be either perpetual or universal; while it may still be competent for the church to vest somewhat similar powers, in special and extraordinary circumstances, and for a time, in a single individual. Still the application of the view which has been given of the true state of the question between Presbytery and Prelacy, the only point with which I am at present concerned, does contribute somewhat to a satisfactory disposal of this argument as well as the others; for it is important to observe, that while Timothy and Titus seem to have exercised some jurisdiction over the presbytery of Ephesus and Crete when they were there, there is no proof in anything said in Scripture concerning them, that their presence was necessary to give validity to any ecclesiastical acts; nothing which implies or indicates that

during their repeated and prolonged absences from their alleged dioceses, —of which absences we have clear intimations in Scripture, — the presbyters themselves could not do all that could be done when they were present; or that presbyters could not perform all necessary ecclesiastical acts in other parts of the church where, so far as we learn from Scripture, there were no such functionaries as Timothy and Titus, no persons vested with the jurisdiction which the apostles delegated to them. This exclusive right of executing certain ecclesiastical functions, incompetent for ordinary presbyters, is an essential feature of the office of the prelate, and there is no evidence whatever that it applied to Timothy and Titus; or, to employ a good and useful scholastic distinction, often introduced by old writers in the discussion of these topics, we admit that the case of Timothy and Titus, could their office be first proved to be ordinary and perpetual, might afford a good argument in favour of prelates having a superior potestas jurisdictionis; but we maintain that it would not even then, or upon that supposition, conceded for the sake of argument, afford any evidence in support of their possessing a higher potestas ordinis, in virtue of which their presence could be held indispensable to the valid, or even the regular, performance of any necessary ecclesiastical acts; and if so, then it falls short of furnishing an argument in favour of modern Prelacy.

The application of a correct view of the true state of the question in the controversy between Presbyterians and Prelatists, is equally obvious and useful in enabling us to form a right estimate of the evidence commonly adduced in favour of Prelacy from antiquity; but the illustration of this must be deferred for the present. In the meantime, I wish it to be remembered that I have not now been professing to give anything like a formal refutation of the Prelatic arguments derived from Scripture; and that still less have I been attempting to bring forward the direct scriptural proofs in support of Presbyterian church government. I have been merely explaining the true state of the question, the real import of the point in dispute, and have only referred incidentally to some Prelatic arguments, in order to illustrate the importance of having clear views and definite impressions upon this subject, and to elucidate the way and manner in which the views that have been given of the true state of the question may and should be applied in an investigation of the evidence.

I have said enough, however, even in these brief and incidental remarks, to show that a large proportion of the arguments which Episcopalians usually attempt to deduce from Scripture in support of their system of church government, are just specimens of the *ignoratio clenchi*, and that, even if admitted to rest upon a satisfactory foundation, they are quite insufficient to establish the point which is really controverted. Even if we admit, what cannot be proved, that the angels of the Asian churches were literally single individuals, there is nothing in anything said or indicated about them that affords even a presumption that they belonged to a distinct class of ordinary functionaries, superior to pastors of congregations. Even if we admit that the office held by Timothy and Titus was intended to be ordinary and perpetual, there is nothing said or indicated concerning it, which proves that their successors in that office, though they might be possessed of a certain superior, controlling jurisdiction over presbyters, had an exclusive right to perform any functions to which presbyters were incompetent. And if it be alleged that the case of Timothy and Titus affords an indication that the apostles intended their own superiority of office over presbyters to be perpetuated in the church, then we have to say, independently of every other consideration that may be brought to bear upon this argument, that there is no evidence whatever in Scripture, that the apostles, any more than Timothy or Titus, exercised any exclusive *potestas ordinis*: in other words, there is no evidence, that after presbyters had once been settled and ordained, there was any ordinary ecclesiastical functions for the performance of which these presbyters were incompetent, and for which the presence of an apostle was necessary. And, indeed, it is remarkable that the apostles, when they speak of themselves as ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearers, take the designation of presbyters, and no other; and that (what is a very striking coincidence) perhaps the most specific statement we have in Scripture upon this whole subject is, that Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, —an irrefragable proof that presbyters are quite competent to the valid and regular performance of that act, for which Prelatists specially hold the presence of a higher functionary to be indispensable.

Let me repeat, before proceeding to consider the testimony of antiquity upon this subject, that the *onus probandi* lies upon our opponents, and

that if we can merely answer their arguments, and show that they have not produced sufficient proof of their position, we are quite entitled, upon this ground alone, to reject all their claims and pretensions, even without needing to adduce and establish the direct and positive evidence in support of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism.

II. Prelacy: —Argument from Antiquity

In dealing with the argument from antiquity, on the subject of Prelacy, we have, first, to examine what evidence we have of the actual state of matters on this point, both in respect to doctrine and practice, in the primitive church; and then, secondly, to consider whether the actual state of matters, when once ascertained, affords any proof or even presumption that proper Prelacy, in the modern sense of the word, was introduced by the apostles. I have already shown that the only genuine and uncorrupted uninspired remains of apostolic men— men who had associated with the apostles— are the first epistle of Clement to the church of Corinth, and the epistle of Polycarp to the church at Philippi; and I endeavoured to answer an observation of Neander's upon a passage in Clement's epistle which he thinks favours Prelacy or the hierarchic system, and which, in consequence, he regarded as an interpolation of a later age. If the passage really favoured Prelacy, I would willingly concede to Neander that it must have been an interpolation; but it was proved, I think, that it did not in any measure favour Prelacy. This is the chief passage in Clement on which Prelatists profess to found anything in their favour. Some of them, indeed, have attempted to found on a passage in which a distinction is made between ἡγούμενοι and πρεσβυτεροι, which they would fain represent as meaning prelates and presbyters; but it is perfectly certain, from the scope of the passage, that the word "presbyters" there means merely old men. So certain, indeed, is this, that even Archbishop Wake, who has not scrupled sometimes, in his translation of the apostolical fathers, unfairly to render presbyter by the word priest, translates it here "the aged." There is nothing, then, in the epistle of Clement which directly or by implication affords any countenance to the notion that bishops, in the modern sense, then existed or were thought necessary; while, from the general substance and leading

object of the epistle, it is perfectly manifest that, if there had been any bishop at Corinth, or if the see had been vacant at the time, as some ingenious Episcopalians have fancied, or if the idea which seems afterwards to have prevailed had then entered men's minds, — viz., that Prelacy was a good remedy against schism and faction, —something must, in the circumstances, have been said which would have proved this. So clear is all this, that the more candid Episcopalians admit it; and the latest Episcopalian Church historian, Dr Waddington, now Dean of Durham— whose History of the Church, though written for a popular purpose, is a very respectable work— after asserting without evidence, that all the other churches were provided with bishops by the apostles, adds: "The church of Corinth seems to have been the only exception. Till the date of St Clement's epistle, its government had been clearly Presbyterial, and we do not learn the exact moment of the change."

It is rather unfortunate for our Episcopalian friends that the church of Corinth should have been the exception; for, if Prelacy is felt to promote unity, peace, and subordination, and to check schism and faction, and if this consideration was present to the minds of the apostles in establishing it, —and all this they commonly allege, —there is no undue presumption in saying that the apostle Paul would surely have taken care that, whatever other churches might have been left to the evils and disorders of Presbyterial government, the proud and factious church of Corinth should have been subjected in good time to the wholesome restraint of Episcopal domination. There is another unfortunate circumstance about this solitary exception. The church of Corinth happens to be the only one about whose internal condition, with respect to government, we have any very specific and satisfactory evidence applicable to this period, —viz., the end of the first century; and we are expected, it seems, to believe that all the other churches were at this time in a different condition in respect to government from the only one whose condition we have any certain means of knowing. Dr Waddington admits that the government of the church of Corinth was at this time "clearly Presbyterial," but he says it was the only exception. Well, then, we put this plain question, Will he select any other church he chooses, and undertake to produce evidence half as satisfactory that its government at this time was Prelatic? The remains of antiquity afford no sufficient materials for doing so; and the

important fact, therefore, stands out, that the only church about whose internal condition we have any clear and satisfactory ex-scriptural evidence, applicable to the first century, had a government "clearly Presbyterian."

We have further in Clement's epistle a distinct and unequivocal declaration that the apostles appointed the first fruits of their ministry to be bishops and deacons, with the consent of the whole church; while there is no hint of their having appointed any other class of office-bearers than these two. It is scarcely disputed that the word bishops here is used, as it unquestionably is in the New Testament, synonymously with presbyters; and, therefore, we are warranted in saying that we find in Clement just what we find in the New Testament, —viz., that the apostles appointed only two orders of ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearers— the one called bishops or presbyters, and the other called deacons. And whereas those Episcopalians who admit that the bishops of the New Testament were just presbyters, or the second order, as they call them, contend that the apostles, before they left the world, indicated their mind that there should be a third and higher order, who were to be specially and pre-eminently their successors, —a position sufficiently disposed of by proving that there is nothing in the New Testament to establish this, and much to disprove it, —it is further to be observed that Clement, in telling us that the apostles appointed two orders of office-bearers— bishops and deacons— evidently intended to describe the condition in which the apostles left the church, and in which they, so far as he knew, meant that it should continue.

All that we learn from Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians concurs with what we learn from the New Testament and Clement. We find in it no evidence for Prelacy, and clear proof of Presbyterian principles. The letter runs in the name of Polycarp and the presbyters who are with him; and without straining, we may fairly say that this expression just as naturally implies that these presbyters were his colleagues as that they were his subjects. But the main point is, that the epistle distinctly intimates that the church of Philippi was at this time under the government of presbyters and deacons, while there is not a hint of the existence, past, present, or prospective, of any other and higher functionaries. This is the

more important, because we find in the New Testament, that when, about sixty or seventy years before, Paul wrote to the same church, it was under the government of bishops and deacons, as we see from the first verse of his epistle, —no doubt the same as the presbyters and deacons of Polycarp's time. This combination of the scriptural and the ex-scriptural evidence in regard to the church at Philippi has sadly perplexed the Episcopalians. Some of them, such as Dr Hammond— a man of much more learning than sense or judgment— contend that the bishops of whom Paul speaks were bishops in the modern sense of the word, that is, prelates; but that Philippi was a metropolis, and had an archbishop, the bishops being the suffragans of the province, and the primate or metropolitan himself being either dead or absent at the time when Paul wrote. But the more judicious among them admit that these bishops were just presbyters; and they add that the bishop, properly so called in the modern sense, must have been either dead or absent when Paul wrote, or, that a prelate had not yet been appointed, the episcopate being still exercised by the apostle himself. But unfortunately it appears from Polycarp's letter, written about seventy years after, when the apostles were all dead, that the church of Philippi was still under the government of presbyters and deacons, without any trace of a bishop. What is to be done with this difficulty? Why, we must just try to suppose again, that the bishop was either dead or absent. Bishop Pearson says, and it is literally all he has to say upon the point: "*Sed quis dabit Episcopum Philippensium tunc in viris fuisse? Quis prsestabit Philippenses ideo a Polycarpo consilium non efflagitasse, quod tunc temporis Episcopo ipsi haud potirentur?*" Presbyterians are not bound, and certainly will not undertake, to produce proof, as Pearson demands, that the Bishop of Philippi was then alive. It is quite enough for us that there is no trace of the existence of any such functionary in the church of Philippi— no evidence that they had had, or were again to have, a prelate to govern them; while it is further manifest, that if the reason why they asked Polycarp's advice was, as Bishop Pearson chooses to imagine, because the see was vacant at the time, it is not within the bounds of possibility that there could have been no hint or trace of this state of things in the letter itself. Philippi surely should be admitted to be another exception. Its government was likewise clearly Presbyterian, and this too after all the apostles were dead, and, consequently, after all the arrangements which

they sanctioned had been introduced. So far, then, as concerns the only two apostolic men, of whom it is generally admitted that we have their remains, genuine and uncorrupted, it is evident that their testimony upon this point entirely concurs with that of Scripture, —that they furnish no evidence whatever of the existence of Prelacy, —and that their testimony runs clearly and decidedly in favour of Presbyterial government; and if so, then this is a blow struck at the root or foundation of the whole alleged Prelatic testimony from antiquity. It cuts off the first and most important link in the chain, and leaves a gap between the apostles and any subsequent Prelacy which cannot be filled up.

Ignatius is the stronghold of the Episcopalians in regard to this period. We have already explained the grounds on which we think it impossible to believe that those parts at least of Ignatius' epistles, which speak of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, could have been written by him. It speaks in a style upon this subject, which is not only very different from that of Clement and Polycarp, but which is entirely unexampled during the whole of the second century; and he inculcates obedience to bishops, presbyters, and deacons, especially to bishops, with a frequency and an absoluteness that are utterly opposed to the whole spirit of the apostles, and the whole scope of their instructions; and that are, indeed, very offensive. We need not go over this ground again. We are not convinced that all the epistles of Ignatius have been proved to be wholly forgeries, but we are persuaded that Daille's argument upon this particular point is unanswerable; and that it has been conclusively defended by Larroque against the objections of Pearson, though Episcopalians continue to boast till this day that Pearson has never been answered. It has been conjectured — and there is nothing improbable, but the reverse, in the conjecture— from the anxious solicitude which the epistles of Ignatius manifest upon this point, that those parts of them at least were fabricated at the time when Prelacy, or something like it, was beginning to spread in the church, and were intended to throw the sanction of the venerable name of Ignatius around the pleasing innovation. This idea was first thrown out by Salmasius, and it is thus expressed in a valuable work by a recent author, which contains a great deal of useful information in a convenient form: "If the epistles are entirely genuine, they prove the very opposite of that for which they are adduced— the apostolic origin of

Prelacy. For here we see a child parading a new toy, of which he thinks he can never make enough. . . . The extreme anxiety to obtain submission betrays a consciousness of a novel assumption, for which the early extension of the church at Antioch, probably, gave both occasion and encouragement.

We would only further observe, that while the epistles of Ignatius prove that at the time when they were composed, or put into their present form, at whatever time that may have been, a real distinction among bishops, presbyters, and deacons, so that they formed three distinct orders or classes of office-bearers, had been introduced, or was in the very act of being introduced, they contain no clear intimations of what were the distinct functions, provinces, and prerogatives of these different orders. It seems pretty plain that even then the bishop was but the pastor of a single congregation, while there is no clear evidence that the presbyters—whom, however, he greatly magnifies, as well as the bishops—were pastors or ministers of the word. Hence some Presbyterian writers, in discussing Ignatius, have taken up the ground that, even admitting his epistles in their present form to be genuine and uncorrupted, they are quite reconcilable with Presbyterian principles, —the bishops being the pastors, and the I presbyters our ruling elders. I cannot say that I attach much value to this mode of disposing of the testimony of Ignatius, though it has been adopted by some respectable Presbyterian writers. The whole *usus loquench* of the second century is decidedly opposed to an explicit and uniformly recognised distinction among three different classes of office-bearers; and as soon as we find unequivocal and genuine proofs of this distinction, we find also evidence that the presbyters were pastors, though there are certainly difficulties to be met with in tracing the progressive history both of the episcopate and the presbyterate, which the existing materials of antiquity do not enable us fully to solve.

Soon after the middle of the second century, we find plain enough traces of the existence of some distinction between bishops and presbyters: i.e., we find that, whereas these words had been used indiscriminately, when applied to ecclesiastical office-bearers, in for a century both of inspired and uninspired writers, they were now sometimes applied to designate two somewhat different classes of persons; and though we have not

materials for determining very fully what the precise difference between them was, we have sufficient materials for deciding that it was very unlike the distinction between bishops and presbyters in modern Prelatic churches. The distinction between Ignatius, who lived in the beginning of the second century, on the one hand, and Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, who flourished from the middle of the second to the middle of the third century, on the other, is this, that he uniformly uses the words bishops, presbyters, and deacons, as designating three different classes, ' while they all sometimes distinguish them, and sometimes confound them, or use them synonymously, —thus clearly proving, that in their time the distinction, though it existed, was neither very great in itself, nor very much regarded, nor very constantly observed. There is no evidence that Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen believed that bishops were, by divine appointment, a distinct class or order of office-bearers from presbyters: no proof can be produced from their writings that this was generally the mind of the church during their life, while not a little can be produced from them which fairly leads to the opposite conclusion; though it must be admitted that, from the subject not having been during all this period discussed controversially, there is some ambiguity and obscurity about their statements, and some ground for dispute as to the precise nature and amount of the conclusions which they warrant. The general result of a comparison of all the various indications upon this subject, contained in the writings of this period, is this, that while at first bishops or presbyters and deacons were the only two classes of office-bearers in the church, the presidents or moderators of the presbyters came to assume, or had conceded to them, an increasing measure of power or authority; and that this gradually led to a general restriction of the name bishop to the president, while the name presbyter was continued to the other pastors. The words, however, are still sometimes used indiscriminately by all these writers. It is perfectly certain that during all this period the churches were still governed by the body of presbyters, acting substantially as colleagues; that the bishops were not regarded as constituting a distinct superior order; that no separate ordination, or consecration, as Prelatists call it now, and nothing but the united choice of the presbyters and the people, was necessary to make a presbyter a bishop. If this be so, then assuredly bishops, till the middle of the third century, were not prelates, and the evidence adduced

in support of Prelacy from this period does not bear upon the proper point in dispute.

Here it may be proper to advert to a very common misrepresentation of Episcopalians. One can scarcely open a work in defence of Prelacy, without finding it asserted, that the most learned Presbyterians admit that Prelacy existed as early as the middle of the second century, from which they think themselves entitled to draw the inference that it must have existed in the apostolic age. And in support of the allegation that learned Presbyterians make this admission, they will probably quote two or three short garbled extracts from Salmasius and Blondell, which have been handed down as an heir-loom from generation to generation among Episcopalian controversialists. The statement is wholly untrue. Neither Salmasius nor Blondell, nor any other learned Presbyterian, ever admitted that Prelacy, in the modern sense, existed as early as the middle of the second century. All that they have admitted is, that about that time there are traces of a distinction being sometimes, though not uniformly, made in the use of the words bishop and presbyter, indicating, no doubt, that the presidents of the presbyteries were beginning to assume greater prominence and influence, while they strenuously deny that at that time bishops were at all like modern prelates, either in the potestas ordinis or in the potestas jurisdictionis, which they assumed and enjoyed. In regard to Blondell and Salmasius more particularly, they maintain that, during the first half of the second century, the moderatorship of the presbytery went by seniority, the oldest minister presiding, and when he died the next oldest taking the chair; that this custom was generally changed about the middle of the second century, and the practice was then introduced of appointing a president by free choice, instead of by seniority. They do not admit that this president, though the name bishop began soon to be in a great measure restricted to him, was regarded as belonging to a distinct superior order; that he had anything like even a veto negative over the proceedings of the presbytery, or that he was possessed of any exclusive powers or prerogatives. They believed, and they have proved, that it was only after a long train of gradual and growing usurpations, not completed till more than two centuries after this period, that the primus presbyter, who had the moderator's chair, was transmuted into a prelate; and yet they are constantly quoted by

Episcopalian controversialists, as admitting that Prelacy existed in the middle of the second century.

The great battle-field, however, is the Cyprianic age, the period during which Cyprian held the see of Carthage, —i.e., for ten or twelve years immediately after the middle of the third century. The government of the church during Cyprian's time has been discussed at great length; and we formerly mentioned some of the principal works on the subject, recommending especially Jameson's "Cyprianus Isotimus." Episcopalians usually affirm with great confidence that Cyprian's writings prove that in his time proper Prelacy prevailed in the church. It cannot be denied that in Cyprian's writings we have abundant proof that in his time there was a clear and palpable distinction between bishops and presbyters, that he very strenuously inculcated the superiority in some sense of bishops over presbyters, while there is good reason to believe that he contributed in no small degree to advance the process of the progressive elevation of bishops, which had no doubt been going on from a very early period, and, indeed, we may almost say since the time of Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence. There is no evidence, however, that Cyprian, with all his zeal and earnestness in maintaining the prerogatives of the episcopate, believed bishops to be of divine appointment— a distinct superior order to presbyters— that he claimed for them anything like the exclusive government of the church, or that he held that there were any ecclesiastical acts to the performance of which presbyters without a bishop were intrinsically incompetent. If bishops are to be held to be by divine right a superior distinct order from presbyters, it is quite plain what are the scriptural grounds upon which the doctrine must be based— those, viz., on which modern Prelatists usually defend their principles. Now, it is remarkable that in all Cyprian's earnest argumentation and vehement declamation in defence of the bishop's prerogatives— a point which he evidently laboured with all his heart— there is not the slightest allusion to any one of the common arguments of modern Prelatists, except that derived from the Jewish priesthood; and even this is not commonly applied as they apply it. His sole argument is taken from those obscure and mystical notions of unity to which we formerly referred, which led him to ascribe a certain primacy to Peter over the other apostles, and to the Bishop of Rome over the other bishops, while yet he

explicitly contended that all the apostles and all the bishops were possessed of an equal measure of proper authority or jurisdiction. The superiority which he ascribed to bishops over presbyters he rests upon the same grounds, and defends by the same arguments, as the superiority which he ascribed to Peter over the apostles; whence the inference is unavoidable, that if he really understood his own principles, he did not intend to ascribe to bishops any real superiority of order or proper jurisdiction over presbyters, any more than to Peter over the apostles, though he might not be so anxious to bring out the conclusion explicitly in the one case as in the other. There is nothing in Cyprian to countenance what may be called the doctrine of Prelacy, viewed in connection with the scriptural grounds on which it is commonly based; nay, the entire absence of them from Cyprian's discussion of this point, proves that they had not then entered into men's heads— that they had not yet been invented— that they were utterly unknown.

As to the practice of the church in his time, all that is proved by it is, that there was then a marked distinction between bishops and presbyters; that the bishop was the fixed president of the presbytery; that it was expected that ordinarily they would pronounce no ecclesiastical judgment, and perform no ecclesiastical act, without his consent and approbation, while he also ordinarily did nothing without theirs. Cyprian expressly informs us that he acted upon the principle of doing nothing without the consent of his presbytery, which consisted only of presbyters; and that, in matters of importance, he must also have the consent of the people, —restraints these upon episcopal domination, which modern Prelatists would ill brook, and which a man of Cyprian's high spirit and exalted notions of episcopal prerogatives would not readily have acknowledged and submitted to, unless the general doctrine and practice of the church of that time had imperatively required it. No satisfactory evidence has been produced, that the bishops in Cyprian's time claimed and exercised, as belonging to them inherently and de jure, a veto or negative over the proceedings of the presbytery, although this seems generally to have been, in fact, conceded to them; and still less of anything like evidence has been produced, that there were any ecclesiastical functions which presbyters could not then validly perform, and to which the bishop's actual presence was necessary. The Cyprianic bishop, then, was not a

modern prelate, though the horns of the mitre were certainly appearing; and it was still true that, as Jerome, the most learned of all the fathers, assures us had been the case from the beginning, the churches were governed *communi consilio presbyterorum*, instead of presbyters being deprived of all share in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs, as they now are in the Prelatical Churches of England and Ireland.

The only thing else produced in support of Prelacy from primitive antiquity is, that some writers of the first three centuries have spoken of particular individuals as being bishops of particular churches, and as having been made so by the apostles; and that some of them speak also of a personal succession of bishops in particular churches. The inference is, that it was then generally believed that the apostles established bishops with Prelatic jurisdiction, and that there was a regular succession of such bishops from the apostolic times. The falsehood of this conclusion is clearly established by what we find in the epistles of Clement and Polycarp; and there is no difficulty in detecting the fallacy of the argument on which it is based. The fallacy lies in these two points: First, in not making allowance for the unquestionably vague and equivocal use of the word bishop, and in imagining that whenever it occurs in ancient writers, it means a modern prelate; whereas nothing is more certain than that, in Scripture and primitive antiquity, it bore no such restricted and specific meaning: And, secondly, in not taking sufficiently into account that, as the word bishop came gradually to be restricted to the presidents or moderators, as distinguished from ordinary presbyters, men naturally applied the style of speaking common in their own age to the events and transactions of preceding generations, when they had occasion to describe or refer to them. The fair application of these two considerations, deprives that argument in favour of Prelacy of all weight, and even plausibility.

Let us advert to an instance: Irenaeus speaks of Polycarp having been made Bishop of Smyrna by the apostles, and of a succession of bishops preserving the tradition of sound doctrine in the churches. Some distinction, in the occasional use of the word bishop and presbyter, with some corresponding difference in dignity or authority, existed in his time; but there is no proof that he regarded them as designating two distinct

and separate orders; and, consequently, there is no proof that he thought Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna to be like a modern prelate; besides that, in another passage, he expressly calls him an apostolical presbyter. While he speaks of a succession of bishops, he speaks also as frequently and as explicitly of a succession of presbyters, as representing the churches, and handing down the apostolic doctrine, — a fact of great importance in illustration of the doctrine of the second century upon this point. And in addressing the Bishop of Rome, he speaks of him and his predecessors in the Roman church as presbyters, — a mode of speaking which no genuine modern Episcopalian would ever think of employing in regard to the Bishop of Rome, or even in regard to his Grace of Canterbury.

With respect to the catalogues of the succession of bishops in the principal churches from the apostolic times, which Eusebius laboured to compile in the fourth century, it is enough to say that the general observations now made apply equally to them; and that, in addition, Eusebius has distinctly confessed that? from want of records, no certainty could in his time be attained regarding the materials of which they were composed.

What is it that can really be held to be proved upon this point? Why, first, that in the age of Clement and Polycarp— the age of the apostles, and that immediately succeeding them— the government of the churches was " clearly Presbyterial." Secondly, that in another generation, after the middle of the second century, we have some traces of a distinction being sometimes observed between the words bishop and presbyter, which had ever before, both by inspired and uninspired men, been used indiscriminately; that bishop was now often used to designate specially the president or moderator of presbyteries, while, at the same time, all pastors, including the presidents or moderators, were still often called by the general name of presbyters; and while there is not yet any trace of these bishops arrogating to themselves the exclusive right of performing any ecclesiastical function or administering the ordinary government of the church, except in conjunction with the presbyters over whom they presided. Thirdly, that in the Cyprianic age, or the latter part of the third century, there is no proof of any very material change in the government of the church from what it had been for a century before, — the difference

being chiefly that the distinction between bishops and presbyters was more regularly and carefully observed; that the power of the bishops as presidents of the presbytery was somewhat more prominent and more extensive; but still there is no proof that there were any ecclesiastical functions exclusively appropriated to the bishop which presbyters could not perform without him, or in his absence; that there is not yet any satisfactory evidence that bishops alone administered ecclesiastical affairs in the exercise of an inherent power, regulated by their own judgment, or even that they had de jure, though practically they often seem to have now exercised de facto, a veto or negative over the proceedings of the presbytery. These are the facts of the case, as they can be, —as we are firmly persuaded they have been, —established by an investigation of the whole evidence; and if so, there was nothing like modern Prelacy in the second century, —and only a faint and feeble shadow of it, very different from the coarse and palpable reality, even in the latter part of the third century.

Now, the whole plausibility of the Prelatic argument from antiquity, depends upon the alleged universality of its prevalence from the apostolic age downwards. This universal prevalence, however, is not only denied, but disproved. Could it be proved that proper Prelacy, in the modern sense, universally prevailed in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, this would be rather a startling fact, and, had we no other evidence of the apostolic arrangements, might be entitled to considerable weight. But the scriptural evidence, that the apostles established only two ordinary permanent offices in the church, is complete and conclusive; and, even if it were not, there is nothing in the testimony of antiquity, — in the facts which it establishes, —that affords even a presumption that they instituted a third and higher one. We see no trace of a third order in the generation immediately following theirs, —(of course we reject, for reasons formerly explained, the testimony of Ignatius upon this subject), —and we can trace thereafter, upon historical grounds, the formation and development of a third or higher order, through a period of more than two centuries, so fully as to leave not a great deal to be filled up by an appeal to the operation of the recognised principles of human nature, and to the general tendencies unquestionably exhibited in the history of the church during that time. We might concede a great deal more to

Episcopalians than a fair view of the evidence requires, as to the origin and growth of Prelacy. We might concede, though it cannot be proved, that there were traces of a distinction between bishops and presbyters earlier than the middle of the second century, and even in the time of Ignatius (and let it be remembered that some distinction or superiority, without specifying what, is all that even his epistles indicate); and we might further concede, that a century later, in Cyprian's time, proper Prelacy, in the modern sense of the word, was in full and general operation; and yet, after conceding all this, we could not infer that there was any proof, or even any very strong presumption, that Prelacy had been established by the apostles. The evidence for the early and general prevalence of Prelacy is not such as to impose upon us an obligation to give any explanation of its growth and origin in order to escape the necessity of referring it to the apostles. But, even if it were, there would be no difficulty in explaining it. The history of the church exhibits from the very first a strong tendency to declension from the scriptural standard both in doctrine and government. So far as government is concerned, the tendency, fully developed at length in the system of Popery, was to invent new offices or orders of office-bearers, to increase and extend the power or authority of individuals, to devise high-sounding titles, and to fabricate distinctions and differences, as pretences or excuses for applying them, and to convert what were originally mere titles of honour or marks of respect, into the grounds of claims to actual power or jurisdiction. Nothing but wilful blindness can fail to see these tendencies in operation in the history of the early church, even during the first three centuries; and if they existed at all, they are fully adequate, when viewed in connection with well-known and powerful principles of human nature, the operation of which is too often exhibited even in the conduct of those whom we cannot but regard as pious men, to account for the origin and growth of Prelacy, even though it could, in its proper sense, be proved to have had a much earlier and more general prevalence than can be truly ascribed to it. Prelacy, or rather some distinction between bishops and presbyters, —some superiority of the one over the other, —was one of the earliest and most respectable of these inventions, but there is no ground to look upon it in any other light.

Besides these general considerations, —which are of themselves quite

sufficient to account for the whole facts of the case, and which would be quite sufficient to account for a great deal more, even for all, or nearly all, of what Episcopalians commonly assert to be matter of fact, if it could be established to be so, —we know enough of the state of the primitive church to be able to give a more specific explanation of the rise and growth of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, without needing to refer it to apostolic appointment. The men who had been settled by the apostles, or with their sanction, as the first pastors of churches, would naturally be looked upon with deference and respect by the other pastors who might be afterwards associated with them, would probably preside at their meetings, and have much actual influence in the regulation of all ecclesiastical affairs. They would naturally, and almost as a matter of course, be led to occupy a position of prominence and influence, and would be looked to by others as virtually representing in some measure the presbyters, and the churches or congregations over which they presided. This prominence and influence, and not any pretended higher order or superior right of jurisdiction, was, no doubt, the whole of the Prelacy enjoyed by Clemens, Bishop of Rome, and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna; and though it is essentially different in its whole character, elements, and foundation, from modern Prelacy, there is no difficulty in seeing how easily and naturally, when extended to another generation, and fostered by special circumstances in the condition of particular churches, and in the character and position of individuals, it might produce such a state of things as would naturally lead to an appropriation to the presidents of the presbyteries of one of the two designations which had formerly been common to all the members. The pastors of the early Christian churches were chiefly settled in towns, where they seem to have lived very much in common, transacting by joint authority the necessary ecclesiastical business; and as they extended their labours to neighbouring villages, and formed churches in them, these new churches seem for a time to have been supplied and superintended by the pastor or pastors of the city, through whose labour they had been planted, and thus to have been kept in some measure of dependence upon, and subordination to, the mother church, and the presbyter or presbyters who had most influence in managing its affairs. The presidency of the presbytery, and the control exercised over the new churches settled around the mother church, were thus evidently the foundations on which

the structure of Prelacy was raised; and there is no difficulty in conceiving how, on this basis, might be constructed the whole progress which took place in this matter from the condition of the church of Corinth in the time of Clemens, to that of the church of Carthage in the time of Cyprian. The common allegations of the advocates of Prelacy about the impossibility of accounting for its origin and prevalence, unless we refer it to the apostles, are destitute of any solid foundation in the principles of human nature or the history of the church, even if we were to concede the accuracy of the representation they usually give of the actual facts of the case; but when we take into account how the matter of fact actually stands upon this subject, they become really ludicrous, and almost unworthy to be discussed in sober argument. Nothing is more natural, nothing more easily explicable, than the unquestionable progress which took place in this matter during the second, third, and fourth centuries.

It may be worth while to notice here one rather curious specimen of the tactics of Episcopalians in the management of this branch of their cause. When they are discussing the general status questionis they talk as if they were contented with a very scanty measure of superiority on the part of the bishops over the presbyters— as if they were perfectly satisfied with any distinction between them, however small, that could be in any sense called imparity or superiority of any kind. And so, in like manner, when they are investigating the remains of antiquity for the purpose of establishing the early and general prevalence of Prelacy, doing their best to make the most of every phrase or incident they meet with, they profess to be quite satisfied, and even delighted with, the very scanty and meagre traces they can discern of some distinction obtaining between bishops and presbyters, however slight it be, and however imperfect may be the information conveyed or indicated as to its real nature and amount. But when they come to the last branch of the argument, and profess to be proving the impossibility of Prelacy having prevailed so early and so generally, unless it had been established by apostolic authority, they then change their course, and give a very different view of what Prelacy is. They then represent it as something greatly and palpably different from anything which Presbyterians can admit of, and of course as being, upon Presbyterian principles, an entire subversion of the apostolic government of the church. Having laboured to make this impression, they then

proceed to enlarge upon the awful sin of making so great and radical a change upon apostolic arrangements, and the injustice and unfairness of charging this fearful crime— as upon Presbyterian principles it must be— upon the pious and holy martyrs of antiquity. And then they go on— professing to think that Presbyterians allege that Prelacy was introduced suddenly and all at once— to show, that even if these pious and holy men could have been guilty of so great a sin as to subvert deliberately the government which the apostles established, it was impossible that they could all at once have succeeded in introducing so great and fundamental a change. Jameson describes this feature in their conduct in this way: "One would think, that, at the beginning, they plead only for as good as nothing; and, that the thing they would have is no bigger than the cloud which was like a man's hand; but afterward the whole heaven of the Kirk of God is black with it."

We may give a specimen of this mode of procedure on their part. The famous Chillingworth, so deservedly celebrated for his writings against the Papists, in which he proves himself to be a singularly acute reasoner, wrote a short tract, which he called "The Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy Demonstrated." He begins with a very moderate definition of what is meant by Episcopal government, abstracting, he says, "all accidentals," and considering "only what is essential and necessary to it." This definition of Prelacy, of course, contains nothing about a distinct order of men vested inherently with superior jurisdiction, or the exclusive power of ordaining. He then tries to show, which he does partly by perverting two extracts from Beza and Du Moulin, that "this government was received universally in the church, either in the apostles' time, or presently after," and that, therefore, "it cannot with reason be denied to be apostolic." The conclusion he puts in this form: "When I shall see therefore all the fables in the Metamorphosis acted, and prove true stories; when I shall see all the democracies and aristocracies in the world he down and sleep, and awake into monarchies; then will I begin to believe, that presbyterial government, having continued in the church during the apostles' times, should presently after (against the apostles' doctrine, and the will of Christ) be whirled about like a scene in a masque, and transformed into episcopacy. In the meantime, while these things remain thus incredible, and in human reason impossible, I hope I

shall have leave to conclude thus: —Episcopal government is acknowledged to have been universally received in the church presently after the apostles' times. Between the apostles' times and this presently after, there was not time enough for, nor possibility of, so great an alteration. And therefore there was no such alteration as is pretended. And therefore episcopacy being confessed to be so ancient and catholic, must be granted also to be apostolic. Quod erat demonstrandum Chillingworth could reason when he liked, and could reason admirably when he had a good cause to plead; but if he had produced nothing better than this, Locke would assuredly not have said, as he did say, "If you wish your son to be a good reasoner, let him read Chillingworth." The fallacy of the reasoning, independently of other and more serious objections to its principles, consists to some extent in the erroneous representation it insinuates of the views of Presbyterians on the topics which it includes. They dispute with him his account of the state of the question, and regard his account of it as little better than a juggle, to obscure and perplex the real merits of the controversy, or as an unmanly evasion of its real difficulties. They never imagined or asserted that Prelacy started into life fully grown, and was suddenly and all at once established over the church; on the contrary, their firm persuasion is, that it took from three to four centuries to attain to the maturity which it exhibits in modern times; and they do not need, in explaining its gradual rise and progress, in so far as they are at all called upon to explain it, to ascribe to any one generation in the church a larger measure of ignorance or sin, of indifference and unconcern about Christ's arrangements, and of love of power and pre-eminence, than is compatible with a large measure of Christian zeal and excellence, or than can be conclusively proved to have been exhibited in early times in other matters besides this.

Prelacy was not established by the apostles, for there is no proof of it in the New Testament. They established only two orders of ordinary permanent office-bearers— presbyters and deacons; and by uniformly using the words bishops and presbyters interchangeably, as both descriptive of one and the same class of office-bearers, and by giving us no hint whatever of any other intended permanent office, they, of course, designed that, in taking the word of God for a guide, and applying it for a standard of faith and practice, the church should adhere to the

Presbyterial government which they, in accordance with their Master's directions, had established. Their immediate successors adhered to the apostolic mode, and retained their Presbyterian principles and practice. Gradually some measure of superior influence and authority came—perhaps from good motives or plausible professions of benefit to the church, and not at first from mere vulgar ambition and open disregard of Christ's arrangements—to be conceded to the presidents of the presbyters, who were also usually the pastors of the original or mother church of the district. A state of things, in some measure new, was thus introduced, which, of course, required to have some name or designation by which it might be represented and described; and this was effected by restricting, though at first without anything like regularity or uniformity, the word bishop to the higher class, and leaving the word presbyter to the inferior. This unquestionable deviation from the apostolic and inspired use of the words, does, according to all the recognised principles which regulate the formation of language, necessarily imply the existence of a different state of things from that which the apostles established and left. A change was made in the use and application of the words, to indicate and express a change which had previously been introduced into the actual administration of ecclesiastical affairs, —a change which, in its progressive development, required the invention of several new words and titles, until the world at length became familiar both with the name and the reality of a universal bishop, — a sovereign pontiff, —the head of the church, —the vicar of Christ upon earth. If they had adhered rigidly to the apostolic arrangements, they would not have needed to have changed the apostolic phraseology.

A great deal of ingenuity has been employed by the defenders of Prelacy, from Epiphanius down to the present day, to account for the uniform interchangeableness and manifest identity of the words bishops and presbyters in the New Testament, and the distinction afterwards introduced between them. Some half-dozen of theories, with various subsidiary modifications, have been devised to account for it, and it is not very easy to say which of them is now most generally adopted by Episcopalians. These different theories are possessed of different degrees of ingenuity and plausibility; but they are all destitute of any solid foundation, either in actual historical evidence or in intrinsic probability,

as might be easily shown. The only satisfactory explanation is, that in apostolic times the offices, as well as the names of bishops and presbyters, were thoroughly identical, and were designed to continue so; that a difference was afterwards introduced into the actual state of matters in the government of the church; and that this difference in the things required and produced a difference in the usage of the names. The principles of human nature, the lessons of experience, the informations of the history of the church, suggest abundant materials for establishing the entire probability of such a change. There is nothing in the least unlikely about it. So likely, indeed, is Prelacy to arise in the church from causes which are in constant and powerful operation, that we regard it at once as a subject of surprise and gratitude, that the evil has not again found its way into the Reformed churches; and we have no doubt that this is to be explained, under God, by the deep impression produced by the history of the early church as to the imminent danger of tampering with God's appointments, and of deviating at all from the scriptural standard, —of yielding in any measure in ecclesiastical arrangements to the suggestions of worldly policy or of carnal ambition.

It would be out of place to be dwelling upon the general tendency of Prelacy, as manifested in history, to obstruct the welfare of the church, and to injure the interests of religion. But I must briefly advert to what are the principal direct charges which we have to adduce against it, and which we think we can fully establish.

First, it introduces a new and unauthorized order of office-bearers into the church. The church is Christ's kingdom— He alone is its sovereign— He has settled its constitution, and established its laws, and He has revealed His whole will to us concerning all these matters in His written word. No one is entitled to prescribe laws to the church, or to fix its office-bearers, except Him who has purchased it with His own blood; and all its arrangements should be regulated by the constitution which He has prescribed. He has given us no intimation of His will that there should exist in His church a distinct class of office-bearers superior to the ordinary pastors, whom He has authorized and required to feed the flocks over which the Holy Spirit hath made them overseers. And if He has given no intimation of His will that His church should have a superior

order of office-bearers to pastors, then no such order ought to exist; and where it has crept in, it ought to be expelled. It is an interference with His arrangements, a usurpation of His prerogative, for any one to introduce it. Episcopacy, indeed, did not present itself as the introduction of a new order of office-bearers, to those who took the first steps that led to its establishment. It was at first merely conceding a somewhat superior measure of dignity or authority to one of the presbyters over the rest, without its being imagined that he thereby ceased to be a presbyter, or that he became anything else. But this led gradually to the notion that he held a distinct superior office, and then the word of God was perverted in order to get some countenance to the innovation. It was, as Jerome assures us, a device of men who, in the exercise of their wisdom, thought it well fitted to guard against schism and faction, though at first it was far from assuming that aspect of palpable contrariety to God's word which it afterwards presented. The remedy, as has happened in other cases, proved worse than the disease. Prelacy was not attended with the divine blessing, and the wisdom of man continued to make progress in improving upon God's plans and arrangements, until the great body of the professing church became an entire apostasy; Christ's authority was trampled under foot, and His great design in establishing the church was in no small measure frustrated by men who professed to act in His name, and to be administering His laws. So dangerous is it to deviate from the path of Scripture, and to introduce the inventions of men into the government and worship of the church of the living God.

Secondly, another serious ground of charge against Prelacy, — though, indeed, it is virtually the same charge in another form, — is, that it deprives the pastors of churches of the power and authority which Christ has conferred upon them. It is surely abundantly evident in Scripture that pastors have a power of ruling— of exercising a certain ministerial authority in administering, according to Christ's word, the ordinary necessary business of His church; and we have irrefragable evidence in Paul's address to the presbytery of Ephesus, that he contemplated no other provision for the government of the church, and the prevention of schism and heresy, than the presbyters or bishops faithfully discharging the duties of their office in ruling as well as in teaching. But no sooner was a distinction made between bishops and presbyters, than the bishops

began gradually to encroach upon the prerogatives of the presbyters, to assume to themselves more and -more of the power of ruling or of administering all ecclesiastical affairs, until at length, though not till many centuries after the apostles' times, the presbyters were excluded from any share in it, and became the mere servants of their lords the prelates. This led also to an inversion of the Scriptural views of the relative dignity and importance of the functions of teaching and ruling, and to a practical elevation of the latter above the former— Scripture always giving the first place, in point of dignity and importance, to the function of teaching. Accordingly, we now see that, in the Prelatic Churches of England and Ireland, not only are presbyters deprived of all power of ruling, or of exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and thus stripped of privileges and prevented from discharging duties which Christ has attached to their office; but it seems, practically at least, to be generally supposed that teaching and preaching the word, which the apostles manifestly regarded as their highest honour and their most imperative duty, is beneath the attention of those dignified ecclesiastics who lift their mitred heads in courts and parliaments, and should be left to the common herd of presbyters, —the mass of the inferior clergy.

IX. The Doctrine of the Trinity

The only topic now remaining in order to complete our proposed survey of the doctrine of the first three centuries is that of the Trinity, —a subject of the highest interest and importance. We have reserved this to the last, chiefly because it connects most closely with the subjects which must occupy our attention in surveying the doctrinal discussions of the fourth and fifth centuries— the Arian, Nestorian, and Eutychian controversies.

I. Testimony of the Early Church on the Trinity

When the Arian controversy arose in the fourth century, both parties claimed, in support of their opposite doctrines, the testimony of the earlier church, though the orthodox party advanced this claim with greater confidence and greater truth. And in more modern times, whenever the subject of the Trinity has become matter of controversial discussion, the question has been agitated as to what were the views that generally prevailed in the early church, or during the first three centuries, regarding it. There seems to have been something like a general feeling upon the part of theological writers, even those who in general were not disposed to attach much weight to catholic consent, that it was a matter of more importance to ascertain what were the views generally held by the primitive church on the subject of the Trinity, than upon any of the other topics which we have already considered, —a sort of general admission that the testimony of the early church would have rather more of a corroborative, though, of course, not probative, influence in support of the side which might enjoy the benefit of it, in this than in most other controversies which have been agitated. And this feeling or impression is perhaps not altogether destitute of some foundation in reason.

The doctrine of the Trinity— i.e., the doctrine that there are three distinct persons possessing one and the same divine nature and essence— is one which is altogether of so peculiar a character, that we cannot help having

an impression that it is in the highest degree improbable, —first, that if it had been taught by the apostles, it would have soon disappeared from the general teaching of the church; or, secondly, that if it had not been taught by them, it would have been afterwards devised or invented by men, and would have so widely and extensively prevailed. On the ground of the first of these positions, we concede to the anti-Trinitarians, that if it should turn out that the doctrine of the Trinity was not generally believed by the early church, this would afford a certain degree of presumption, though of course no proof, that it was not taught by the apostles; while, on the ground of the second of these positions, we call upon them to admit, that a proof of its general prevalence in the early church affords at least an equally strong presumption in favour of its apostolic origin. None of the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity imagine that men can be reasonably expected to embrace this doctrine, —which, from its very nature, must be one of pure revelation, —unless it can be clearly established from Scripture; and they are all persuaded that if the divine authority of Scripture be admitted, and if it be further admitted that the authors of the books of Scripture understood what they wrote, and meant to write so as to be understood by others, the doctrine of the Trinity can be fully established. But there is nothing unreasonable in the general idea that the prevalence in the early church of a doctrine of so very peculiar a character— so very unlikely to have been invented by man— should be regarded as affording some presumption in favour of the soundness of the conclusions that may have been deduced from Scripture. At the same time, it is true, as might have been expected, that most of those who have believed that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in Scripture, have also believed that the testimony of the early church is in favour of it; while, on the other hand, most of those who have succeeded in persuading themselves that the doctrine of the Trinity is not taught in Scripture, have been equally successful in reaching the conclusion that it was not generally adopted by the early church.

Some collateral or adventitious influences, indeed, have occasionally been brought to bear upon the investigation of this subject— of the faith of the early church concerning the Trinity— which have broken in upon the regularity with which theologians have ranged themselves upon the one side or the other, according to their own personal convictions as to

the truth of the doctrine itself. More especially, the discussion of the question of the faith of the early church on the subject of the Trinity has been brought to bear upon the more general question of the respect due to the authority of the fathers, and even upon the subordinate question of the comparative respect due to the testimony of the ante-Nicene and the post-Nicene fathers; and men seem to have been somewhat influenced in deciding upon the Trinitarianism or anti-Trinitarianism of the early church by the views which they felt called upon to maintain in regard to the general question. As we cannot enter into a minute examination of the precise meaning of passages in early writers, very often obscure and confused; and as, after all, the subject is now important, chiefly, perhaps, from the prominent place it occupies in modern theological literature, I may illustrate the statement about the cross currents of influences in affecting men's opinions upon the subject by one or two examples.

Dionysius Petavius, or Denis Petan, whom I have already had occasion to mention, a very learned and able Roman Catholic writer in the early part of the seventeenth century, and profoundly versant in patristic literature, has given it as his deliberate opinion, that a clear and decided testimony against Arianism cannot be produced from the existing remains of the first three centuries; nay, that many of the fathers of that period were no better than Arians, and that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity — which, like all Romanists, he professed to believe— was first brought out fully and clearly at the time of the Council of Nice. And this declaration of Petavius has been since boasted of by anti-Trinitarians as a concession wrested from a very learned adversary by the pure force of truth and evidence. Bishop Bull, the most eminent among the champions of the orthodoxy of the ante-Nicene fathers, after expressing his surprise and amazement that a man like Petavius— *vir magnus atque omnigena literatura instructissimus*, as he calls him— should have propounded such an opinion, intimates his conviction that he was not influenced in adopting it by a pure love of truth, but *subdolo aliquo consilio*, and then proceeds to explain how this view was fitted to serve the purposes of Popery, in this way: First, its tendency was to elevate the authority of the post-Nicene fathers— whom Petavius and all others acknowledge to have been generally Trinitarians— above that of the ante-Nicene fathers, and thus to afford to the Papists a pretence for shifting their general

controversy with Protestants, so far as antiquity is concerned, from the first three centuries, where they can find little to support them, to the fourth and fifth centuries, where there is a good deal to countenance them; and, Secondly, the establishment of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by the Council of Nice, without its having much support from previous tradition, and its general adoption thereafter by the church, give some countenance to the principle, which has been advocated by some Popish writers, of the right of general councils to form and establish new articles of faith. The word of God and the history of the church make it manifest that there is no great improbability of finding, and no great lack of reasonable charity in expecting to find, abundance of fraud and iniquity in the defenders of Popery. But I think it must be admitted in fairness, that in this case the suspicions of Bishop Bull are farfetched and unreasonable, and that there is no sufficient reason to doubt that Petavius may have believed what he said about the Arianism of many of the ante-Nicene fathers, —the testimony of the primitive church not being quite so clear as to exclude the possibility of an honest difference of opinion. Romish writers have not, in general, adopted this notion of Petavius; but, on the contrary, have been accustomed to adduce the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, as instances of the obscurity and imperfection of Scripture, — instances of doctrines very obscurely and imperfectly revealed in the word of God, but clearly established by the testimony of the early church, supplying the deficiencies of Scripture. This also was the ground generally taken upon the subject by the Tractarians; and hence the real amount and worth of the testimony of antiquity to the doctrine of the Trinity, or rather the comparative clearness of the scriptural and the ecclesiastical testimony upon the subject, has come to be involved in recent controversies. Accordingly, Goode, in his *Divine Rule of Faith and Practice*, makes it his business to show that the scriptural testimony in favour of the doctrine is clear, full, and explicit, and that the ecclesiastical testimony— which the Tractarians, following; the Papists, had preferred, in point of clearness, to the scriptural proof— is confused and contradictory; and in the course of his discussion of this topic, he charges Bishop Bull with forcing some of the declarations of the ante-Nicene fathers into an orthodox sense, and censures him for his censure upon Petavius.

When Bossuet published his great work upon the Variations of the Protestant Churches, Jurieu, who has written a great number of valuable works, especially upon the Popish controversy, but who was not free from a certain measure of rashness and recklessness, attacked his fundamental principle, that variation was a proof of error, by adducing the case of the doctrine of the Trinity, and bringing out the variations and inconsistencies of the testimony of the early church concerning it, of which, of course, he made the most; while Bossuet, in his reply, endeavoured to show that that testimony was uniform and consistent.

These may serve as illustrations of the way in which this subject of the faith of the primitive church, in regard to the Trinity, has been brought to bear upon other controversies, and of the way in which men's views regarding it have been modified by their opinions upon some other points than that of the truth of the doctrine itself. Still it is, in the main, substantially true, that those who are Trinitarians upon scriptural grounds, have generally regarded the testimony of the primitive church as corroborating their conclusions from Scripture; while those who were anti-Trinitarians on alleged scriptural grounds, have taken an opposite view of the bearing and import of the testimony of antiquity. It appears to me that the truth upon this point may be comprehended in these two positions: First, the testimony of the church of the first three centuries in favour of the doctrine concerning the Trinity, which has ever since been held by the great body of professing Christians, is sufficiently clear and full to afford some corroboration to the conviction based upon Scripture, that it was taught by the apostles; and, Secondly, that it is not so clear and full as to be of any real service to those who would employ it for depreciating the clearness and sufficiency of Scripture; and that, on the contrary, there are much greater difficulties and drawbacks connected with it than have ever been proved to attach to the Scriptural testimony. Let us briefly illustrate these positions.

The whole host of the opponents of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, assuming, though unwarrantably, the general designation of Unitarians, make common cause in discussing this question. When they profess to be interpreting Scripture, they divide into different ranks, and disagree as much with each other as they do with Trinitarians. But in discussing the

testimony of antiquity they usually combine their forces, and seem all equally anxious to bring forward anything that may be fitted to afford a proof or a presumption that the early church did not generally hold the doctrine of the Trinity. This is scarcely fair, though perhaps it is not worth contending about. The three great divisions of the anti-Trinitarians— for this, and not Unitarians, is their proper generic designation— are the Sabellians, the Socinians, and the Arians. Sabellianism is now commonly used as a general designation for the doctrine of those who, admitting that a distinction in the Godhead is set forth in Scripture, deny that this distinction is a personal one, and maintain it to be merely nominal or modal;— or, in other words, who assert that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are just three different names for one and the same person, viewed under different aspects or relations. Now, it is certain that some notion of this sort was broached during the first three centuries by Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius, but it is not alleged that it ever had a general prevalence in the early church; in other words, it is not alleged that the testimony of the early church is in favour of Sabellianism. There never has been any considerable body of men, either in ancient or in modern times, who professed what are called Sabellian principles. There have, indeed, been occasionally individual theologians, who, while professing to hold the orthodox and generally received doctrine of the Trinity, have given such explanations of the distinction in the Godhead, or rather have explained it so much away, as to subject themselves to the charge from other orthodox divines of advocating Sabellianism, and who may perhaps have afforded some ground for the suspicion that they virtually denied or explained away a true and real distinction of persons; just as there have occasionally been instances of theologians— orthodox, or intending to be so— who seem to have gone into the opposite extreme, and have explained the distinction in the Godhead in such a way as to afford some plausible grounds for charging them with Tritheism, —i.e., with maintaining, not as the Scripture teaches, and as the great body of professing Christians have generally held, that there are three persons in the unity of the Godhead, possessing one and the same nature, essence, and substance, but that there are three Gods. Thus, about a century and a half ago, some discussions took place upon this subject in England, in which, on the one hand, Dr Wallis and Dr South were charged with having taught Sabellianism, or something like it; and, on the other hand,

Dr William Sherlock, and Bingham, the author of the Christian Antiquities, who opposed them, were charged with having given some countenance to Tritheism. These were, however, not the formal and deliberate expressions of definite opinions held by bodies or classes of men, but rather incidental and personal aberrations, arising from attempting an unwarranted and presumptuous minuteness of explanation on a subject which, in many respects, lies beyond the limits of our comprehension. Socinians and Asians, indeed, are accustomed to allege that all but themselves must be at bottom either Sabellians or Tritheists; and to refer to the case of those who have been charged with Sabellianism as proof of the felt difficulty among Trinitarians of keeping up a profession of a real personal distinction, and to the case of those who have been charged with Tritheism, —i.e., with holding the doctrine of three Gods, as distinguished from that of three persons in one Godhead, — as bringing out openly and plainly the real nature and practical import of Trinitarianism. This, however, is manifestly assuming the whole question in dispute; while at the same time it must be admitted, that it also illustrates the injury sometimes done to truth by the rash and presumptuous speculations of its advocates. At present, however, it is enough to remark, that very few professing Christians, if any, have deliberately and intentionally advocated Sabellian principles, and that there is no pretence for alleging that the doctrine of the early church was Sabellian.

There remain the Socinians, who maintain that Christ was a mere man, who had no existence until He was born by ordinary generation of Joseph and Mary; and the Arians, who admit His pre-existence even before the creation of the world, but deny His proper divinity, His possession of the divine nature, His consubstantiality and co-eternity with the Father, — who, in short, represent Him as a creature, though prior in time and superior in rank and dignity to all other creatures. It is very manifest that these two classes of heretics, though both ranking themselves, under the general designation of Unitarians, must put a totally different meaning from each other upon many statements of Scripture; and that, indeed, in regard to those passages which bear merely upon the point of Christ's pre-existence, without asserting His true and proper divinity (and there are some such), the Arians must differ wholly from the Socinians, and

agree with the orthodox in the interpretation of them. It is equally plain, that when they appeal to the testimony of the early church, as many of both classes have confidently done, they must differ much from each other in the construction they put upon many of the statements of the fathers.

When the subject of the faith of the early church upon this point is started, we are fully entitled to put three distinct and separate questions, and to investigate each of these distinctly on its own proper ground: viz., first, Was it Socinian? secondly, Was it Arian I and, thirdly, Was it Trinitarian I The proof which has been adduced, that the faith of the early church was Socinian, — Le.} that Christ was then generally regarded as a mere man, —is of a very meagre and unsatisfactory description, and is a good deal involved in the obscure and perplexing distinction, originating in Gnostic views, made between Jesus and Christ. Indeed, it depends mainly upon the alleged Socinianism of the Ebionites, and upon the further allegation that the Ebionites were not reckoned heretics by the generality of the church. That the Ebionites were generally reckoned heretics, and, indeed, just a branch of the great Gnostic sect, has been proved by conclusive evidence, while it is by no means certain that they, heretics as they were, held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ. That they held that Jesus was a mere man, —some of them admitting, and others denying His miraculous conception, —is certain; but it is about equally certain that, in common with the Cerinthians and other Gnostics, they held that Jesus was not Christ till a divine energy or emanation descended upon Him at His baptism, which left Him again before His crucifixion. This notion may be fairly regarded as a virtual testimony to the general doctrine of the church, that Christ was intimately connected with the divine nature— that there was in Him some combination of the human and the divine. Eusebius expressly declares, that the first who taught that Christ was a mere man, ψῖλος ἄνθρωπος, was Theodotus, a currier, who flourished in the latter part of the second century; and we know also, that about the same time another person of the name of Artemon held similar opinions. There is some reason to think that both these men, as well as Paul of Samosata, about the middle of the third century, still retained something of the old Cerinthian or Ebionistic notion, that some supernatural, divine energy resided in the man Jesus,

and, therefore, were not simple humanitarians, as they have been called, though they might be said to deny that Christ came in the flesh. But even if it be conceded that, in the full sense of the expression, as now commonly understood, they held Christ to have been a mere man, there is nothing in anything we know about them or their opinions, which affords any evidence that their opinions had any general prevalence in the early church. With respect to the personal history of Artemon we know nothing. With regard to Theodotus, we have respectable evidence that he was tempted to deny Christ by fear of persecution, and that, in order to excuse himself, he alleged that he had not denied God, but only a man; that he denied the genuineness of John's gospel; that his arguments from Scripture were directed solely to the object of proving that Christ was a man, which of course no Trinitarian disputes; and that He was excommunicated for heresy by Victor, Bishop of Rome, with the general approbation of the church. There is no ground to believe that the views of Theodotus and Artemon were generally adopted, or had any considerable prevalence; on the contrary, they seem to have died away, until revived about the middle of the third century by Paul of Samosata, — a man noted also for that worldliness and secularity of character, which has always been a leading characteristic of Socinians, — and then condemned by a council at Antioch with the general approbation of the church. And then, on the other hand, we have the whole body of the ancient fathers declaring unanimously, as I point quite certain in itself and universally acknowledged, the preexistence of Christ, His existence before He was born of Mary, and before the creation of the universe. The God-denying heresy, then, of Socinianism, or simple humanitarianism, has nothing of

weight to appeal to in the testimony of the ancient church, which, I on the contrary, clearly and fully confirms what is the plain doctrine of Scripture — that the Son existed with the Father before the foundation of the world.

We are now shut up to one alternative— the faith of the early church must have been either Arian or Trinitarian. Now, on this question, it should be at once conceded that there is greater difficulty in coming to a conclusion; that there are some anomalies at least, if not contradictions, in the proof, which are not very easily explained; and that, altogether, there is fairer ground for an honest difference of opinion. I have no doubt that the

evidence in favour of the Trinitarianism of the early church greatly preponderates; that we are fairly entitled to hold that the doctrine of the Trinity was generally received in the church from the time of the apostles till that of the Council of Nice; and that this affords some corroboration of the correctness of the Trinitarian interpretation of Scripture. But it is just as evident, that there are not a few of the fathers, in whose writings statements occur in regard to Christ which it is not easy to reconcile with orthodox doctrine, and which, at least, afford abundant evidence that they did not always write very clearly or consistently, and of course have no claim whatever to be received as guides or standards of faith, in preference to, or even in conjunction with, the sacred Scriptures. The orthodox writers of the Nicene age admitted that, before the Arian controversy arose, and led to a more thorough sifting of the subject, some of the fathers spoke loosely and carelessly, and in such a way as sometimes to afford a handle to adversaries; while, at the same time, they strenuously contended that, practically and substantially, the testimony of most of them was in favour of orthodox views, and in opposition to the Arian heresy. This is very near the truth, and probably would not have been much disputed by Trinitarians, had not the foolish and indiscriminate admirers of the early fathers refused to admit the qualifications of the statement, and represented their testimony in behalf of the divinity of Christ as more clear and satisfactory than that which we find in Scripture.

If we assume the truth of the doctrine which has been generally held by the church, —viz., that Jesus Christ is true and eternal God, and that He is also a man, a real partaker of human nature, —we have a key which, without difficulty or straining, unlocks the whole of the passages in the word of God which refer to this subject, and combines them in consistency and harmony; while no other doctrine fairly and fully embodies the combined import and result of the whole of what the Scripture teaches concerning the Saviour of sinners. Now, this cannot be said of the testimony of the fathers of the first three centuries, viewed in the mass; and it is here that, independently of the immeasurable distance between divine and human testimony in point of weight and authority, lies the difference between the testimony of Scripture and that of antiquity, in point of clearness and fulness. It can be proved that there is

a great preponderance of evidence in the writings of the first three centuries in support of the truth that Christ is God, of the same nature and substance with the Father; but there are some statements in several of them which cannot be very easily explained by being applied either to His proper divinity or to His humanity. Bishop Bull has put forth all his learning and ingenuity in labouring to explain them in accordance with orthodox views, and has certainly made out a very plausible case; but I am not prepared to say that he has entirely succeeded. The passages here referred to are chiefly of two kinds: First, some which seem pretty plainly to deny His eternity j to ascribe an origin in time to His existence, and to represent Him as beginning to exist just before the creation of the world, immediately before what they called His προελευσις, or forthcoming from the Father to create the universe. This notion seems to correspond well with the Arian doctrine of His being the first and most exalted of created beings. Bull labours to show that those of the early fathers who have spoken in this strain, have also, in other places, ascribed to Him proper eternity, and of course should not be made inconsistent with themselves, if it can be helped; and that while they held that there was a special forthcoming of the Son from the Father, just before the creation of the world, and for the purpose of creating it, they held also that this was not regarded as properly the commencement of His existence, but that He was begotten, as the Scripture teaches, of the Father from eternity. Much plausibility is given to this solution of the difficulty by the proof which Bull adduces, that some of the Nicene or post-Nicene fathers, undoubtedly Trinitarian, such as Athanasius himself, held a sort of triple nativity of the Son, —viz., first, His eternal generation of the Father; secondly, His coming forth to create the world; thirdly, His descending in the fulness of time to assume human nature. Still there seems good ground to believe that some of the early fathers held that, while the Son might be said to have existed from eternity in the Father as His λογος, or reason, His distinct personal existence began with His coming forth to create the world.

The other class of passages which Bull seems to have felt to be still more perplexing, are those in which some of the fathers, while maintaining that it was the Son, and not the Father, who appeared to the patriarchs in the Old Testament history, assign reasons a priori for its being the Son and

not the Father, which are scarcely consistent with their ascribing the same nature and perfections to them, and which seem to imply a denial of the Son's invisibility and immensity, or incomprehensibility in a physical sense, —i.e., omnipresence. And to these passages he has little else to answer than that they are inconsistent with what the same fathers have taught in other parts of their works. This, we think, he has shown to be the case; and though he has in this way built up the general argument in support of the great preponderance of evidence from antiquity for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, he has not shown that that testimony is throughout clear and unambiguous; but, on the contrary, has been obliged virtually to admit that it is not so. I have no doubt that Bishop Bull has succeeded in the great leading object of his work, —i.e., in defending the Nicene faith on the subject of the Trinity from the writings of the catholic fathers of the first three centuries; and I am satisfied, also, that the whole discussion which the subject has undergone since his time, has tended decidedly to confirm the view of the testimony of the early church which he advocates with so much learning and ability. But" still I must say, that a careful perusal of Bull's work does leave the impression that he has occasionally been obliged, especially in regard to these two classes of passages to which I have referred, to have recourse to a degree of straining, and to employ an amount of ingenuity in sifting, piecing, and conjecturing, which might have modified his profound and somewhat irrational deference to the authority of the fathers.

At the same time, it ought to be remembered that these difficulties attach to the writings only of some of the fathers, and that the great body of them are full and unequivocal in asserting the proper divinity of our Saviour, as implying the consubstantiality and co-eternity of the Son with the Father, though not always with full precision of statement and perfect accuracy of language, — qualities which the history of the church seems to prove that uninspired men seldom or never even approach to, upon any topic, until after it has been subjected to a full and sifting controversial discussion. And it is to be remembered, that though Sabellianism and simple humanitarianism, or what we now call Socinianism, were somewhat discussed during the first three centuries, and were rejected by the church, Arianism did not, during that period, undergo a discussion, and was not formally decided upon by the church,

till the time of the Council of Nice. In these circumstances, occasional looseness of statement and inaccuracy of expression became of little importance as affecting the general character and weight of the evidence; and the question being put on this general issue, Was the faith of the early ante-Nicene church Arian or Trinitarian?— and being brought to be decided by a combined view of the whole materials bearing upon its settlement, —it is clear that, though there is some room for ingenious pleading, and though some difficulties may be started, which, taken by themselves, cannot perhaps be all specifically and satisfactorily removed, the practical result of the whole body of proof in the mass is, that the early fathers regarded Christ, in whom they trusted for salvation, and for whose name's sake many of them were honoured to shed their blood, as raised infinitely above the highest of created beings, —as being, indeed, God over all, blessed for evermore.

II. Nicene Creed— Consubstantiality

We have seen that the Sabellian view of the Trinity, and the simple humanitarian or Socinian view of the person of Christ, were broached and somewhat discussed during the first three centuries, and that they were generally, almost unanimously, rejected by the primitive church. The Socinian doctrine (for so for brevity we may call it) upon the person of Christ was defended in the fourth century by Photinus, but it was again rejected and condemned by the great body of the church, and soon disappeared. It attracted no further notice till near the end of the sixteenth century, when its revival by Socinus was represented by the Papists as one of the fruits of the Reformation, and afforded them a sort of pretence for alleging that the doctrine of the Reformers was just the revival of ancient heresies. Arianism had not been discussed or formally condemned during this early period; and, as we formerly showed, there are some of the fathers of the first three centuries whose works contain statements of a somewhat Arian complexion, though the general testimony of the early church may be fairly said to be, upon the whole, decidedly in favour of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Arius seems to have been led to bring forth those views, which have ever since been called by his name, and which occupied a large share of the attention of

the church during the greater part of the fourth century, in his zeal to oppose statements which appeared to him to be of a Sabellian tendency, —i.e., to imply, or to tend towards a denying or explaining away of any real personal distinction between the Father and the Son. He certainly made the distinction between them sufficiently palpable; but it was by going so far as to deny any true and proper divinity to the Son, and reducing Him to the rank of a creature, produced in time, out of nothing.

The Arian positions which are expressly condemned and anathematized in the Nicene Creed, are: "that there was a time when the Son was not," or "did not exist;" "that before He was born He was not; that He was made out of nothing, or of things that are not; that He is of a different substance or essence from the Father; and that He was created, and liable to change or alteration." These positions manifestly deny anything like true and proper divinity to the Son, and reduce Him to the rank of a mere creature, whose existence, commencing in time, was precarious, and might, of course, be brought to an end by the same power which created Him. The Nicene Council not only condemned these positions, but they further asserted positively that He was begotten, not made; that He was begotten of the Father, of the Father's substance or essence; that He was God of God, light of light, true God of true God, or, as it is sometimes expressed, very God of very God; and that He was consubstantial with the Father. These declarations explicitly assert the doctrines which have since been generally known under the names of the co-eternity and consubstantiality of the Son, and His eternal generation by the Father out of His own substance, —doctrines which have been held ever since by the great body of professing Christians, and which are explicitly asserted as being taught by the word of God in the standards of our Church. The name *ὁμοούσιος*, or the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, is usually regarded as the great distinguishing peculiarity of the Nicene theology in regard to the Trinity, as virtually embodying the substance of what they taught upon this subject; and in directing our attention to this topic, there are three questions which naturally present themselves for consideration: First, What is meant by the Son's being declared to be consubstantial, or of the same substance, with the Father? secondly, Was the Nicene assertion of the consubstantiality an accurate declaration of a true scriptural doctrine? and thirdly, Was it a

warrantable and expedient thing, as a matter of Christian wisdom, to adopt this language as a virtual test of orthodoxy upon the subject of the Trinity? And to each of these questions we would now advert.

There is no great difficulty in understanding what is meant by the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, that is, in so far as the subject is in its own nature comprehensible by our faculties, although, by reason of the feebleness of these faculties, viewed in connection with the exalted nature of the subject, it must be explained in some measure by negatives. Negatively, it implies that the Son is not a creature, formed out of nothing by a creating power, or out of any previously existing created substance. There was, of course, a time when, upon any other theory than that of the eternity of matter, no being existed but God, the One First Cause of all. This One First Cause created all beings which have since come into existence out of nothing, either mediately or immediately; and this distinction of mediate and immediate may be applied either to the agent or the subject of the process of creation, —i.e., first, God may either have created all things by His own direct, immediate agency, or He may, perhaps, for anything which mere reason can very certainly establish, have employed creatures already formed as His instruments in the creation of others; and, secondly, He may either have formed creatures immediately out of nothing, or He may have formed them mediately out of created substances which He had previously produced. But these distinctions do not in the least affect the substance of the matter, or at all modify the real meaning of what a creature or a creation implies. Creation is still the bringing into existence out of nothing of what had no previous existence; a creature is still a being radically and essentially distinct from, and inferior to, its Creator, and dependent wholly upon His good pleasure for the commencement and continuance of its existence.

Arius admitted that the Son was produced before all other beings, and held that He was God's agent or instrument in the creation of them all; but that still, as He was produced in time and out of nothing, He was, of course, a mere creature, having only a precarious or contingent existence. His followers sometimes honestly admitted that they held the Son to be a mere creature, and sometimes they denied that they held this; but when called upon to explain in what respects, upon their principles, He differed

from a creature, or what there was about Him that took Him out of that class of beings, the only answer they could give was one which amounted to nothing, and was a mere evasion, —viz., that He was produced immediately by the Father, and that all other beings were produced immediately by Him (the Son, or Logos), and only mediately by the Father. There is manifestly no intelligible medium between the creature and the Creator. All beings may be ranked under the two heads of created or uncreated; and created beings are those which have been produced, mediately or immediately, out of nothing, by the mere will of the Creator, and are dependent wholly upon His good pleasure for the continuance of their existence. The Son is not a creature, but consubstantial with the Father. The word ὁμοούσιος, or consubstantial, does not of itself express or indicate anything about the communication of the divine essence or substance by the Father to the Son; and that we leave at present out of view, intending afterwards to advert to it under the head of the eternal generation. The word expresses merely this idea, that He does in fact possess the same nature, essence, or substance which the Father has, as distinguished from any created nature or essence; or, as Bishop Bull ordinarily describes its meaning, that the Son is “non creatae alicujus aut mutabilis essentiae sed ejusdem prorsus cum patre suo naturae divinae et incommunicabilis.” The exemption of the Son from the class of creatures necessarily implies that He is possessed of the divine nature, and, of course, has or possesses the divine essence or substance, or that in the one divine being which makes Him what He is, and constitutes Him the sole member of a class from which all other beings whatever are absolutely and unchangeably excluded.

In regard to the meaning of consubstantial, we would only further remark, that there is good ground to believe that it was used by the Nicene fathers to denote something more than its mere etymology implies, and that its proper translation, as it was then commonly used, is not "of the same substance," but "of one and the same substance," "unius ejusdemque substantiae." This distinction has more immediate reference to an attempt which has been made, especially by Curcellaeus and Whitby, to show that the fathers, at least before the Council of Nice, held that the identity or unity of substance which they ascribed to the Father and the Son was not a numerical, but a specific identity or unity; i.e., that

the substance of the Father was the same as that of the Son, not in number, but in kind or degree, —"non numero sed specie,"— was a substance of the same general class or description, but not numerically one with it. This distinction serves no direct Arian object, but it has been introduced and applied in modern times to explain the language of the fathers, merely in order to involve the whole subject in confusion and perplexity, and to afford a pretence for insinuating against the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity something like a charge of Tritheism, as if it implied an assertion of three substances, the same, indeed, specifically; i.e., in kind or in specie, but not numerically one, as distinguished from the scriptural doctrine of one and the same substance; i.e., of a substance or essence numerically as well as specifically one, possessed by three distinct persons. The word consubstantial, by itself, does not necessarily imply more than a specific unity, or an identity in kind; and it might consist with Sabellianism or Tritheism, expressing in the one case a numerical, and in the other a specific unity. It would not, however, in any sense, consist with Arianism, the heresy against which the Nicene Creed was directed; and it is plain at least, that this distinction, though employed by Curcellaeus and Whitby to evade or mystify the testimony of ante-Nicene writers in favour of the orthodox doctrine, cannot be applied to the explanation or perversion of the Nicene Creed, since the Nicene fathers not only asserted that the Son was ὁμοούσιος with the Father, but also, moreover, that He was begotten of the substance (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας) of the Father, and, of course, had a substance not only the same in kind, but numerically one with His.

The second question respects the accuracy of the Nicene phraseology, in declaring the Son to be of one and the same substance with the Father, as expounding a real scriptural truth. The substance of what we learn directly in Scripture concerning the Son is this, that the names, titles, attributes, and works of the one supreme God, are ascribed to Him; that they are ascribed to the Son in no inferior or subordinate sense from that in which they are ascribed to the Father; and that thus there subsists, in some most important and essential respects, an identity between them. This great fundamental truth is, of course, to be established only by a careful examination of the precise and exact meaning of scriptural statements, —an examination that must be conducted according to the

principles and rules of sound criticism and the ordinary laws of language. Every thing depends upon the result of this examination— the materials which it furnishes. When the precise meaning of the scriptural statements bearing upon this subject has been ascertained, it is then proper to consider what is the substance of the doctrine taught upon the point, and to examine in what way, or by what propositions, the real scriptural doctrine may be most fully, most clearly, and most accurately expressed. This is, indeed, the process by which our whole system of theological opinions ought to be formed; and there is need for special care and caution in conducting this process, in regard to topics which can be known only from Scripture, and with respect to which there has been much difference of opinion as to the meaning of Scripture among those who professedly admit its divine authority. But if it be indeed true that the names, titles, attributes, and works of God are ascribed in Scripture to the Son, and that not in any inferior or subordinate sense, but in the same sense in which they are applied to the Father; and if we find also in Scripture that the Supreme Being is jealous of His own honour, and will not give His glory to another, we are fully warranted in concluding, upon the authority of Scripture, that the Son is not comprehended in the class of creatures; that He belongs to a totally different order of beings; that He is of the same rank or order as the Father. This is just the same as saying that He has not a created nature or substance, but a divine nature or substance; or, in other words, that He possesses that nature or substance, because of the possession of which the Supreme Being is distinguished from, and raised infinitely above, all other beings.

The divine nature can be but one, and the Son, therefore, is possessed of the one divine nature. The unity of the divine nature, however, as distinguished from the nature of a creature, might be only a specific and not a numerical unity, and this nature might be possessed by more than one divine being; but the Scriptures plainly ascribe a numerical unity to the Supreme Being, and, of course, preclude the idea that there are several different beings who are possessed of the one divine nature. This is virtually the same thing as teaching us that the one divine nature is possessed only by one essence or substance, from which the conclusion is clear, that if the Father be possessed of the divine nature, and if the Son, with a distinct personality, be also possessed of the divine nature, the

Father and the Son must be of one and the same substance; or rather, — for it can scarcely with propriety be called a conclusion or a consequence, —the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father is just an expression or embodiment of the one great truth, the different component parts of which are each established by scriptural authority, — viz., that the Father and the Son, having distinct personality in the unity of the Godhead, are both equally possessed of the divine, as distinguished from the created, nature. Before any creature existed, or had been produced by God out of nothing, the Son existed in the possession of the divine nature. If this be true, and if it be also true that God is in any sense one, then it is likewise true, —for this is just according to the established meaning of words, the current mode of expressing it, —that the Father and the Son are the same in substance as well as equal in power and glory.

The third question respected the propriety and the wisdom of adopting the position that the Father and the Son are of one and the same substance, and making it a test of orthodoxy. The Nicene fathers professed to take the word of God as their rule or standard, though they likewise give us their testimony that the doctrines which they embodied in this creed had been generally held by the church since the apostles' times. We are told by Athanasius, that when they commenced their deliberations they had some intention of embodying their decision upon the doctrines of Arius in the words of Scripture; but that, upon more careful consideration, especially of the fact that Arius professed to receive all the statements of Scripture as well as they, that he put his own construction upon them, and gave an interpretation of them in accordance with his own views, they directed their attention to the object of devising certain statements, which should be possessed of these two properties: first, that they accurately embodied the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject; and, secondly, that they involved a denial or contradiction of Arian views so clearly and explicitly, that no Arian would receive them, and which should thus be accurate tests of truth and error upon the subject. This was the object they aimed at, and I am persuaded that in this object they substantially succeeded. The first of these properties, of course, was of primary and fundamental importance; but the other also, if attained, would be of great value in effecting objects

which the existing condition of the church, and a regard to the interests of truth, rendered it imperative on them to aim at. I have already shown, that, assuming it as fully established by an exact and critical examination of the precise meaning of scriptural statements, that the Son is truly, and in the highest sense, God, possessed of the divine nature, — this doctrine, viewed in connection with what the Scripture also teaches concerning the unity of God, is accurately expressed by declaring, as they did, the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son;— and I now, therefore, further assume that the great doctrine which forms the distinguishing peculiarity of the Nicene theology is really sanctioned by the word of God, and, of course, may be rightfully asserted and maintained.

The Arians of the fourth century professed to dislike the Nicene Creed for this, among other reasons, because it deviated from the language of Scripture, and introduced new words and phrases which the word of God has not explicitly sanctioned; and many since have continued to object to this and other similar documents upon the same ground. The objection is a very frivolous one; and when it does not proceed, as it too often does, from a dislike to the doctrines which the creeds and confessions objected to inculcate, is founded upon very obvious misapprehensions. So long as men, all professing to take the Scripture as their rule, deduce from it opposite doctrines, or put inconsistent interpretations upon its statements, it will be indispensably necessary, if they are to attempt to ascertain how far they agree with, and how far they differ from, each other, that they employ, in expressing their convictions, words different from those which are used in Scripture. It may be objected, that this implies that men can form or devise more clear, explicit, and unequivocal declarations of doctrine than the word of God furnishes. It must be admitted that this is implied in it; but it may also be maintained, that this is, in a certain sense, true, without any disparagement to the word of God, and its perfect sufficiency for all the objects which it was designed by its Author to effect. Different doctrines are revealed in the word of God with different degrees of clearness and fulness; and it was manifestly not God's purpose to make His word so clear and explicit, in regard to all the doctrines it contains, as to preclude the possibility of men possessed of intelligence and substantial integrity taking different views of the meaning of some of its statements. Men of talent, learning, and piety

have denied that the New Testament teaches the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic; but no sane man has ever yet denied that the Westminster Confession teaches these doctrines, —a fact which may fairly be regarded as establishing the conclusion, that in some sense the latter teaches them more clearly and explicitly than the former. It is possible for men to ascertain whether other men agree with them in holding Calvinistic doctrines, and it is desirable and important that this should be ascertained; but this manifestly cannot be done while they confine their communications with each other to the use of mere scriptural language. So, in like manner, when Arius broached the doctrines which have since been called by his name, it became necessary for the church in general to make it manifest whether or not they approved of his views; and if not, what they regarded to be the doctrines really taught in Scripture upon the point, as distinguished from, and opposed to, his errors. Arius professed, as they did, to believe all that was said in Scripture concerning the Son; and hence it became necessary that, if Arianism was to be condemned, and the truth opposed to its errors to be fully and explicitly set forth, other words than those contained in Scripture should be employed— words which, beyond all reasonable doubt, should convince all men competent to judge of them, that those who adopted and concurred in them, denied that the Son was a creature, or had a created and inferior nature; and, on the contrary, maintained that, while undoubtedly a distinct person from the Father, He was possessed of one and the same divine nature, and yet was not a second or distinct God. This they professed to do, by asserting that He is of one and the same substance with the Father; and the history of the Arian controversy, lasting as it did during the greater part of the fourth century, proves that they succeeded, to a very large extent at least, in the object they aimed at.

The most direct and proper ground on which the declaration of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father can be assailed is, by showing that this position does not accurately embody or express the substance of what is taught or indicated in Scripture upon the subject. This is the only objection that is entitled to much consideration, and, if established, is of course at once and conclusively fatal; a property which no other objection can possess. It would, however, be also a serious,

though not necessarily a fatal objection, could it be proved that, as the Arians sometimes alleged, the word ὁμοούσιος, was of equivocal signification, —that its proper meaning could not be very clearly ascertained or very fully established. All they could adduce to give plausibility to this allegation was, the fact that the word had been used in the preceding century in a Sabellian sense by Paul of Samosata, and that, in consequence, the disuse of the word had been recommended by the orthodox Council of Antioch which condemned him. And it is quite true, as was already remarked, that the word does not include or suggest a condemnation of Sabellianism, or an assertion of the opposite truth of a real personal distinction in the Godhead; but this was not the purpose for which it was employed by the Nicene fathers, or for which it has been since employed by the orthodox church. It was intended to embody a condemnation of Arianism, and an assertion of the great scriptural truth which is opposed to it. The Arians not only knew that this was its intended object, but they saw and felt that this object it was admirably fitted to effect; for it is a very remarkable fact, that amid all the discussions which took place upon this subject, Arians and semi-Arians uniformly manifested a most intense and unwavering dislike to the word ὁμοούσιος, and to the doctrine which it so explicitly and unequivocally declared. Most of the different sections into which the Arians and semi-Arians split in the course of the fourth century, laboured to devise, and ostentatiously paraded, the highest and most exalted terms which they could consistently apply to the Son, and some of them professed to adopt most of the terms applied to Him in the Nicene Creed. The semi-Arians in general professed to concur in the condemnation pronounced by the Nicene Council upon those who asserted that there was a time when He was- not, or who maintained that He was a creature, made out of nothing. Some of them went so far as to profess to regard Him, not only as God, but as the true God: in short, they professed to say, in regard to Him, almost everything which the Nicene fathers had said; but none of them ever would admit the doctrine of the consubstantiality.

During some portion of the fourth century, through the influence of the Emperors Constantius and Valens, a large part of the professing church was overrun with Arian or semi-Arian heresies; so that it was said, "Unus Athanasius contra orbem,"— and that Jerome declared that the whole

world groaned, and wondered that it had become Arian. During the period, many Arian and semi-Arian councils were held, and a considerable number of creeds were adopted by them. We have still extant several creeds, for example, prepared under Arian and semi-Arian influence, in councils held at Antioch, Sardica, Sirmium, and Ariminum; and the great facts concerning them' are these: first, that they all, without exception, omit the word ὁμοούσιος, or any expression of similar import; and, secondly, that there are some of them with respect to which this single omission is the only very intelligible or palpable difference between them and the one at Nice, —so that there are even some of them in regard to which it has been ever since a subject of controversy, whether they ought to be regarded as orthodox or not. The more bold and honest Arians said that the Son was of a different substance from the Father; others said that He was unlike the Father; and some, who were usually reckoned semi-Arians, admitted that He was of a like substance with the Father; but they all unanimously refused to admit the Nicene phraseology, because they were opposed to the Nicene doctrine of the true and proper divinity of the Son, and saw and felt that that phraseology accurately and unequivocally expressed it, though they sometimes professed to adduce other objections against the use of it. They made many attempts to appear to come as near as possible to the orthodox doctrine, without really committing themselves to its fundamental distinctive principle; but the word ὁμοούσιος acted like Ithuriel's spear in detecting all their shifts and manoeuvres, and in holding them up to the world as opposers, whatever they might sometimes pretend, of the true and proper divinity of the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. It was like the anchor that held the orthodox faith in steadiness and safety amid the fearful storms of more than half a century, which elapsed between the first and the second oecumenical councils. It was a barrier against which neither force nor fraud could prevail, and which, in so far as anything of the kind could effect it, may have been said to have kept God's truth pure and undefiled, until the calamity had overpast, and a period arrived more favourable to the open profession and maintenance of the true doctrine which He has made known concerning His Son. I do not know that the history of the church presents to us another instance in which the wisdom and expediency of any particular doctrinal deliverance have been so fully established by

experience; The history of the fourth century most fully proves that the Nicene fathers acted wisely, —that is, acted under the guidance and direction of Him who is the God only wise, —when they embodied in their creed or declaration that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. The Arians were never able to pervert it into an accordance with their views, but were obliged ever to admit that it unequivocally condemned them.

It thus fully served the purpose for which it was intended, and acted as a discriminating test between truth and error. The Lord blessed it, and made it the means of preserving His truth when it was exposed to imminent danger; and it continues to this day, in the symbolical books of almost all orthodox churches, to be regarded as a precise and accurate exponent of the great doctrine of our Lord's true and proper divinity.

There is, indeed, one slight deduction to be made from the statement now given, of the beneficial effects of the assertion of this doctrine and the use of this phraseology, —i.e., from the proof from experience of the wisdom and expediency of the adoption of it as a test of orthodoxy. There do seem to have been some persons in the fourth century who, while holding the substance of the orthodox doctrine in regard to the person of Christ, in opposition not only to Arians but to semi-Arians, had difficulties about adopting the word ὁμοούσιος; so that while it fully served the important purpose of detecting and excluding all Arians, it did not quite so fully effect the object— which is also of great importance in a matter of this sort— of uniting and combining all who agreed with the sacred Scriptures, and with each other, in regard to the substance of the doctrine. This was no doubt a partial evil, and it was to be regretted, both for the sake of truth and for the sake of the individuals themselves. The number of these individuals, however, who held the substance of the Nicene doctrine, but objected to the phraseology in which it was expressed, was very small, —and the evil, therefore, was very inconsiderable; while the advantage was incalculable that resulted from the possession and the use of a definite phraseology, which shut out all the supporters of error, combined nearly all the maintainers of truth, and formed a rallying-point around which the whole orthodox church ultimately gathered, after the confusion and distraction occasioned by Arian cunning and Arian persecution had passed away.

It is interesting to notice that some of the most zealous champions of orthodoxy during the Arian controversy knew how to temper their zeal for fundamental truth with a reasonable forbearance for the difficulties and infirmities of individuals; and that they did distinguish between differences as to the substance of the great doctrine of our Lord's true and proper divinity, and differences about some minor points in the mode of explaining it, and in the phraseology employed in doing so. It is generally said, that the adoption of the word ὁμοιούσιος, of a similar substance, as distinguished from ὁμοούσιος, of the same substance, is the discriminating characteristic of the semi-Arians— of those who wished to appear to come as near to orthodoxy as possible, without actually adopting it; and this is, to a large extent, though not universally, true. Athanasius and Hilary, two of the most zealous defenders of the Nicene Creed, have both distinctly admitted that there were men in their time who scrupled to employ the word ὁμοιούσιος, and preferred that of ὁμοούσιος, who yet held the substance of the orthodox doctrine upon the subject, -and were therefore to be treated as brethren in the faith— weak brethren, it might be— but still not as enemies of the truth. It was reckoned, and justly, a mark of some measure of error or misconception, a just cause of suspicion which required to be purged away, that men should object to asserting an identity of substance between the Father and the Son, and prefer asserting only a similarity. Still this was not to be held to be of itself conclusive against their orthodoxy. Hilary, one of the ablest and most strenuous defenders of the Nicene doctrine, laboured to show that ὁμοιούσιος was not only in fact used in preference to ὁμοούσιος by men who were in the main orthodox on the subject of the person of Christ, but, moreover, that it fairly admitted of a good and orthodox sense, i.e., of substantially the same sense as ὁμοούσιος. He says: "Similarity of nature, then, is far from suspicion of unsoundness; nor can the Son appear to be non-participant of His Father's nature, merely because He is like Him, since there is no similiarity except from equality of nature, and there cannot be equality of nature except it be one — one, indeed, not in unity of person, but of kind or species. This, then, is a pious faith— this a religious conscience— this a sound mode of speaking, not to deny one substance of the Father and the Son, because it is like; and to assert that the substance of the Son is like that of the Father, because they are one."

Athanasius has the following statement upon this subject, which is honourable to him, and fitted to teach us a useful and important lesson. "This," says he, "may suffice for refuting those who assail the Council of Nice, and attack all its proceedings. But with respect to those who receive the other decisions of the council, but have a difficulty about the ὁμοούσιος, we ought not to treat them as enemies: for we are not to identify them with the Arians, or to proclaim open war against them, but to discuss the matter with them as brethren, because they have really the same doctrine as we, and dispute only about words; for since they profess that the Son is of the substance of the Father, and not of any other substance, —that He is not a creature, but the true and natural offspring of the Father, and that He existed with the Father from eternity, —they are not far removed from the ὁμοούσιος." It was certainly an act of great weakness, —originating, probably, to some extent in pride or prejudice, not very creditable to the parties themselves, and decidedly injurious to the interests of truth, —that men who honestly believed all this should scruple about the word ὁμοούσιος; but cases of an analogous description have occurred in all ages in which there has been anything like free investigation. They have occurred not only in regard to this doctrine, but also in regard to others; and where the cases really are analogous, —i.e., where there is good ground to think that the substance of the true scriptural doctrine is honestly believed, —they ought to be spoken of and treated in the way of which Athanasius has here set us an edifying example.

III. The Nicene Creed— the Eternal Sonship

The propositions which are directly and immediately taught us in Scripture on the subject of the Godhead are these: that there is one God— that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God and from these propositions, directly taught in, and conclusively established by, Scripture, we draw the inference that these three— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost— are the one God. The Scriptures bring these three before us as distinguished from each other, and as distinguished from each other in a way that bears some analogy or resemblance to that in which three different persons among men are

distinguished from each other, so that they might be marked out by the application to them of the distinct personal pronouns, I, Thou, and he; and upon this ground we consider ourselves fully warranted in saying, as is said in our Confession of Faith, in the sense which has already been fully explained, that in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. When it is further said in the Confession, that these three persons are "of one substance, power, and eternity," this, of course, is intended to set forth some of the leading positions which are implied in or result from, and thus explain the great general doctrine that they all possess the one Godhead, or the one proper divine nature. If God be one, and if the Son be God, and the Holy Ghost be God, they must possess equally with the Father the one undivided and indivisible divine essence or substance, and they must possess equally all divine perfections, such as power and eternity; or, in the language which has been commonly employed by orthodox divines, the three distinct persons in the one Godhead or divine nature are consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal.

To this general description of the Trinity in unity, or of three persons possessing the one divine nature or essence, and the same divine perfections, it is added in the Larger Catechism (Quest. 9), that they are "distinguished by their personal properties." Now, this statement introduces an idea over and above what is necessarily implied in the position that they are three distinct persons. All that is implied in the general position, that they are three distinct persons, so far as we are warranted and qualified to explain it, is this: that they are distinguished from each other in a way somewhat analogous to that in which three different persons among men are distinguished from each other, so as to admit of the distinct personal pronouns, I, Thou, and He, being applied to them respectively; and the true ground of the position is this general consideration, that the scriptural representations upon the subject are manifestly fitted,; and of course were intended, to convey to us this general conviction and impression. The position that they are "distinguished by their personal properties," conveys to us something fuller and more specific than this, with respect to the nature, or rather the manifestations and consequences, of the distinction; and if true, it affords ground for this position, that there is something which may be predicated

of each of the persons that cannot be predicated of the rest. These two things are correlatives. If it be true that the three persons are distinguished by their personal properties, then it follows necessarily that there must be something about each of them that cannot be predicated of the others; and, e converso, if it can be proved that there is something predicable of each of them that cannot be predicated of the others, then we are fully warranted in deducing from this fact the general doctrine necessarily involved in it, that they are distinguished by their personal properties. Now we hold, and undertake to prove, that the Scripture warrants us in maintaining that there is something predicable of each of the persons which cannot be predicated of the others; and when we have proved this specifically and in detail, we consider ourselves fully warranted in laying down the general position that they are distinguished by their personal properties, which is nothing more than embodying in a general statement the substance of scripturally proved facts. Accordingly, the Larger Catechism, after asserting that they are "distinguished by their personal properties," puts the question, "What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead" and the answer is, "It is proper to the Father (i.e., it is a peculiar, distinguishing property of the Father, predicated of Him, and not of the other two persons) to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity;" or, as it is expressed in the Confession, "The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son." Now, what is here asserted concerning the Father and the Son, and their mutual relation, as well as distinguishing properties, constitutes the substance of the doctrine which has been generally held by the church in all ages under the name of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, or the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ; and it has been held just because it was believed that it could be fully proved from Scripture that the Son was eternally begotten of the Father.

The Nicene fathers did not stop short with asserting, in opposition to Arius, that the Son was of one and the same substance with the Father; they further declared that He was begotten— not made or created— that He was begotten of the Father, and of the Father's substance, and that

thus He was “God of God, θεός εκ θεοῦ, light of light, true God of true God.” This is manifestly an assertion of a doctrine different from that of the consubstantiality, and additional to it; and the same general questions may be propounded concerning this additional doctrine as those which we have already considered under the former head. This doctrine plainly implies in general that the second person in the Godhead stands in the relation of a Son to the first person, with reference to His divine nature; that there was a generation or begetting, by which the Father in some sense communicated the divine nature, essence, or substance to the Son, and the Son of course derived or received it from the Father, so as to be even as God— a Son and begotten. This was clearly the doctrine which the Nicene fathers intended to teach, and it has been generally received ever since by most orthodox churches, under the designation of the eternal Sonship or filiation of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son, or Logos. Bishop Bull discusses it under the head of the Subordination of the Son to the Father, as to his origo et principium, and shows that both the ante-Nicene fathers and the post-Nicene, while asserting the perfect equality of the Father and the Son in nature and in all perfection, were accustomed to speak of the Father as being the ἀρχή, the αἰτία, the auctor of the Son, the origo or fons (πηγή) of the divinity which the Son possesses. The use of the word subordination, however, even when thus explained and limited, has been generally avoided by orthodox writers, as fitted to suggest ideas inconsistent with true and proper divinity, and to give a handle to the Arians. As the leading idea intended to be conveyed is just the communication from eternity in some mysterious and ineffable way of the divine nature and substance by the Father to the Son; and as the main ground on which the doctrine rests is the position, that Christ is represented in Scripture as being a Son, and as being generated or begotten, even as God, or in respect to His possession of the divine nature and perfections, —it is more common, and certainly more warrantable and becoming, to speak of the doctrine under the designation of the eternal Sonship or filiation of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son by the Father.

I have said that this doctrine of the eternal Sonship or filiation of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son (the same undoubtedly which the

Nicene Council intended to teach in the quotations given from their creed), has been generally received ever since by most orthodox churches. At the same time, it must be admitted that there have been writers of eminence who have held the true and proper divinity of the Son, and His consubstantiality with the Father, but have rejected the doctrine of His eternal generation. They have been led to reject this doctrine partly from some abstract metaphysical reasonings, —which, however, I am persuaded can be proved to carry with them no more real weight in opposition to the eternal generation of the Son than other abstract reasonings of a similar kind possess, in opposition to His proper divinity, —and partly from a sensitive shrinking from what may appear presumptuous speculations upon a mysterious subject, without clear warrant, as they think, in Scripture. These persons are accustomed to say, that all that is clearly revealed upon this subject in Scripture is, —that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God; and yet that they are not three Gods, but one God. If this be indeed all that is revealed in Scripture, then here we should stop, and content ourselves with explaining, illustrating, and defending this position; and this, as I formerly showed, is quite enough to warrant us in asserting the consubstantiality of the three persons in the Godhead. But as, on the one hand, we ought to beware of trying to be wise above what is written; so, on the other hand, we must guard against laying aside," or leaving out of view, anything which has really been revealed upon this point. In either case equally we are failing in making a right use and improvement of the word of God. Some of the fathers indulged in unwarrantable and presumptuous speculations about the relations of the persons in the Godhead; and this was carried to a far greater excess, and exhibited much more offensively, by the schoolmen, who were accustomed to discuss many questions concerning this subject which assuredly the word of God affords us no materials for deciding, and which may justly be regarded as not only presumptuous, but profane. This, combined with other causes, has led some modern writers to lean somewhat to the opposite extreme; and to leave out, or to refuse to take up, positions which there is good ground to believe that the word of God sufficiently warrants. Calvin, disgusted with the presumptuous speculations of the schoolmen, and having to contend in his own day both with

Sabellian and Tritheistic heretics, expressed a wish that the names usually employed in discussing this subject were buried, and that men would be contented with believing and professing that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God; and yet that the Son is not the Father, or the Spirit the Son, but that they are distinguished from each other by their personal properties; and in accordance with this feeling, he certainly spoke with some degree of doubt or suspicion of the eternal Sonship of Christ, though there is no sufficient ground for maintaining, as has been sometimes done, that he positively denied or rejected it.

It must be admitted that the fundamental truth upon this point, —that which stands clearly and prominently first, both in respect to the fulness of its scriptural evidence and its own intrinsic importance, —is the doctrine that the Son is God— truly and properly God— of one and the same substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory; and it may be admitted that men who believe this, and believe nothing more upon the point, may have correct views in the main of the leading principles of the scheme of redemption. Still, the Nicene fathers taught, and most orthodox churches have concurred with them, that there was another and a more specific additional truth revealed in Scripture upon this subject, and possessed of no inconsiderable intrinsic importance, —that, namely, of the eternal generation of the Son. Of those who, admitting the proper divinity of the Son (for it is with them only we have at present to do), have not admitted His eternal generation, some have contented themselves with saying that they saw no sufficient scriptural evidence of this latter doctrine, and therefore did not receive it into their creed; while others have gone further, and have maintained positively that the doctrine is false, nay, even that it is inconsistent with the scriptural doctrine of His true and proper divinity. Some of this latter class, —and especially the late Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, one of the first Biblical critics of the present day, —have taken some credit to themselves for being the most judicious defenders of Christ's proper divinity, and have imagined that they derived important advantages in the management of this great cause from casting off the doctrine of the eternal Sonship. The defenders of the eternal Sonship of Christ do not imagine that it can be established by any other evidence except scriptural testimony; but they believe that the scriptural testimony in its favour is

sufficient and satisfactory; that there is no reason whatever why it should be rejected or explained away; and that the doctrine, instead of weakening or subverting that of Christ's proper divinity, tends greatly to confirm and illustrate it, as well as to throw light upon other important doctrines.

Those who positively deny or reject the doctrine of Christ's eternal Sonship, usually adopt a line of argument in opposing it, precisely analogous to that employed by Arians and Socinians in arguing against Christ's divinity. They begin with trying to prove by abstract reasonings, a priori, that the doctrine cannot be true; and then they proceed to what is in a great measure superfluous, —if they have really succeeded in establishing their first position, —to show that the scriptural statements on which the proof of the doctrine is commonly based are not sufficient to prove it. We have already admitted that the clearest and most fundamental truth upon this point is, that Christ is truly possessed of the divine nature, and of all divine perfections. All who hold this doctrine— and it is admitted by both parties in the discussion about the eternal Sonship— must of course admit that nothing can be truly predicated of Christ which contradicts, or is inconsistent with, His true and proper divinity. Now, the opponents of this eternal generation by the Father assert that this generation implies that the Father existed before Him in point of time, and that therefore He was not co-eternal with the Father; and also, that the derivation of His existence and substance from the Father by generation, in any sense, is inconsistent with that necessary existence which is an essential attribute of divinity. I am not called upon to enter upon a minute and formal investigation of this difficulty, and can only point briefly to the principal considerations by which it can, I think, be satisfactorily solved.

The fallacy of the argument lies in this, that it proceeds upon the assumption that generation, —and what it involves or implies when applied to the divine nature, —must be the same as when applied to men, and that the same or an analogous inference may be deduced from it in both cases. This is a mode of arguing which all the defenders of the proper divinity of Christ reject, when they are called upon to maintain that doctrine against its opponents. Arians and Socinians are accustomed

to argue that, as three persons among men are three different intelligent beings, so three persons in the Godhead must be three beings, or three Gods; and the answer which is reckoned sufficient by all defenders of our Lord's divinity is, in substance, that it is unwarrantable to argue in this way from the human to the divine nature; that what is true in regard to the one, may not be true, and cannot be proved to be true, in regard to the other; that we speak of three persons in the unity of the Godhead, just because this is the nearest approach we can make, by the exercise of our feeble faculties, and in the use of human language, to embodying or expressing a combination of a unity with a threefold distinction, — a combination which is clearly intimated to us in Scripture. In like manner, it appears to be intimated in Scripture— for we are entitled, in discussing this preliminary objection, to assume this— that the Logos, or second person of the Godhead, stands to the first even as God in the relation of Sonship, nay, in a relation expressly described in Scripture as Sonship; and we are fully warranted in putting aside as presumptuous and inadequate any preliminary objection to this doctrine, based upon difficulties which manifestly rest upon the application to a relation subsisting in the divine nature of notions derived from a relation called by the same name, because in some respects analogous, subsisting among men. We do not admit, and it cannot be proved, that generation in the divine nature must imply priority of existence in the begetter with relation to the begotten, or merely contingent as opposed to necessary existence in the Son; and in this way it may be shown that the preliminary objection to the eternal generation of the Son may be disposed of in the same way, and just as conclusively, as the preliminary objection to His proper divinity derived from the admitted unity of God.

Nay, there is one important aspect in which the answer to the objection in the former case has an advantage over the answer to the objection in the latter; and it is this: a distinction of persons — the subsistence of three persons in the unity of the Godhead— have not, as phrases or expressions, explicit scriptural sanction. They are used, and warrantably used, just because they seem best adapted of any expressions which human language furnishes, to embody or indicate what the Scripture unfolds to us upon the subject; whereas, if the doctrine of eternal generation has any foundation in Scripture— and that it has, we are

entitled, as I have said, to assume hypothetically at this stage of the argument— then we have the idea of Sonship expressly applied to the relation subsisting between the first and second persons of the Godhead. And, of course, we are thus entitled to allege that the relation which actually subsists between them, —whatever may be its precise nature, however imperfectly it may have been revealed to us, and however inadequate our faculties may be to comprehend it, —that this actual relation is that which truly and properly constitutes Sonship, or is the original idea or archetype of filiation. And, if so, it manifestly follows that we ought to regulate our conceptions of what sonship is and implies, not from the defective and imperfect representations of it given in the relation of fathers and sons among men, but from the original and only true idea of it as subsisting between the first and second persons of the Godhead. This view brings out most palpably the unwarrantableness and inexcusableness of deducing inferences from what generation or sonship involves or implies among men, to what it must involve or imply when regarded as subsisting between the persons of the Godhead. The eternal generation of the Son, then, just means the communication from eternity, in some ineffable and mysterious way, of the divine nature and essence by the first to the second person of the Godhead, in virtue of which the relation of proper paternity and proper sonship subsists between them, and is accordingly set before us in Scripture in the only way in which it could be unfolded, in language applicable to a human relation, which is, in some respects, though not in all, analogous to it. The proper Sonship of Christ, instead of suggesting any considerations inconsistent with His true divinity, most naturally and immediately suggests His being truly of the same nature and substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory.

As it may be truly said of the doctrine of the Trinity in general, that when it is once proved that it may be true, —i.e., when it is once shown that it cannot be proved to involve a contradiction, —there is no difficulty in proving from Scripture that it is true; so it may with equal justice be said of the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, that when it is once shown that it cannot be proved (for, of course, the onus probandi lies upon those who allege the objection) to involve anything necessarily inconsistent with His proper divinity— His co-eternity and co-equality

with the Father— then there is no great difficulty in finding in Scripture enough to establish its truth. The evidence depends mainly upon an investigation of the true meaning and application of the phrase, the Son of God, as it is used by the inspired writers; and more particularly, upon the decision of the question whether this designation is ever applied to Christ as God, or with an exclusive reference to His divine nature. If it appears that Christ, as God, is on any occasion represented in Scripture as the Son of God, then the controversy is settled; for this is nearly all that is meant by His eternal Sonship— that, as God, or in His divine nature, He stands in the relation of a Son to the first person of the Godhead. The opponents of the eternal Sonship of Christ allege, some of them, that the designation, Son of God, as applied to Him in Scripture, is descriptive, not of His nature, but only of His office as Messiah or Mediator; others, that it is properly descriptive of His human nature, upon the ground of His miraculous conception; while others, again, admitting, like the latter class, that it is a designation not merely of office but of nature, hold that it is applied to Him merely as a general description of His peculiar position and dignity, and intimate relation to God in His complex person, as God and man in one person. This last is the view taken of its import by Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, who has laboured with great zeal to refute the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, and whose erroneous views upon this point materially detract from the value of his other labours in establishing the proper divinity of Christ in opposition to the Socinians. The discussion of this subject, of course, opens up a wide ' field of critical investigation into the true meaning and import of a large number of the most important and interesting passages in the New Testament. On this field I am not called upon to enter; and it is the less necessary, as there is a very accessible book, published a few years ago, in which the whole subject is most fully and minutely discussed with great ability, and in an admirable spirit— I mean Treffry on "The Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ," where the doctrines which I have endeavoured briefly to state and explain are, I think, established by unanswerable evidence from the word of God.

It is important to keep in view, in surveying the scriptural evidence, that, if it clearly appears that in any instance the idea of generation or sonship is applied in Scripture to our Saviour, with reference exclusively to His

divine nature or His eternal relation to the first person of the Godhead, this is quite sufficient to establish the doctrine, even though it should appear that there are also passages in Scripture in which the designation, Son of God, is applied to Him with reference to His office and not His nature, or if to nature as distinguished from office, with a reference to His human nature, or to His complex person as θεανθρωπος, as distinguished from His divine nature, simply as such. It has been common among some divines to bring out and illustrate different grounds or modes of filiation, as they call it, said to be applied to Christ in Scripture, or various reasons on account of which He is there styled the Son of God, such as His miraculous conception, His mission and office as Messiah and Mediator, His resurrection from the dead, and the peculiar intimacy of fellowship which He enjoyed with the Father, and the preeminent power and glory to which He has been raised. Treffry's admirable work shows that some of these alleged modes of filiation or grounds of Sonship have no foundation whatever in Scripture, —i.e., are not adduced and represented there as the reasons why Christ is called the Son of God; and that, in regard to all of them, the evidence is much more defective and uncertain than might at first sight appear, —that, in short, the ordinary and general, if not the exclusive, application of the title, Son of God, to Christ, describes or indicates a relation subsisting between Him and the first person in the Godhead from eternity. But even if we were to admit that all the different inferior modes of filiation which divines have enumerated were sanctioned by Scripture, the question would still remain, whether it does not also, in addition, exhibit and sanction another and higher mode of filiation, by representing Christ as being the Son of God with reference to His divine nature, apart from any other view, either of His nature or of His official position and privileges. If this mode of filiation, if this species and ground of Sonship, be sanctioned by Scripture, as we have no doubt it can be proved to be, then is the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son or Logos, fully established, whatever other inferior modes of filiation may be also brought before us in Scripture; and thus, of course, it becomes our duty to believe upon the authority of God, that there has subsisted from eternity, between the first and second persons in the Godhead, a relation analogous in some respects to that subsisting between a father and a son among men, implying, as the human relation does, identity of nature and equality of

order or dignity, but, of course, not implying priority in time as opposed to co-eternity, or contingency and dependence of existence as opposed to necessary and unchangeable existence, or, indeed, anything inconsistent with the full possession by the Son of true and proper divinity, and all which this involves.

There are not a few in our own day, who, under a profession of adhering strictly to the simplicity of Scripture, and indulging in no speculations which the word of God does not warrant, reject the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of the Saviour. The question, of course, must be decided by an appeal to Scripture, which alone can give any information upon a subject so mysterious, and so immeasurably raised above the cognizance of our unaided faculties; but we cannot help thinking, that just as Arians and Socinians come to the examination of the scriptural evidence of our Lord's proper divinity with their minds biassed by a previous conviction, upon grounds of abstract reasoning, that the one divine nature cannot be possessed by two distinct persons, so the opponents of the eternal generation of the Son come to the examination of the scriptural evidence upon this point with their minds biassed by a previous conviction, that there cannot subsist between two distinct persons in the Godhead a relation in some respects analogous to that subsisting between a father and a son among men.

We are persuaded, then, that the Nicene fathers were supported by the word of God, as well as by the testimony of the early church, in declaring that the Son was not only of one and the same substance with the Father, but also that He was eternally begotten by the Father of His own substance; and though we would not put this doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son upon the same level, in point of intrinsic importance, with that of His consubstantiality or true and proper divinity, yet we believe that it is much more important than many seem willing to admit, as throwing most interesting and valuable light upon many particular statements and general doctrines of Scripture, and especially as enabling us more fully to understand and realize the great doctrine which may be said to constitute the gospel of our salvation, — viz., "that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"

and that "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

IV. The Nicene Creed— Procession of the Spirit

There was nothing said in the original Nicene Creed about the Holy Ghost, except the simple mention of His name, because, up till that time, the Scripture doctrine concerning Him had not been made a matter of controversial discussion; but in what is commonly known as the Nicene Creed, —and which is the proper Nicene Creed as enlarged by the second general council held at Constantinople in 381, —the Holy Ghost is described as "the Lord and Lifegiver, proceeding from the Father, and with the Father and the Son to be worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." Now, this was intended to assert the consubstantiality and co-equality of the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son, as a distinct person; and, in addition, to predicate of Him, as a distinguishing personal property, that He proceeds— εκπορευεται — from the Father. At a later period, the Latin or Western Church introduced into the creed the statement, that He proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son. This doctrine of the procession of the Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father, the Greek or Eastern Church refused to adopt; and the discussion of this topic was one main cause that led to the final separation of the Eastern and Western Churches, and has always continued to form a leading subject of controversy between them. The reformed churches have all adopted the doctrine of the Latin or Western Church upon this subject, and have maintained, as is done in our Confession, that the Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son. What we have at present to do with is only this, that it is a peculiar distinguishing property of the Spirit, —a fact predicated of Him and not of any other person in the Godhead, —that He proceeds— i.e., has the divine nature or essence communicated to Him by the other persons, or derives it from them in a mysterious and ineffable way, of which Scripture affords us no materials for saying anything, except that, while it implies communication on the one part, and derivation on the other, it is

different from, and is left in a somewhat more general and indefinite position than the "begetting and being begotten," which represents the distinguishing personal properties of the Father and the Son, and, at the same time, constitutes their mutual relation.

This is the sum and substance of all that is revealed to us in Scripture concerning the distinction in the divine nature, —concerning the three distinct persons who possess in common the one divine nature, —in so far as their true and proper divinity, or their eternal power and Godhead, are concerned; and we have now only to advert to another great truth revealed to us in Scripture concerning the second of these three persons, —viz., that He was made flesh, that He became man, —and to what is implied in and results from this.

X. The Person Of Christ

The subjects which we have been considering, in connection with the Arian controversy and the Nicene Creed, come under the head of Theology, in the most restricted meaning of the word, as descriptive of that branch of divine truth which treats directly of God, or the Divine Being; and, accordingly, they are often discussed in the older systematic works under the head *De Deo Uno et Trino*. It is an important feature of the information which God in His word gives us concerning Himself, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory; and men who know not or who deny this, cannot be said to know the true God as He has made Himself known to us. The topics involved in the controversies, to which we now proceed very briefly to advert, come under the head of what, according to the modern divisions generally adopted upon the continent, is called Christology, as distinguished from Theology in the most restricted sense of the word, and were usually discussed in the older systems under the head "*De persona Mediatoris*." They respect the constitution of the Saviour's person, not as He existed from eternity with the Father, but as He was when on earth working out the salvation of sinners, and as He now is in heaven at God's right hand.

So far as the Socinians are concerned, the controversy is virtually terminated by the proof of Christ's true and proper divinity. Though some ancient heretics denied Christ's humanity, and though one or two modern Arians have held that the super-angelic creature whom they regard as the Son, or Logos, informed or dwelt in Christ's body, and thus served as a substitute for a human soul; yet it may be said, practically and substantially, to be universally admitted that Christ was truly and really a man, possessed of a true body and a reasonable soul. It is right that we should dwell upon the abundant evidence which Scripture affords of this position, in order that we may realize the great truth, that He was a partaker of flesh and blood, —a true and real man like ourselves. But this evidence is now scarcely ever produced for controversial objects, except when the Socinians descend to the artifice of marshalling it for the

purpose of insinuating, or conveying the impression, that, because He was man, therefore He was not God. Of course, the question whether He was God or not, is not to be disposed of in so summary a way, but by a full and impartial examination of the scriptural evidence bearing upon this point itself, conducted in the manner and upon the principles which have been already described. It is impossible to prove, a priori, the impossibility of a union of the divine and human natures, or of a divine person taking human nature into union with Himself, —just as impossible as it is to prove that there cannot be three persons subsisting in the unity of the Godhead; and if so, there is no reason why we should not receive and hold in combination both the doctrines, each of which can be conclusively established by its appropriate evidence, —viz., that Christ was from eternity God, possessed of true and proper divinity; and that when He appeared on earth He was a true and real man.

But the Scriptures not only teach us that Christ was God, and that He was man, —they further distinctly and explicitly assert the fact of His incarnation, of His being made flesh, of His becoming man, —i.e., of His assuming human nature into union with the divine. The Socinians, of course, apply to those passages that assert His incarnation, the same process which they apply to those that make known His proper divinity, with the same object, —viz., to pervert them from their natural obvious meaning; and with the same result, —viz., in their failure, when tested by the rules of strict and impartial criticism; and while they attempt to accumulate additional improbabilities and difficulties, on abstract grounds, on the doctrine of His incarnation, as distinguished from the doctrine of His divinity, the fair conclusion is, that the explicit assertion in Scripture of His being made flesh, or of His becoming man, greatly confirms the evidence of His having previously existed in the possession of a higher nature. There have been some controversies among those who believed in the divinity and incarnation of Christ, as to what the assumption of the human nature by a divine person, and the consequent union in some sense of the two natures, implied or involved; and to these it may be proper to advert, in order to complete the scriptural view of the constitution of Christ's person.

This subject was fully discussed in the fifth century, in connection with

the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies; and the decisions, then pronounced by the church regarding it, have been ever since generally received by the churches of Christ. The Nestorians and Eutychians both professed to receive the decrees of the Council of Nice and Constantinople, and, of course, to believe in the incarnation of the Son of God, —i.e., to believe that the second person of the Godhead, eternally begotten by the Father of His own substance, did assume human nature so as to become a man. This incarnation of the eternal Word— this assumption of human nature by the Son of God — is the great fundamental truth upon the subject, clearly taught in Scripture, and clearly declared in the Nicene, or rather the Constantinopolitan, Creed; and in comparison with this great truth the topics involved in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies sink to the somewhat lower platform of being questions about the exact nature and precise results of the incarnation, and the mode in which it was effected. But though the doctrine, that the eternal Son of God assumed human nature so as to have thereby become a man, is the fundamental truth upon this subject, to which all others are in some sense subordinate, it does not by any means follow that the ulterior questions as to what this general truth, more precisely examined, involves or implies, are unimportant. When the question is put— and it is of course one of fundamental importance — what is Christ? the direct and proper answer to it is, —That He is God and man, —i.e., that having been from eternity God, He in time assumed human nature, so as thereby to become man. But when the mind dwells upon this great truth, with the view of more fully comprehending and realizing it, the questions almost immediately arise, whether, after this assumption of human nature, by one who had been from eternity possessed of the divine nature, the two natures still continued to retain each its own entireness or completeness; and whether, if so, each of the two natures did not form or constitute a distinct person, so that in Christ there should be two persons as well as two natures. And these are just the topics involved in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies. The great doctrine of the incarnation cannot be very distinctly understood, and it cannot be very clearly explained, unless these questions be kept in view, and unless the words employed in explaining it virtually contain a deliverance regarding them. Accordingly, we find that, even in works intended to convey instruction in the elementary and fundamental

doctrines of Christianity, it has been felt to be necessary, in describing the person of Christ, to make statements which contain a deliverance upon these controversies, —controversies which were at one time discussed with so much heat, and which, from the mode in which they were discussed in the fifth century, appeared to involve points of the most unprofitable, the most obscure, and the most perplexing description. In our Shorter Catechism for instance, it is said, "that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God became man, and so was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever,"— a statement which manifestly embodies the sum and substance of the decrees of the third and fourth ecumenical Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon in the fifth century, and which cannot be explained and defended without a knowledge of those scriptural grounds applicable to the subject on which the decisions of these councils were professedly based.

Assuming that the general doctrine of the incarnation of the eternal Word, as it has been declared by the Councils of Nice and Constantinople, was generally received in the church, as it certainly was, it might have been expected that the next question which would arise, as that which most naturally and obviously presented itself to the minds of men in the progress of exposition or speculation, would be that which concerned the continued distinctness and entireness or completeness of the two natures — the divine and the human— after the incarnation. And this reasonable expectation seems to be contradicted by the fact that the Nestorian heresy which divided the person, preceded the Eutychian, which confounded the natures. It should be remembered, however, that the heresy of Apollinari, which preceded that of Nestorius, turned in substance upon the completeness of the two natures in Christ; that Nestorius, if indeed he was really a Nestorian, about which many competent judges have entertained great doubts, seems to have been led into error by going into the opposite extreme in opposing Apollinarianism; and that Cyril, the great opponent of Nestorius, was charged by some with leaning towards Apollinarianism, and what was afterwards called Eutychianism, or the heresy of the Monophysites.

I. The Eutychian Controversy

We shall first advert to the continued distinctness and completeness of the two natures in Christ, in opposition to Eutychianism; and then to the unity of the person of Christ, notwithstanding the continued distinctness and completeness of the two natures, in opposition to Nestorius, or at least the Nestorians; following the order of the Catechism, which teaches that "Christ was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures," or as the Larger Catechism, with a more explicit reference to doctrinal controversies, expresses it, "in two entire distinct natures and one person for ever." The whole scriptural truth upon the subject is thus stated in the Confession of Faith: "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, —the Godhead and the manhood, — were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man." This statement, so far as concerns the point with which we have at present more immediately to do, is given almost in the words of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which, in condemning Eutyches, gave an explanation of the whole doctrine of the incarnation, or the constitution of Christ's person, in opposition to the Nestorian as well as the Monophysite extreme. The general doctrine explicitly taught in Scripture upon this subject is, that the Logos, the eternal Son of God, was incarnate, or assumed human nature, or became man. Of course He could not cease to be God, to be fully possessed of the divine nature, with all divine perfections and prerogatives; and accordingly, all who admit that He was from eternity possessed of the divine nature, and that He became incarnate in time, believe that He continues to be very God, to possess the divine nature entire and unchanged. The question, therefore, respects only the entireness and completeness of the human nature after its assumption by the Logos; and really amounts in substance to this: Did the assumption of human nature by the eternal Son of God, leave that human nature entire and complete, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, —the manhood as well as the Godhead, — were still to be

found joined together in Christ?

The considerations which most obviously occur as bearing upon the settlement of this question, are these: First, that we have no indication whatever in Scripture of the disappearance, absorption, or extinction of the human nature in the divine; secondly, that the fair and natural import of the scriptural statements, which declare the great fact of the incarnation, leads to the conclusion that the human nature, though assumed into union with the divine, continued to exist in its proper character as human nature, retaining all its essential properties; and, thirdly, especially and above all, —for this is the direct and conclusive proof, —that Christ is uniformly represented to us in Scripture, during His abode upon earth, and of course after the incarnation, even from His birth, as being truly, properly, and in all respects, a man, or a partaker of human nature, with all its necessary constituent elements and essential properties. It is on this position mainly that the question hinges, —it is by this chiefly that it is to be decided. Christ had been from eternity God over all; He assumed human nature into union with the divine. The divine nature of course continued unchanged, because it is unchangeable. Did the human nature also continue unchanged, distinct from the divine, though inseparably united with it Christ is uniformly represented to us in Scripture as being *prima facie* a man— a full partaker of human nature in all its completeness. If it be asserted that He had not human nature in its entirety and perfection, or that anything essential to human nature was wanting in Him, the *onus probandi* must be upon those who make this assertion; for the obvious import of the general declaration of the incarnation, and the general bearing of the representation given us of Christ during His abode upon earth, plainly lead to an opposite conclusion. There is no evidence whatever in Scripture that Christ wanted anything whatever to make Him an entire and perfect man, or possessor of human nature in all its completeness; and, on the contrary, there is direct and positive proof that he had every essential property of humanity.

The distinctive constituent elements of a man, of a human being, of one who is possessed of perfect human nature, are a body and a soul united. Christ took to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and He

retained, and still retains them in all their completeness, and with all their essential qualities. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, "of her substance," as is said in the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism; these words, "of her substance," being intended as a negation of an old heresy, revived by some Anabaptists after the Reformation, to the effect that He was conceived in Mary, but not of her; and that He, as it were, passed through her body without deriving anything from her substance; and being intended to assert, in opposition to this notion, that she contributed to the formation of Christ's human nature, just what mothers ordinarily contribute to the formation of their children. Having thus taken a true body, formed of the substance of the Virgin, He continued ever after to retain it, as is manifest in the whole history of His life, of His death, and of the period succeeding His resurrection; and He has it still at the right hand of God. He took also a reasonable soul, possessed of all the ordinary faculties and capacities of the souls of other men, including a power of volition, which is asserted in opposition to the error of the Monothelites. We see this clearly manifested in the whole of His history, both before and after His death and resurrection; and the proofs of it might very easily be drawn out in detail in a survey of the whole record which God has given us concerning His Son. The denial of perfect and entire manhood, as well as Godhead, in Christ, rests upon no better foundation than a vague and confused notion, that the divine must, somehow or other, have absorbed or extinguished and swallowed up the human nature; so that the human could not, after its union to the divine, continue to exist in its entirety, and in the possession of all its own essential properties. But this is a mere imagination or conjecture, which has no solid foundation to rest upon. We must not imagine or conjecture anything upon such a subject, but seek simply to ascertain what the word of God makes known to us. That word plainly represents Christ to us as being and continuing a true and perfect man, after the human nature had been assumed into union by the divine; and thus shows that our plain and imperative duty is just to believe on God's testimony, that the divine nature did not absorb or extinguish the human, but left it, notwithstanding the union between them, distinct, in all its entirety and completeness, so that Christ really was very man as well as very God, and had manhood as well as Godhead, whole and entire.

The Son of God assumed human nature into union with the divine. The human nature is, of course, liable to change or alteration, while the divine is not; and, therefore, the question naturally enough occurs, What became of this human nature when it was taken into union with the divine; what position did it thereafter occupy? It was to contradict or exclude all supposable modes of explaining its position and relation to the divine nature, except that to which the whole tenor of God's word shuts us up, —viz., that it still, in the union, retained its own entire completeness and perfection— that the Council of Chalcedon declared that they were united together; and that it is declared in our own Confession, that they "were joined together without conversion, composition, or confusion." It is not needful to suppose that these three words in our Confession are intended to convey three distinct, or materially different ideas; or indeed anything more in substance than the ἄτρεπτως και ἀσύγχυτως introduced by the fathers of Chalcedon against Eutyches, and ever since generally adopted by the orthodox churches. Composition and confusion are here used as critically synonymous, —the one being merely exegetical of the other, and the two together just expressing most fully the sense of ἀσύγχυτως, for which indeed the word communication, as well as composition or confusion, has been sometimes employed. If the human nature did not continue in Christ perfect and entire, so that He still was very man as well as very God, there are just two ways, in one or other of which it must, when assumed by the divine nature, have been disposed of. It may be conceived to have been changed or converted into the divine nature, so as to have been wholly absorbed by it, and thereby to have ceased to have any proper existence of its own; this is denied to have taken place, when it is said that the two natures were united, without conversion, without the one being changed into the other. Or else the two in their union may have been confused or mixed up together, so as that a third nature was formed out of the composition or commixture of the two which was neither the one nor the other, but partook partly of the properties of both; this is denied to have taken place, when it is asserted that they were joined together, without composition or confusion. And the grounds of these negations are twofold: First, the intrinsic and inherent absurdity and impossibility of the things themselves, —i.e., of the human nature being changed into the divine; unless, indeed, this be supposed to be the same as the

annihilation of the human nature, which is possible, but which is not contended for, or being commingled with it, so as to change or modify its character. And, secondly, their inconsistency with the scriptural representation of the continued entireness and complete perfection of the human nature in its distinctive characteristics, and with all its essential properties, in Christ after its assumption into union with the divine. There would have been no occasion whatever for making such assertions, or for Employing such phrases as these, had not the Eutychians maintained that there was but one nature in Christ, —that He was indeed of two natures, as they expressed it, i.e., that the divine and human natures both went, or contributed in some way, to the formation or constitution of His person;— but that He was not in, as well as of, two natures, inasmuch as from the time when the union of the two was formed, one or other, or both, had been in some way changed, so that they were not both, if either, found in him entire and perfect. If the eternal Son of God assumed human nature, and if yet Christ, from the time when the assumption took place, had but one nature, as they held, it followed necessarily, that the union or assumption must have taken place in such a way, that either the one was changed into the other, or that the two must have been commingled together, so as that one compound was formed out of them. Hence the necessity and consequent propriety, with a view to the explicit contradiction and exclusion of the whole error upon this subject, in its root and branches, of asserting that the divine and human natures were, and continued to be, in Christ distinct, entire, and perfect, being united together “without conversion,” and without “composition or confusion.”

II. The Nestorian Controversy

Though Christ had two distinct natures, entire and perfect, He had but one person, as the ancient church decided against Nestorius, and as has been since generally held by orthodox churches. This position is necessary, in order to our forming' right views of the person of the Mediator; and the meaning of this position, though it does not perhaps admit of any very clear, formal definition,, is just practically and in substance this, that from the time when the union of the divine and

human natures took place, all that was said, done, or suffered, was said, done, and suffered by one and the same Being, without any distinction of persons subsisting in that one Being, as there does in the unity of the Godhead, —there being but one speaker in regard to all the words which Christ uttered, one agent in regard to all the actions which He performed, one sufferer in regard to all the afflictions which He endured. There is no appearance in Scripture of anything like a distinction of persons in Christ, of a divine person saying or doing some things ascribed to Him, and of a human person saying or doing other things, also ascribed to Him. On the contrary, He is uniformly represented as being in every sense one; and if we just submit our understandings fairly and implicitly to the influence of the views given us concerning Christ in the word of God, we can no more doubt that He was one person, though He possessed two natures united together, and each perfect and entire, than we can doubt that any one of our fellow-men is one person, though he has a body and a soul united together, — and though some things that may be predicated of Him generally and without distinction, are true only of His soul, and other things only of His body. The ground on which the person of Christ has been divided, and on which it has been maintained that He had two persons as well as two natures, is not in the least a scriptural, but merely a metaphysical one. The doctrine ascribed to Nestorius, and certainly taught by some of his followers, that Christ had two persons, is represented as a natural or necessary consequence of His having two natures. It is not necessary to enter into any metaphysical discussion upon such a point. It is enough that the word of God uniformly represents Him as one person, though having two distinct natures united together; and to remember that it was the person of the Son, the eternal Word, who, retaining His own proper personality, assumed, not a human person, but human nature, into union with the divine.

These great scriptural truths concerning the person of Christ, the Mediator between God and man, when combined together, form what is usually called by divines the doctrine of the hypostatical union, or the union of the divine and human natures in the one hypostasis, or person of Christ. There are several distinct truths, each based upon clear and abundant scriptural authority, that, when combined, go to form this great doctrine, — which declares or unfolds the person of Christ, the Redeemer

of God's elect. The particular truths or doctrines which exhibit or unfold the constitution of Christ's person, are these: first, that He was God, possessed of the divine nature and perfections, and God's Son, even with reference to His divine nature, as standing from eternity in a certain special relation to the first person of the Godhead, analogous in some respects, though of course not in all, to the relation subsisting between a son and a father among men; secondly, that He was a man possessed of human nature, with all its essential properties and common infirmities, yet without sin, —an actual partaker of flesh and blood, having a true body and a reasonable soul, as we have; thirdly, that, though He possessed at once the divine and human natures, He was but one person, as distinguished from two or more persons. Now, if these different doctrines are each based upon scriptural authority, then, when combined together, they just form the one great doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, which is thus proved to be taught in the word of God; while it manifestly unfolds to us all that we could desire to know concerning the person of Him who is set before us in Scripture as the only Saviour of sinners. The only thing material necessary to complete the scriptural account of the person of the Redeemer, is, that this union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, having been once formed, is never again to be dissolved. It existed while He tabernacled on earth, —it exists now while He sits at the right hand of God, —it will continue when He comes again to judge the world, —and it will last" for ever.

There is one other position concerning this matter laid down in the Confession as taught in Scripture, to which, before finally quitting this subject, I may briefly advert. It is this: "Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself: yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature." The union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, with a view to the salvation of sinners, was effected just because there were some things necessary for the salvation of men which could be accomplished only by God, and others which could be done or endured only by man. Man alone could suffer and die, and God alone could satisfy the divine justice and magnify

the divine law. Christ, accordingly, being God and man in one person, did by each nature that which was proper to itself.

The second part of the statement just quoted from the Confession is a mere assertion of a fact in regard to a certain scriptural usage of language, and its accuracy is proved by such texts as this— “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.” Dying is, of course, proper to the human nature; yet it is here attributed to God — the person denominated by the divine nature; and the ground or reason of the attribution is, that that person who laid down His life, and did so as man, was also God. The Confession, in making this statement, merely notices a fact, or points out an actual scriptural usage of language; but is not to be understood as laying down any general principle by which we may be guided in our use of language. We ought to make no such attributions of what is proper to one nature to the person denominated by the other, except only when the Scripture has gone before us, and sanctioned it. Some persons, upon the ground that instances of this usage of language occur in Scripture, have thought themselves warranted to indulge in minute and elaborate attributions of what was proper to the one nature, to the person denominated by the other, and thus to form an elaborate series of startling and prima facie contradictory or irreconcilable positions, —declaring of Christ's human nature, or at least of Christ as man, what was true only of the divine, or of Christ as God, and vice versa, —a practice which I cannot but regard as inconsistent with the awe and reverence with which the great mystery of godliness— God manifest in the flesh— ought ever to be contemplated. The position in the Confession, —a mere statement of a fact in regard to an occasional scriptural usage of language, -must be carefully distinguished from a doctrine which sounds very like it, and which has been strenuously maintained by Lutheran divines, as the ground of their tenet concerning the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's body, as it is called, which they are accustomed to adduce in defence of their view of the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. The Lutheran doctrine is, that what is proper to one nature may be attributed, not, as our Confession says, to the person denominated by the other nature, or described by a name taken from the other nature, but to the other nature itself; and more particularly, that the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's divine nature

may be attributed, because it really belongs, or has been communicated, to His human nature; nay, to His body or flesh. It is quite unnecessary to expose this absurd and monstrous doctrine; it is enough to point out that, though resembling in sound the statement contained in the Confession, it is essentially different in its nature and import, and in the authority on which it rests.

The errors involved in the Eutychian and Nestorian controversies are not now, and, indeed, have scarcely ever been since they were first broached, subjects of serious practical discussion, though there are still some sects of Christians in the East who are understood to hold them. The chief use now to be made of an examination of these controversies, —of the points which they involved, and of the grounds on which they were decided, —is not so much to guard us against errors which may be pressed upon us, and into which we may be tempted to fall, but rather to aid us in forming clear and definite conceptions of the truths regarding the person of Christ, which all profess to believe; in securing precision and accuracy of language in explaining them, and especially to assist us in realizing them; in habitually regarding as great and actual realities the leading features of the constitution of Christ's person, which the word of God unfolds to us. Scarcely any man in the Western Church has, ever since the fifth or sixth century, deliberately and intentionally taught Eutychian or Nestorian error, though charges of this sort have occasionally been brought against individuals— not because they had deliberately embraced these errors, and seriously meant to defend them, but because, from ignorance or inadvertence, they had been led to use language which had something of an Eutychian or Nestorian complexion. It would be no very difficult thing to produce specimens of this, or of something like it, from works on popular theology; and I am not sure that I have not heard from the pulpit phrases which a more intelligent acquaintance with the discussions that have taken place in regard to the constitution of Christ's person, would have led men to avoid, —expressions which, if strictly interpreted and followed out, would have tended either towards dividing the one person, or confounding the two natures. It is, of course, the duty of all to see that they are able to unfold the scriptural views of the person of the Redeemer with clearness, precision, and accuracy. There is - reason to fear that professing Christians in general, and even ministers of the gospel, are too

apt to rest satisfied with very vague and indefinite conceptions of the person of Christ, and to contemplate Him too much merely in general as a glorious and exalted being, who came down from heaven to save sinners, without distinctly regarding Him as being at once very God and very man, —a real possessor of the divine nature, and at the same time as truly and fully a real partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves. This is the view given us in Scripture of the person of our Redeemer; and it is only when this view of His person, in all its completeness, is understood and realized, that we are duly honouring the Son, and that we are at all fitted to cherish and express the feelings and to discharge the duties of which He is the appropriate object, —to love Him with all our hearts, at once as our Creator and our elder Brother, —to rest in Him alone for salvation, —to yield ourselves unto Him as alive from the dead, —and to rely with implicit confidence on His ability and willingness to make all things work together for our welfare, and to admit us at length into His own presence and glory.

XI. The Pelagian Controversy

The Pelagian controversy respects chiefly topics which are usually classed by continental writers under the head of Anthropology, or the doctrine of what man is, and of how he is influenced in those matters which concern his salvation. They stand connected with the views which Scripture unfolds to us of the actual state and condition of human nature, and, of course, of each man who possesses it, and of the kind and causes of those changes, if such there be, which are necessary to prepare men for the enjoyment of heaven. The discussion of these topics, indeed, runs up into the investigation of the divine sovereignty and fore-ordination; but still the basis and starting-point may be said to be in the questions, What is man? his character and capacities? and what the nature and the source of those changes which must be produced upon him in order to prepare him for the enjoyment of God's presence? The Pelagian controversy thus includes all those most important and difficult topics which are usually discussed in works on systematic theology, under the heads, *De peccato*, *De gratia*, *De vocatione*, and *De predestinatione*. No subjects can surpass in intrinsic importance those which treat directly of God and Christ; but those we have now to advert to are not inferior in importance, being just as intimately connected with the salvation of men's souls, and therefore as truly necessary to be known, and known correctly, and as fundamental in their character. The history of the church seems to indicate that somehow the prosperity of vital personal religion is more closely connected with correct views of the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, than even with correct views upon the subject of the Trinity and of the person of Christ. There never, indeed, has been much appearance of true personal religion where the divinity of the Son of God has been denied; but there has been often a profession of sound doctrine upon this subject, long maintained, where there has been little real religion. Whereas, not only has there never been much real religion where there was not a profession of substantially sound doctrine in regard to the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, but also— and this is the point of contrast — the decay of true religion has always been accompanied by a large measure of error in doctrine upon these subjects;

the action and reaction of the two upon each other being speedy and manifest. The apostate Church of Rome has preserved throughout an orthodox profession on the subject of the Trinity; but though precluded by her avowed principles from professing Pelagian doctrines, which have been frequently anathematized by popes and councils, she has always, in her practical teaching, exhibited a large amount of Pelagian error, and may be said to have become formally liable to the charge of teaching Pelagianism, in consequence of the general adoption by the church of the famous Bull Unigenitus, against the Jansenists, published in the early part of last century.

There is one consideration which makes the Pelagian controversy somewhat more intricate and perplexing than the Trinitarian; and that is, that there is room for a greater diversity of sentiment, and a greater indefiniteness or latitude of statement, even among those who may, perhaps, be regarded as agreeing in the main substance of the doctrine, in the one case than in the other. Few persons who have been classed under the general designation of Pelagians— except Pelagius himself, and his immediate followers, Coelestius, and Julian, and modern Socinians and Rationalists— have denied altogether that man's nature suffered some moral taint or corruption from the fall, or that the gracious agency of God is in some way necessary in preparing men for heaven. When men go so far as to deny these things, the grounds of controversy are abundantly clear and definite: but there have been many who, without going nearly so far, and without therefore having opened up nearly so clear and definite a field for controversial discussion, have yet been charged, and justly, with greatly underrating the effects of the fall upon man's moral nature; and with superseding, to some extent at least, the agency of the Spirit in his conversion and sanctification. Pelagianism, in its original historical sense, is thus a pretty definite heresy, striking at the root of almost all that is most peculiar and distinctive in the system of revealed truth; but what has been called semi-Pelagianism — which may be regarded as describing, in general, views that make some approach to Pelagianism, but do not go quite so far— is of a much more vague and indefinite character. Pelagianism, and other words of a similar description, are often used in theological literature with a considerable measure of vagueness, —not to describe the precise sentiments of him

from whom the name is derived, but rather as a convenient, though of course somewhat loose, mode of indicating a general class of opinions, of which there may be no one very definite standard, and which may not have been fully developed by the original broacher of the doctrines, who has given name to the system, but only by those who have afterwards followed in the same general track. There has been, perhaps, more indefiniteness in the use of the word Pelagianism than in that of almost any other word of a similar kind; for this, among other reasons, that there has never been any distinct and separate community of professing Christians to which this designation has been generally attached as their ordinary distinctive appellation.

The Socinians, indeed, have fully adopted the views of the original Pelagians in regard to the character and capacities of man's moral nature, and the agency of divine grace; but these are not the features of Socinianism which have attracted the largest measure of public attention. Arminians have been commonly charged with holding Pelagian errors; and no doubt all Arminians hold some principles which were maintained by Pelagius and his followers, and opposed by Augustine and the church in general in his day; but then there have been some of the better class of Arminians, —especially Arminius and the Wesleyan Methodists, — who, however inconsistently, fully adopt Augustine's views upon what are usually regarded as the main distinctive features of the Pelagian system, —viz., the entire depravity of human nature, and the absolute necessity of the special gracious agency of God in the whole process of the conversion and sanctification of sinners, —and are thus much more orthodox upon these points than even the semi-Pelagians were. In ordinary usage, Pelagianism is commonly employed as a general designation of defective and erroneous views in regard to the extent and consequences of human depravity, and of the necessity of special divine agency in conversion and sanctification; and it is obvious that there is room for considerable latitude in the extent to which the deviation from sound scriptural doctrine upon this point may be carried.

There are strong and powerful tendencies of various kinds that lead men to underrate the injurious effects of the fall upon their moral nature, and the consequent necessity of divine grace for their renovation; and on this

account, Pelagian views, more or less fully developed, have prevailed very extensively in almost every age of the church. Generally, they have assumed somewhat of a philosophic dress, and have prevailed most among those who have thought themselves entitled to the character of rational Christians, and professed to be very zealous for the interests of morality and virtue. Sometimes, however, as we see in the Morisonianism of our own day, they have assumed a more apparently scriptural and sanctimonious garb, and have been accompanied with great professions of an eager desire for the conversion of sinners, and an anxious wish to remove every obstruction to men's coming to Christ, and laying hold of the offered blessings of the gospel. In this latter class of cases, there has usually been mixed up with the Pelagian error a larger amount of scriptural truth than has been maintained by the more rational and philosophical Pelagians, —so much of scriptural truth, indeed, as that God may have, to some extent, blessed the labours of these persons for the conversion of souls, —not of course because of the error they hold, but in spite of it, and because of the truth they hold along with it. But, in so far as this particular point is concerned, they, just as much as the other class, obscure the divine sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, and do what they can to rob God of the glory which He has declared that He will not give to another.

I. Historical Statement

In formerly directing attention to the testimony of the primitive church, —i.e., the church of the three first centuries, —upon the subject of the doctrines of grace, we had occasion to show that it was of a somewhat dubious and uncertain kind; that these topics had not during that period been, at least in all their length and breadth, subjects of controversial discussion; and that in consequence, as is usually the case, there had been considerable vagueness and inaccuracy in the language sometimes employed regarding them. The discussions in which the early fathers were engaged had a tendency to lead them rather to magnify the power of man's free-will, since fatalism, or something like it, deeply pervaded the Oriental and Gnostic systems; and it is chiefly on what some of them have said in magnifying man's freewill, in opposition to fatalism, that those

who have maintained that Pelagian views prevailed in the primitive church have taken their stand. Statements, however, upon this point do not afford the best or most certain test of men's views upon the subject of the doctrines of grace in general. Augustine certainly did not deny man's free-will altogether, and in every sense of the word; and the most zealous defenders of the doctrines of grace and of Calvinistic principles have admitted that there is a free-will, or free-agency, in some sense, which man has, and which is necessary to his being responsible for his transgressions of God's law. It is laid down in our own Confession, that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil and it would not be easy to prove, in regard to the generality of the fathers of the first three centuries, that they believed, or really intended to declare, more in regard to the free-will of man, even when they were contending against fatalism, than may be fairly regarded as involved in this position, especially as they have given us no reason to believe that they ever deliberately considered the distinctions which are of fundamental importance in regard to this whole question, —viz., between man's liberty of will before and after the fall, and between his free-agency in regard to things spiritual, and things merely civil and moral. It is very certain that they were not in general Pelagians, since they almost all held in some sense the doctrine of original sin, —i.e., believed - that man's moral nature was to some extent corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that all that was truly good in man was to be ascribed to God's special agency, and not to the exercise of his own powers and capacities. At the same time, it is plain that they had no very distinct conception of what these truths involved, especially in their connection with each other and the other departments of Christian doctrine, and did not always speak regarding them in a very definite or consistent way.

There does not appear to have been any very material change in the general strain of the teaching of the church upon this subject in the fourth century, from what it had been during the three preceding centuries. Chrysostom's works contain many statements to which the Pelagians, or at least the semi-Pelagians, appealed, and not without reason, in support of these doctrines; while Augustine, in defending the doctrines of grace, appealed sometimes to Ambrose, who had been the chief instrument in

the hand of God of leading him to the knowledge of the truth, though there is good reason to doubt whether Ambrose's teaching upon these subjects was perfectly uniform and consistent. It was in the early part of the fifth century that the doctrines of grace were, for the first time, subjected to a full investigation, error being then more openly and explicitly taught, and truth being more satisfactorily defended and illustrated, developed, and systematized than ever before. It is this which stamps so special an importance upon the Pelagian controversy. It is this which sheds so peculiar a glory around the name of Augustine, —a glory which attaches in the same degree to no man whom Christ gave to His church, from the age of the apostles till the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

We see in Augustine what has not unfrequently been noticed in men whom God has made signal blessings to His church, that even before his conversion he was subjected to a course of discipline and training that was not without its use, in preparing him for the work to which he was afterwards to be called: I refer especially to his having been for a good many years involved in the heresy of Manichaeism, —a fact which I have no doubt was overruled by God for preserving him from the danger to which men who are called upon to engage in arduous controversy upon difficult and perplexed subjects are so very liable, —that, viz., of leaning to an extreme opposite to that against which they may feel it to be their duty at the time to contend. Manichaeism may be regarded as, in some respects, an opposite extreme to Pelagianism, as the former implied a sort of fatalism, and the latter exalted unwarrantably the natural powers of man. It has, indeed, been alleged by Pelagians, both in ancient and in modern times, that Augustinianism, or Calvinism, —for they are in substance the same, —is tainted by some infusion of Manichaeian error; and it has been asserted, that this is to be traced to Augustine retaining some leaven of his old Manichaeian principles: but the general experience of mankind shows that this theory is most improbable, and proves that it is much more likely that a man who had, deliberately and from full conviction, renounced a system of error, pervaded throughout by one uniform and peculiar character, should, in place of retaining and cherishing any of its distinctive principles, be rather apt to run into the opposite extreme. Augustine, assuredly, did not run into the opposite

extreme to Manichaeism— else he would not have made such strenuous opposition to Pelagianism; but neither, in opposing Pelagianism, was he tempted to go to the opposite extreme of Manichaeism, as he might probably, —according to the tendencies which controversialists too often manifest, —have been led to do, had he not previously sounded the depths and subtleties of Manichaeism, and been led decidedly and deliberately to reject it. There would probably have been some better ground for the charge of Manichaeism, which has often, without foundation, been adduced against Augustine, had he not both embraced and renounced this heresy before he was called upon to engage in the Pelagian controversy; but as matters stand, it can be fully established that, in opposing the Pelagian heresy, he has avoided all tendency to run into the Manichaeian extreme, and been enabled to keep, with wonderful accuracy, in regard to all the essential features of the controversy, the golden mean of scriptural truth.

The founders of Pelagianism— men who have had few followers in the extent to which they carried their views, except the Socinians and nationalists of modern times— were Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian. The two former were monks, but, as was usually the case with monks at this period, they were laymen and not clergymen. Julian was Bishop of Eclanum, a small village in Italy, near Capua; for even in the fifth century many villages still had bishops. Pelagius was a native of Britain; and Coelestius, too, is supposed to have been a countryman of our own, though the evidence in regard to him is not very conclusive. Jerome, who was always remarkable for the virulence with which he assailed his opponents, never being able to see any good quality in them, speaks with the utmost contempt of Pelagius and Coelestius; but Augustine, who was, after his conversion, as highly exalted above the generality of the fathers of his age in the personal excellence of his character, as he was in ability and knowledge of divine truth, speaks very respectfully both of their talent and of the general character which they had sustained. They seem to.

have broached their errors at Rome about the year 411, and to have afterwards visited Africa and the East. They met with no countenance in Africa, where Augustine's influence was very powerful, and their

doctrines were condemned in several African councils, which were held most of them at Carthage. Pelagius met with more favour in the East, chiefly in consequence of the prevalence of Origen's views, which were akin in some respects to his own; and at a council held to examine his doctrines at Diospolis, or Lydda, in Palestine, he was acquitted of the charge of heresy, though there is reason to believe that this result was brought about chiefly by his concealing and explaining away his opinions, and by his renouncing and anathematizing some statements which had been made by Coelestius, and in which there is good ground to believe that Pelagius himself really concurred, though there was not at that time any evidence to bring them home to him. Innocent, Bishop of Rome, condemned the new doctrines; but Coelestius afterwards, by skill and cunning in explaining and glossing over his statements, managed to impose upon the ignorance and simplicity of his successor Zosimus, who publicly pronounced him orthodox, — a judgment, however, which he was afterwards induced to retract by the expostulations of Augustine and the African bishops. These different transactions have occasioned much difficulty to the defenders of Papal infallibility, who usually allege in cases of this sort, — as, for example, in that of Pope Liberius, who subscribed an Arian creed, and Pope Honorius, who advocated Monothelism, and was anathematized in consequence as a heretic by the sixth oecumenical council, — that they never really believed the heresies which they taught, but only professed them, either from some misapprehension, or through the force of temptation, in order to avoid persecution, which, it seems, are not inconsistent with their being fully qualified to be infallible guides and rulers of the Church. The Pelagian controversy was conducted chiefly in Africa and the West, and did not attract much attention in the East, where the bishops generally were engaged in discussing the errors broached by Apollinaris, Nestorius, and Eutyches. The third general council, held at Ephesus in 431, which condemned Nestorius, condemned also Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, though writing the history of the period, do not even mention it.

Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian; and thus the church in general at this time may be said to have condemned Pelagianism, and to have sanctioned the views of Augustine, though it is deserving of remark, that, in the proceedings of the Council of Ephesus, there is merely a general

condemnation of the doctrines taught by Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian, without any formal declaration of the orthodox doctrine upon the subject in opposition to their errors, or even a statement of what the specific errors were which they had taught. Augustine laboured for about twenty years, with all the powers of his mind, and with unwearied zeal and assiduity, in opposition to the errors of Pelagius; writing many books upon the subject, most of which have come down to us, and exerting his influence in every other way to prevent the spread of heresy. The Lord was pleased to call him to his rest in the year 430, while he was engaged in writing a book against Julian, which has come down to us in an imperfect state, as he left it, and without affording him the satisfaction of witnessing the triumph of sound doctrine, and the condemnation of its opponents in the General Council of Ephesus.

Pelagius, and his immediate followers, Coelestius and Julian, taught openly and explicitly that man's moral character had received no injury from the fall, and that men were born now with as much ability to do the will of God, and to discharge all the obligations incumbent upon them, as Adam; and, in consequence, they denied the necessity of divine grace, or of any special divine agency or influence upon men, unless it might be for the purpose of enabling them to do more easily that which, however, they were able to do, though less easily, without it, and which, in their estimation, was nothing less than attaining to perfection in holiness in this life. These doctrines are so palpably inconsistent, not only with many particular statements, but with the whole scope and substance of Scripture, that they did not gain much support in the church; and after the- decision of the Council of Ephesus, they seem to have almost wholly disappeared.

Pelagius and his immediate followers do not seem to have called in question the doctrine of the Trinity, or any of the scriptural doctrines more immediately connected with it; and yet it is very manifest that modern Socinians and Rationalists are the only consistent Pelagians. When men reject what Pelagius rejected, they are bound in consistency to reject everything that is peculiar and distinctive in the Christian system as a remedial scheme. Upon Pelagian principles, there is no occasion for, and really no meaning in, a Saviour, an atonement, a Holy Spirit. No evil

has befallen our race, and there is no occasion for a remedy, especially for such a remedy as the Bible has been generally regarded as unfolding. Augustine, through God's blessing, put down this unscriptural, inconsistent, and cowardly scheme of heresy; and it was not revived until after the Reformation, when it appeared in i the bolder and more consistent form of Socinianism. There are, however, as we have said, powerful tendencies in human nature, leading men to over-estimate their own moral powers and capacities, and to think lightly of the necessity and importance of divine grace, —of God's special agency; and while, on the one hand, Pelagius' views met with little countenance, Augustine's, on the other, met with a good deal of opposition. An intermediate scheme was devised, which has passed under the name of semi-Pelagianism, and which, whether bearing that name or not, has almost always prevailed to a considerable extent in the professedly Christian church, especially when true piety was in a feeble or declining condition; and has comprehended men of very different characters, and been held in conjunction with other doctrines, approaching more or less nearly to the scriptural standard. Semi, Pelagianism, from its very nature, bears a character of great indefiniteness. It admits original sin in some sense; i.e., it admits that man's moral nature is more or less corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that special divine assistance was more or less necessary, in order to the attainment of those things which accompany salvation. These intermediate and indefinite views, resembling very much the doctrines which have been held generally by Arminians in modern times, were broached during Augustine's lifetime, and thus afforded him an opportunity of directing against them the same great definite scriptural doctrines which he had wielded with so much ability and success against Pelagianism. The contest was carried on after his death, on the side of truth, by Prosper and Fulgentius; but though semi-Pelagianism was never formally approved of by the church, and was very explicitly and formally condemned by a Provincial Council of France, the second Council of Orange, Concilium Arausicanum, in 529, it prevailed practically to a considerable extent till the period of the Reformation.

Augustine has had the peculiar honour assigned to him, by the great Head of the church, of having been the first to develop, in a systematic order, and in their right connection with each other, the great doctrines

taught in the word of God concerning man's lost and ruined condition by nature; the gracious agency of God in the conversion and sanctification of sinners; and the true cause or source of all the effects thus produced, wherever they are produced, in His own sovereign good pleasure and eternal purpose, — having mercy on whom He would have mercy, and having compassion on whom He would have compassion; and he was thus enabled to render most important services to the cause of truth and righteousness in all succeeding generations. There is indeed much reason to believe that no inconsiderable portion of the piety that existed in the church from the time when he flourished till the Reformation, — a period of above one thousand years, — was instrumentally connected, more or less directly, with his influence and writings. We may apply the same statement to almost everything like piety that has ever been found in connection with the Church of Rome, including what is certainly to the eye of a Christian by far the brightest spot in the history of that apostate communion, — viz., the Port-Royalists, and the other Jansenists of France in the seventeenth century.

Augustine, indeed, eminently as he was furnished by the great Head of the Church both with gifts and graces for defending and promoting divine truth, is not by any means an infallible judge, to whom we can securely trust. God has never given to any uninspired man or body of men, to rise thoroughly and in all respects above the reach of the circumstances in which they have been placed, and the influences to which they have been subjected; and Augustine was certainly involved to a considerable extent in some of the corrupt and erroneous views and practices which in his time were already prevailing widely in the church. There are, it must be admitted, some of the corruptions of Popery, the germs of which at least, though not fully developed, are to be found in his writings. But the great defect with which he is chargeable is, that he seems to have had no very clear or accurate views of the great doctrine of justification by faith. He did not accurately understand the meaning of justification as a forensic or judicial term, as distinguished from sanctification; and he seems to have to some extent confounded them together, as the Church of Rome still does. It could not be, indeed, that a man of Augustine's undoubted and eminent piety, and with so deep a sense as he had of human depravity and of God's sovereignty in determining man's character and condition,

could have been resting upon any works or merits of his own for salvation, and therefore he must practically and in heart have been resting upon Christ alone; and this general statement must have been true of many others besides him in the early and middle ages, who had obscure or erroneous views upon this subject. But he had certainly not attained to any such knowledge of God's word in regard to this matter, as would have enabled him to give a very accurate or consistent exposition of the reason or ground of his hope. I formerly had occasion to explain, that at a very early period in the history of the church, the scriptural doctrine of justification became obscured and lost sight of, and was never again revived in all its fulness and purity until the Lord raised up Luther as His instrument in effecting that important result. The early fathers soon began to talk in an unscriptural and mystical way about the objects and effects of the sacraments; and at length they came to talk of baptism as if it not only signified and represented, but actually conferred, and conferred invariably, both the forgiveness of sins and the renovation of men's moral natures. Augustine knew too much of the word of God, and of the scheme of divine truth, to go thoroughly into such views as these; but he certainly had such notions of the nature and effects of baptism, and of its connection with the forgiveness of sins, as to lead him to some extent to overlook and throw into the background, if not to pervert, the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone. The subject of baptism entered largely into his controversy with the Pelagians, —he adducing the baptism of infants for the remission of sins as a proof of original sin, and they regarding it, like the modern Socinians, merely as the appointed rite or ceremony of outward admission into the communion of the visible church; and though he was right in the main in the use and application he made of baptism in opposition to the Pelagian denial of original sin, yet he showed very strikingly how much he was perverted by erroneous and exaggerated views of the nature, objects, and importance of external ordinances, by broadly and unequivocally laying down the doctrine that all infants dying unbaptized are consigned to everlasting misery, —a doctrine which is still generally taught in the Church of Rome. The Pelagian controversy, as conducted in Augustine's time, embraced a great variety of topics, —taking in, indeed, more or less fully nearly all the leading doctrines of Christianity, except the Trinity and the atonement; and these were not comprehended, just because the original Pelagians

had not the boldness and consistency of modern Socinians in following out or developing their own principles. Forbes, in his *Instructiones Historiae-Theologicae*, has enumerated twenty-six topics which were controverted between Augustine and his opponents; but they are all reducible, as to their main features, to a few general heads, —such as Original Sin, and Free-will; Grace, or Divine Agency in the conversion and sanctification of sinners; Predestination, and the Perseverance of Saints, —and under these heads we propose very briefly to advert to them.

Let me again remark, before proceeding to advert to these topics, that the permanent value of the labours and writings of Augustine in the Pelagian controversy, lies not mainly or chiefly in his having exposed, and through God's blessing put down, Pelagianism in the gross form in which it was at first propounded, and in which it is now held by Socinians and Rationalists, but in his having brought out the clear and definite doctrines of God's word, so as at one and the same time to refute and exclude not only Pelagianism, but also what has been designated semi-Pelagianism; and thus to furnish an antidote to all the numerous attempts which have since been made to exalt unduly the power of man in spiritual things, without wholly superseding the necessity of divine grace, and in this way to share the glory of the salvation of sinners between the saved and the Saviour. This consideration obviously suggests, that in the brief and imperfect notice which alone we can give of this important controversy, we must confine ourselves chiefly to the statement of those great scriptural truths which Augustine so fully unfolded and so ably defended, and which strike at the root of all the errors which have been held upon these subjects, either in ancient or in modern times, and whether in a grosser or in a more mitigated form.

II. Depravity— Original Sin

That branch of Christian doctrine, which is now frequently called Anthropology, proposes to answer the question, What is man in his moral and spiritual character and capacities; in his relations to God and to eternity? So far as the question respects merely the actual features and

constituent elements of man's moral nature, there is no incompetency or impropriety in men looking into their own hearts, and surveying their own lives, in order to obtain materials for answering it; but, as God knows what is in men better than they do themselves, it is also quite reasonable that they should receive with implicit submission whatever He may have been pleased to reveal to them in His word regarding it. The question then is, What does God in His word make known to us with respect to men's actual moral character, and spiritual relations and capacities? This, like every other question in Christian theology, taking the word in its widest sense, should be answered by an exact investigation of the true meaning of the various statements of God's word which bear upon it.

It is surely abundantly evident in general, that the representation given us in Scripture of the actual moral character and spiritual capacities of men, as they come into the world, and grow up in it, —of their relation to God, and of the tendency of all this, in its bearing upon their eternal destiny, —is not such as is fitted to lead us to entertain any very exalted conceptions of our own worth and our own powers. The word of God surely represents men— all men— as not only actual transgressors of God's laws, and therefore justly liable to all the consequences of transgression, whatever these may be, but as having also a decided bias or proneness to transgress God's law as an actual feature of their moral nature, from which they cannot by their own strength emancipate themselves, and which renders necessary some special interposition of God, if they are ever to be delivered from it. Those who are, from whatever cause, averse to receive this view of the actual moral character and condition of man, have been accustomed, besides attempting to explain away the statements of Scripture, in which it seems to be very plainly taught, to have recourse to the considerations universally conceded, that man did not possess this moral character when he came forth at first from the hand of his Creator— that this was not the character of our first parents when they were created; and then to assert that there is no evidence that man's character has been changed— that our moral character and capacities are different from what those of Adam were. Their opponents, though wishing to rest mainly, in the first instance, —as the proper ground of their cause, —upon the direct

Scripture proof of universal native moral corruption, have no objection to follow them in that direction; being confident that the scriptural representation of the effects of Adam's first sin upon himself and upon his posterity, —the scriptural evidence that in connection with Adam's first sin, and in some way as a consequence of it, an important moral deterioration has been introduced into the human race, —only corroborates and illustrates the views they have been led to take of the import of those scriptural statements which speak directly and immediately of the actual character of all men as they come into the world, and are found there. That Adam sinned against God— that thereby he not only incurred the guilt of transgression, but became deteriorated in his own moral character, and that, in consequence, all his posterity have also become to some extent deteriorated in their moral character and capacities, so that they do not now, in fact, bring with them into the world a moral character, a capacity of obeying God's law, equal to what Adam originally possessed, or to what, so far as we know, they would have had had he not fallen— has been, as a general position, admitted by almost all who have professed to believe in the authority of the sacred Scriptures, except the original Pelagians and the modern Socinians. We need not dwell upon this, but proceed to advert to what is the whole truth upon this subject, as set forth in Scripture and maintained by Augustine.

In considering what is man's actual moral character and capacity, we are investigating a matter of fact; we are seeking, directly and primarily, an answer to the question, What man, in these respects, is? And we are not called upon, in the first instance, to take into account any questions that may be raised as to the origin or source, the cause or rationale, of what may be found to attach to men, or to be truly predicable of them all in their present actual condition. We might be able to ascertain, with accuracy and precision, what is the actual moral condition and capacity of men, even though we were unable to give any very definite account or explanation of how this state of things had been brought about; and it is desirable that, in seeking to understand this whole subject, and to estimate the amount and validity of the evidence bearing upon it, we should distinguish between these two questions. The difficulties attaching to an investigation of the origin and the reason of the actual ungodliness and depravity of human nature, have been perhaps too much allowed to

affect the proof and the impression of its actual existence as a feature of men's moral condition.

There is distinct and abundant scriptural evidence, bearing directly and immediately upon the question of what man is, and is capable of doing in a moral point of view, independently of any information given us in Scripture concerning the origin or cause of the sad realities of the case. Were men really convinced, upon scriptural grounds, that they do all, in point of fact, bring with them to the world hearts which, when estimated in the light of God's law and of our obligations, are indeed deceitful above all things and desperately wicked— that in us, i.e., in our flesh or natural character, there dwelleth no good thing— that until men become the subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace, the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil and that continually, —they would feel that they are not called upon in right reason to attach, in the first instance, so much weight, as is often done, to the determination of the questions that may be started as to the manner and circumstances in which this condition of things may have been brought about, and the way in which it is to be explained and vindicated. It would then stand very much upon the same footing as many other things, the existence and reality of which are established by competent and satisfactory evidence appropriate to the case, but the causes or reasons of which are involved in darkness and difficulty; whereas it is too much the practice, in discussing this subject, to burden the consideration of the great primary question, What is the true character of man's moral nature, as a matter of fact, or an actual feature of what man is? with all the additional difficulties attaching to the questions of how he came to be so ungodly and depraved as he appears to be, and of how the fact that he comes into the world possessed of such a moral character, can be vindicated from the charge of making God the author of sin, and destroying man's responsibility. The questions as to the original moral character of our first parents, —the effects of their first sin upon their own moral character, —the identity of the moral character which all men now have, with that which became theirs after they had sinned, —and the connection between their moral character, as fallen, and that of their posterity;— all these questions stand to the question, of what is now the actual moral character of men, merely in the position of explanations of the actual fact or state of the case, —

accounts of the way in which it originated, and may be defended. And it is of some importance, in order to rightly appreciating the evidence— the *rationes decidendi*— that this distinction should be kept in view.

With respect to the subject of guilt, as distinguished from depravity, the bearing of the first sin of Adam has a somewhat closer and more direct connection with the actual condition of man; for, according to the general doctrine of orthodox Calvinistic divines, the guilt of Adam's first sin, imputed to his posterity, is directly a part of the guilt which actually attaches to them, and forms a constituent element of one important feature of their actual condition, —viz., their guilt, their *reatus*, their just liability to punishment, including of course, from the nature of the case, the grounds on which that liability rests. But, as we have already explained, neither guilt, in its proper sense (*reatus*), on the one hand, nor justification in its proper sense, as simply deliverance from guilt or liability to punishment, and acceptance, on the other, entered directly into the original Pelagian controversy, as it was managed in the time of Augustine. It was ungodliness or depravity, and its bearing upon men's actual capacity to do the will of God, and to discharge their obligations, that was then mainly discussed; and it is with that, therefore, at present that we have chiefly to do. The bearing of the first sin of Adam upon his posterity, and generally the connection subsisting between him and his descendants, was indeed discussed between Augustine and his opponents; but, in accordance with the distinction which we have just explained, it was not directly, as if the guilt of his first sin was a portion of the guilt actually attaching to them, but only indirectly, in so far as his first sin and its immediate consequences afforded some explanation of the origin or ground of the deep-seated and pervading depravity or ungodliness, which Scripture and experience unite in proclaiming to be an actual feature of the moral character of all men.

Augustine was enabled to see and unfold, with a very considerable measure of clearness and accuracy, the great truth which has since been more fully developed and illustrated in defence of Calvinistic principles, —viz., that Adam was constituted by God the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that his trial or probation was virtually and in God's estimation, according to the wise and just constitution or

arrangement which He had made, —and which certainly, to say the least, cannot be proved to have been unjust or unfavourable to his posterity, — the trial or probation of the human race; and that thus the transgression of Adam became, in a legal and judicial sense, and without any injustice to them, theirs, so that they were justly involved in its proper consequences. If it be indeed the actual fact that men come into the world with ungodly and depraved natures, which certainly and invariably, until they are changed, produce transgressions and shortcomings of God's law — actual violations of moral obligations— then, assuredly, the principle that Adam was constituted, and thereafter was held and regarded by God, as the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that they sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression, is the only one that has ever been propounded which makes even an approach towards affording an explanation of this important fact, —viz., that men do come into the world with their whole moral nature corrupted, and thoroughly perverted, so far as God and His law are concerned. If men are not satisfied with this explanation, so far as it goes, it is their business to devise or suggest a better. But, in place of impartially considering this explanation, which the statements of Scripture plainly enough indicate, and in place of attempting to give any other more satisfactory explanation of a fact which appears in itself to be well established, the more common process is to deny the fact altogether, or to explain it away, —i.e., either to deny that men bring with them into the world an ungodly and depraved moral nature, or to represent the ungodliness and depravity, which may be admitted in some sense to attach to it, to be insufficient to affect materially their relation to God, and, without divine interposition, their future destiny; and to be thus scarcely important enough to stand much in need of explanation, as not presenting any very serious difficulty either in speculation or in reality.

All this contributes to illustrate the observation we have made, as to the propriety and importance of first of all ascertaining, if possible, how the actual matter of fact stands, that men who are opposed to orthodox views may be deprived of the unfair advantage of shuffling between the fact and its cause, —the thing itself, and its origin or reason. Let the question be distinctly put, and let it be fairly investigated, until, if possible, a deliberate and decided conclusion is come to: Do men, or do they not,

bring with them into the world ungodly and depraved natures? And if they do, have we any practical test or standard of the strength, efficacy, and consequences of this ungodliness or depravity, which actually, and in fact, attaches to them as a feature of their moral character? When the matter of fact is once ascertained, it will then be proper to consider, if it seem necessary, both, on the one hand, how it originated and how it may be explained; and, on the other, to what conclusions, theoretical and practical, it may lead. When the matter is viewed in this light— when the question is thus considered by itself, and in the light of its direct and appropriate evidence— there seems to be no very great difficulty in coming to a decided determination regarding it.

There are surely many sufficiently plain statements in Scripture which assure us that men have all by nature, —i.e., as they actually come into the world, and until some important change is effected upon them, —a bias, proneness, or tendency to disregard God, to neglect the duties which He has imposed upon them, and to break His laws. Experience, or an actual survey of the history and condition of the human race, fully confirms this doctrine of Scripture, and shows that this tendency is universal, —extending to all men, —and is so strong and powerful as never in any instance to be overcome by the unaided efforts of men themselves, or by any combination of external circumstances; or, to adopt the language of Jonathan Edwards, in his great work on Original Sin, "that all mankind constantly in all ages, without fail in any one instance, run into moral evil" and "that, consequently, all mankind are under the influence of a prevailing effectual tendency in their nature to sin and wickedness." There are, indeed, many men who do not seem to be at all aware of this tendency to sin as a feature in their character, and not a few even who openly deny it, and appeal to their own consciousness to disprove it. This, however, is no sufficient argument against the reality and universality of the alleged tendency; for it may be, and the Scripture plainly enough indicates that it is, one feature or result of this very tendency itself, and of its immediate consequences, to render men blind and insensible to its own existence. Many men, who once disbelieved and opposed this doctrine, have come to be firmly persuaded of its truth; while none who ever really and intelligently believed it, have ever been brought to reject it; and there are few men whose consciousness, if

allowed full and fair scope, and subjected to a skilful cross-examination upon some materials which the word of God furnishes, would not be brought to render some testimony, more or less explicit, to its truth. In the very nature of this doctrine, or rather of the fact which it announces, it is very manifest that men are imperatively called upon to ascertain whether it be true, and to be familiar with the grounds on which their conviction of its truth is based. And when this conviction is once reached, then is the proper time to investigate both its origin and its results— its causes and its consequences— taking care, however, that neither the difficulties and perplexities that may attend an investigation of its origin or cause, nor the alarming consequences that may flow from it, when practically applied and followed out, shall be allowed to shake the conviction in regard to the actual matter of fact, —this feature of man's moral character, which has been satisfactorily established by competent and appropriate evidence.

Now the Scripture, as we have mentioned, does give us some explanation concerning its origin and source, though certainly not such as to remove every difficulty, and to render the subject in its principles perfectly level to our comprehension; and the substance of what the Scripture makes known to us upon this point was much more fully and accurately brought out by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, than ever it had been before, and has been already briefly explained. No other reasonable explanation of the fact has ever been given, —we might say, has ever been attempted. Men have attempted to explain the fact of the universal prevalence of actual sin among mankind, without referring it to a proneness or tendency to sin, which men now bring with them into the world, and which constitutes an actual feature in their moral character; but for this proneness or tendency itself operating universally and certainly, when once admitted or found to be an actual reality, no other explanation has ever been proposed. Some men, indeed, have stopped short with the fact itself, received upon scriptural authority, without seeking, or even admitting, any explanation of its origin or cause; in other words, they have held the fact of the actual and entire corruption and depravity of human nature, without receiving or taking into account the federal headship of our first parent— the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity— or its derivation in any proper sense from Adam and his first

transgression. This raises the question, whether or not the Scripture gives any countenance to the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; and whether, if it does, this principle does anything towards explaining the fact of the universal corruption and depravity of human nature. Augustine maintained and proved that Adam's sin involved all his posterity in this moral corruption and depravity, and did so, because it was held or reckoned as theirs; although, as has been already explained, he did not apply the imputation of Adam's first sin in the twofold aspect in which it has been commonly presented by Calvinistic divines, —as the ground at once of a portion of the guilt or reatus which attaches to them, and as, at the same time, affording some explanation of their universal actual moral depravity, —but only in the latter of these aspects. God did not create man with this prevailing proneness or tendency to sin. It must have been in some way the result of transgression or disobedience. The only act of disobedience or transgression to which it can be ascribed, or with which it can be supposed to be penally connected— and the connection must have been of a penal character— is that of our first parents; and the only way in which that transgression could operate upon us, so as to affect our moral character, is by its being imputed to us, or held and accounted as ours. This, again, receives its explanation from the principle that God constituted Adam the representative or federal head of mankind, so that his trial was actually, and in a judicial sense, the trial of the human race, —and his fall and sin the fall and sin of all his posterity.

Had nothing further been revealed to us in Scripture than the mere fact that all men have, and bring with them into the world, ungodly and depraved natures, it would have been our duty to have received this upon God's authority, though He might have given us no explanation whatever of it, and though we might have been utterly unable to devise any; and even as matters stand, our first and most important duty in regard to this subject is just to ascertain whether this be so, in point of fact, or not. But the Scripture does plainly trace the fact which it asserts of the universal corruption and depravity of man's nature, to our connection with Adam, and to the first sin of our first parent, and does contain plain enough indications that this connection is based upon a constitution, arrangement, or covenant, which God made, —which is in itself perfectly equitable, —and in virtue of which Adam's trial or probation was to be the

trial or probation of the whole human race. This is information given us in Scripture, in addition to the making known the mere fact of the universal prevalence of actual ungodliness and depravity as a feature of human nature, and is to be received and submitted to simply as being revealed; while, at the same time, there is no great difficulty in seeing that this additional information does throw some light upon the important fact with which it is connected, or does contribute something towards explaining it. The subject is, indeed, still a mysterious one, and we have no right to expect that we should fully comprehend it; but the statements which we have briefly explained, can, we think, be all established, with more or less clearness or certainty, from the word of God. They exhaust the information which is given us there upon the different points involved in this matter, and they form a compact and intelligible scheme, which unfolds the whole subject in such a way that each part corroborates and illustrates the other.

The difficulties connected with what seems to be taught in Scripture, as to the bearing of Adam's first sin upon his own moral character, and that of all his descendants, and with the alleged imputation of that sin to his posterity, should not in reason affect our investigation of the question, as to what the actual moral character of mankind is, or the decision to which we may come regarding it. The view of the origin and cause of the moral depravity of man's nature, which is plainly intimated in Scripture, does assuredly not make the great fact itself more incredible or improbable, or weaken the force of the evidence on which it rests. And it is only when the fact is fully established, that men are warranted to investigate into its origin or cause. It is then only that they will be likely to enter upon this investigation with a due measure of impartiality and diligence; and when due impartiality and diligence are employed, men not only will not find, in difficulties that may be connected with the scriptural representation of the origin and cause of this great fact, any ground for doubting the reality of the fact itself, established upon its own proper evidence; but they will see that the scriptural explanation of the fact, though it may not remove every difficulty, does tend in no inconsiderable degree to throw light upon it, —that, when the whole of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject is viewed in combination, it is all fitly framed together, and that the different branches of the great general doctrine upon this point afford

mutual strength and support to each other.

So much for the retrospect, or looking back from the fact established, or assumed to be so, of the moral corruption or depravity of human nature, to its source or cause. Let us now briefly advert to the prospect, or looking forward to the consequences that result from it. In the Pelagian controversy, as understood in Augustine's time, the consequences of the fall were viewed chiefly, not in their connection with guilt, as rendering necessary, if men were to be saved, some provision for securing pardon and acceptance; but in their connection with depravity, as rendering necessary some provision for changing men's natures, and as in some measure determining the nature and character of the provision that was needful. And here the principal and primary question amounts in substance to this: Is this corruption or depravity, attaching to all men as an actual feature of the moral nature which they bring with them into this world, total or partial?

If it be only partial, then man still has by nature something about him that is really good, in the proper sense of the word, —something that is really in accordance with the requirements of God's law, that enables him to do something in the way of really discharging the obligations which he upon him as a creature of God, and of effecting, or at least aiding to effect, by his own strength and efforts, his own entire deliverance from its influence. If, on ' the other hand, the corruption or depravity which attaches to man's moral nature be total, then it follows that the positions now referred to are wholly unfounded, and that statements directly the reverse may justly be made with regard to men's qualities and capacities, so far as concerns their relation to God and His laws, their fitness to discharge the obligations which he upon them, and their ability to exert themselves any real influence upon their deliverance from depravity, and their meetness for heaven.

Our Confession of Faith says, —and the word of God fully proves it, —that in virtue of this corruption or depravity, which attaches to all men by nature, they are "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," and that they are "thereby utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." This, and nothing less, Scripture and experience concur in showing to be

the real import and amount of the corruption which, in fact, attaches to man's moral nature; and while the direct and immediate result of this truth, proved or admitted, is, that men should, in the belief of it, be fully aware of, and should constantly realize, their own utter worthlessness and helplessness in regard to all spiritual and eternal things, and cherish a frame of mind and heart corresponding to this awful reality, which either now attaches, or did once attach, to every one of them, —its more general and extended importance, both theoretically and practically, is to be seen in its bearing upon the question of what is the nature, character, and source of the provision that may be adequate and needful for removing it. It is here, of course, that the subject of original sin and human depravity connects with that of divine grace, or the special gracious agency of God, in converting and sanctifying men, —a subject which formed, perhaps, the most prominent topic of discussion in the controversy between Augustine and the Pelagians. Here, too, comes in the important and difficult subject of free-will; about the precise mode of stating, defending, and applying which, there has been considerable diversity of sentiment, even among those who in the main agreed in the whole substance of what they believed regarding the moral nature and spiritual capacity of fallen man. Indeed, the subject of the freedom or bondage, the liberty or servitude, of the human will, — i.e., of the will of men as they are, as they come into the world, with a corrupt and depraved moral nature, —may be regarded as forming, in some sense, the connecting link between the doctrine of original sin, and that of God's grace in the conversion of sinners. The doctrine of man's total depravity implies, or immediately leads to, that of the actual servitude or bondage of the human will. And this, again, when once proved, would be sufficient of itself to establish the doctrine of God's special gracious agency as the ultimate source, and only real cause of, all that is truly good in man, even although this latter doctrine had not been so clearly and fully established by the express declarations of Scripture. It is in this connection, and in this connection alone, that the servitude or bondage of the human will was asserted by Augustine, and what is much more important, is asserted in our Confession of Faith. The Confession, after laying down the general principle about the natural liberty of the will of man already quoted, and asserting that " man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God, but yet

mutably, so that he might fall from it," proceeds in these words: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

I cannot enter upon any detailed discussion of this subject, though I will afterwards return to it; but I would just remark, that I am by no means satisfied that any other doctrine of necessity— any other view of the bondage or servitude of the human will— than that which represents it as implied in, or deduced from, the moral depravity which attaches to all men, as an actual feature of their character, can be fully established, either from Scripture or reason. The actual inability of men to will or to do what is really good, —and this is the only necessity under which they live that is of any material practical importance, —seems in Scripture to be always connected with, or deduced from, not their mere position as the creatures of God's hand, and the subjects of His moral government, — although, of course, they are in these characters wholly subject at all times, and in all circumstances, to His guidance and control, —not any general laws which He has impressed upon His intelligent creatures, or upon the human mind as such, or on its power of volition, or other faculties or operations; but it seems to be connected with, or deduced from, that thorough ungodliness, or entire moral corruption, which attaches to the nature of man, as fallen. That the ungodliness or corruption which attaches to man's nature, as fallen, does produce or imply a bondage or servitude of the will, by which men are, in fact, "unable by their own strength to convert themselves, or to prepare themselves thereunto," is evident in the nature of the case, and is clearly taught in Scripture. That any other kind or species of servitude, or necessity, attaches to the human will, is not by any means so certain. The only ground on which it can be alleged to rest is a metaphysical speculation, which, whether true or false, ought to be carefully distinguished from truths actually taught in Scripture; and which, while not itself positively sanctioned by Scripture, cannot, I think, be shown to be indispensably necessary for the exposition, illustration, or defence of any of those great doctrines, the belief of which is required in the word of God, and the knowledge of which is necessary in order to an accurate

acquaintance with the way of salvation.

III. Conversion— Sovereign and Efficacious Grace

The controversy between Augustine and his opponents turned, as we have said, to a large extent, upon the nature and import, the necessity, grounds, and results of that grace of God, which, in some sense, was universally admitted to be manifested in preparing men for heaven. That a certain character, and a certain mode of acting, in obedience to God's law, were in fact necessary, in order to men's attaining final happiness, and that men were in some sense indebted to God's grace or favour for realizing this, was universally conceded. It was conceded by Pelagius and his immediate followers, and it is conceded by modern Socinians; but then the explanation which these parties gave of this grace of God, which they professed to admit, made grace to be no grace, and practically made men, and not God, the authors of their own salvation, which the Socinians, consistently enough, guarantee at length to all men. With the original Pelagians and the modern Socinians, the grace of God, by which men are, in this life, led to that mode of acting which, in fact, stands connected with their welfare in the next, —(for even Socinians commonly admit some punishment of wicked men in the future world, though they regard it as only temporary), —consists in these two things: First, the powers and capacities with which He has endowed man's nature, and which are possessed by all men as they come into the world, along with that general assistance which He gives in His ordinary providence, in upholding and aiding them in their own exercise and improvement of these powers and capacities; and, secondly, in the revelation which He has given them to guide and direct them, and in the providential circumstances in which He may have placed them. This view of the grace of God, of course, assumes the non-existence of any such moral corruption attaching to men, as implies any inability on their part, in any sense, to obey the will of God, or to do what He requires of them; and, in accordance with this view of what man is and can do, ascribes to him a power of doing by his own strength, and without any special, supernatural, divine assistance, all that is necessary for his ultimate

welfare. This view is too flatly contradictory to the plain statements of Scripture, and especially to what we are told there concerning the agency of the Holy Ghost, to have been ever very generally admitted by men who professed to receive the Bible as the word of God; and, accordingly, there has been a pretty general recognition of the necessity, in addition to whatever powers or capacities God may have given to men, and whatever aids or facilities of an external or objective kind He may have afforded them, of a subjective work upon them through special supernatural agency; and the question, whether particular individuals or bodies of men were involved more or less in the errors of semi-Pelagianism, or taught the true doctrine of Scripture, is, in part, to be determined by the views which they have maintained concerning the nature, character, and results of this special supernatural agency of God, in fitting men for the enjoyment of His own presence.

Even the original Pelagians admitted the existence of supernatural gracious influences exerted by God upon men; but then they denied that they were necessary in order to the production of any of those things which accompany salvation, and held that when bestowed they merely enabled men to attain them more easily than they could have done without them; while they also explicitly taught that men merited them, or received them as the meritorious reward of their previous improvement of their own natural powers. An assertion of the necessity of a supernatural gracious work of God upon men's moral nature, in order to the production of what is, in point of fact, indispensable to their salvation, has been usually regarded as necessary to entitle men to the designation of semi-Pelagians, —a designation which comprehends all who, while admitting the necessity of a supernatural work of God, come short of the full scriptural views of the grounds of this necessity, and of the source, character, and results of the work itself. The original Pelagian system upon this point is intelligible and definite, and so is the scriptural system of Augustine; while any intermediate view, whether it may or may not be what can, with historical correctness, be called semi-Pelagianism, is marked by obscurity and confusion. Leaving out of view the proper Pelagian or Socinian doctrine upon this subject, and confining our attention to the scriptural system of Augustine on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to those confused and indefinite notions which fall short

of it, though not to such an extent as the doctrines of the Pelagians and the Socinians, we would remark that it is conceded upon both sides: First, that before men are admitted into heaven they must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lead thereafter a life of new obedience; and, secondly, that men have a moral nature so far tainted by depravity, that this indispensable process cannot in any instance be carried through without a supernatural gracious work of God's Spirit upon them.

These two propositions embody most important and fundamental truths, clearly and fully taught in Scripture, and essential to a right comprehension of the way of salvation. Men who deny them may be justly regarded as refusing to submit to the authority of God's word, and as rejecting the counsel of God against themselves; while, on the other hand, men who honestly and intelligently receive them, though coming short of the whole scriptural truth in expounding and applying them, may be regarded as maintaining all that is fundamental upon this subject; by which I mean, —in accordance with the common Protestant doctrine of fundamentals as brought out in the controversy with the Church of Rome, —that some men who have held nothing more than this have afforded satisfactory evidence that they themselves were born again of the word of God, and have been honoured as the instruments of converting others through the preaching of the gospel. But while this is true, and ought not to be forgotten, it is of at least equal importance to observe, that many who have professed to receive these two propositions in the general terms in which we have stated them, have given too good ground to believe that this professed reception of them was decidedly defective either in integrity or in intelligence, —have so explained them, or rather explained them away, as to deprive them of all real meaning and efficacy, and practically to establish the power of man to save himself, and to prepare for heaven, upon the ruins of the free grace of God, which is manifested just as fully in the sanctification as in the justification of sinners. And hence the importance and necessity of clearly and definitely understanding what is the scriptural truth upon these subjects, lest we should be deceived by vague and indefinite plausibilities, which seem to establish the grace of God, while they in fact destroy it. Defective and erroneous views upon this subject are usually connected with defective and erroneous views in regard to the totality of the moral corruption

which attaches to men by nature, and of their consequent inability to do anything that is really spiritually good. It is manifest that any error or defect in men's views upon this subject will naturally and necessarily lead to erroneous and defective views of the nature, character, and results of that gracious work of God, by which man is led to will and to do what is good and well-pleasing in His sight.

When those who admit in general the necessity of a gracious work of God's Spirit upon men, in order to their repenting and believing the gospel, have yet erroneous and defective views upon the subject of divine grace, they usually manifest this by magnifying the power or influence of the truth or word of God, —by underrating the difficulty of repenting and believing, —by ascribing to men some remains of moral power for effecting these results, and some real and proper activity in the work of turning to God, —and by representing the work of God's Spirit as consisting chiefly, if not exclusively, in helping to impress the truth upon men's minds, or, more generally, rendering some aid or assistance to the original powers of man, and to the efforts which he makes. It is by such notions as these, though often very obscurely developed, insinuated rather than asserted, and sometimes mixed up with much that seems sound and scriptural, that the time doctrine of the gracious work of God in the conversion of sinners has been often undermined and altogether overthrown. These men have, more or less distinctly, confounded the word or the truth— which is merely the dead instrument— with the Spirit, who is the real agent, or efficient cause of the whole process. They have restricted the gracious work of the Spirit to the illumination of men's understandings through the instrumentality of the truth, as if their will did not require to be renewed, and as if all that was needful was that men should be aided intellectually to perceive what was their true state and condition by nature, and what provision had been made for their salvation in Christ, and then they would certainly repent and believe as a matter of course, without needing specially to have the enmity of their hearts to God and His truth subdued. They have represented the gracious work of the Spirit chiefly, if not exclusively, as co-operating with men, and aiding them in the work for which they have some natural capacity, though not enough to produce of themselves the necessary result, as if there was little or no need of preventing or prevenient grace, or grace

going before, in order that man may work or act at all in believing and turning to God. These men are usually very anxious to represent faith in Jesus Christ as to some extent the work of men's own powers, the result of their own principles; and Augustine admits that he had some difficulty in satisfying himself for a time that faith was really and properly the gift of God, and was wrought in men by the operation of His Spirit, though this doctrine is very plainly and explicitly taught in Scripture. Much pains have been taken to explain how natural and easy saving faith is, to reduce it to great simplicity, to bring it down as it were to the level of the lowest capacity, —sometimes with better and more worthy motives, but sometimes also, we fear, in order to diminish, if not to exclude, the necessity of a supernatural preventing work of God's Spirit in producing it. And then, as repentance and conversion, as well as the whole process of sanctification, are beyond all doubt inseparably connected with the belief of the gospel, the way is thus paved for ascribing to man himself some share in the work of his deliverance from depravity, and his preparation for heaven.

One of the most subtle forms of the various attempts which have been made to obscure the work of God's Spirit in this matter, is that which represents faith as being antecedent— in the order of nature at least, though not of time— to the introduction or implantation of spiritual life into the soul of man, dead in sins and trespasses. This notion is founded upon these two grounds: first, upon a misapprehension of the full import of the scriptural doctrine, that man is dead in sin, —as if this death in sin, while implying a moral inability directly to love God, and to give true spiritual obedience to His law, did not equally imply a moral inability to apprehend aright divine truth, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, upon a misapplication or perversion of the scriptural principle, that men are born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth, —as if this, while no doubt implying that the truth has been effectually brought to bear upon the mind before the process of being born again has been completed, so that the man is in the full exercise of new spiritual life, implied, moreover, that this efficacious operation of the truth must precede, in the order of nature, the whole work by which the Spirit originates the process of vivification; and the object and tendency of this notion, based upon these two grounds, are to produce the

impression that men, through believing, are able to do something towards making themselves, or at least towards becoming, spiritually alive, and thereby superseding to some extent the necessity of a supernatural work of God's Spirit in a point of primary and vital importance, intimately connected with the salvation of men. Man is dead in sin; the making him alive, the restoring him to life, is represented in Scripture as, in every part of the process, from its commencement to its conclusion, the work of God's Spirit. The instrumentality of the truth or the word is, indeed, employed in the process; but in the nature of the case, and in accordance with what is clearly taught in Scripture, there must, antecedently— at least in the order of nature, though not of time— to the truth being so brought to bear upon men's minds as to produce instrumentally any of its appropriate effects, be a work of God's Spirit, whereby spiritual life is implanted, and a capacity of perceiving and submitting to the truth, which had been hitherto rejected, is communicated, —a capacity which, indeed, previously existed, so far as concerns the mere intellectual framework of man's mental constitution— the mere psychological faculties which he possesses as being still a man, though fallen— but which was practically useless because of the entire bondage or servitude of his will, which required to be renewed, and could be renewed only by the immediate agency of God's Spirit. The doctrine of God's word upon this subject is fully maintained only when man is really regarded as being in his natural condition, morally dead to all that is really good, and when the first implantation of spiritual life, and all that results from it, including faith as well as repentance, turning to God and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, is honestly, and without reserve or equivocation, traced to the supernatural agency of God's Spirit as its only efficient cause.

One other important point connected with this subject, which, from the time of Augustine till the present day, has been largely discussed, is what has been called the efficacy, or invincibility, or irresistibility of grace. Pelagians and semi-Pelagians have all united in denying the irresistibility of grace, and have virtually maintained— for it really comes to this in substance— that whatever power the Holy Spirit may put forth upon men in order to convert and renew them, it is in their power to resist it all, and to escape, so to speak, unconverted and unrenewed; while Augustine

maintained that the grace of God, the power of the Spirit in i the Elect, always prevailed or overcame, and certainly took effect, whatever resistance men might make to it. This doctrine has been held in substance ever since by orthodox divines, though there has been some difference of opinion among them as to what were the terms in which the substance of the scriptural views upon the subject could be most fitly and accurately expressed.

Augustine, in asserting the invincibility or irresistibility of grace, did not mean, —and those who in subsequent times have embraced his general system of doctrine as scriptural, did not intend to convey the idea, —that man was compelled to do that which was good, or that he was forced to repent and believe against his will, whether he would or not, as the doctrine is commonly misrepresented; but merely that he was certainly and effectually made willing, by the renovation of his will through the power of God, whenever that power was put forth in a measure sufficient or adequate to produce the result. Augustine, and those who have adopted his system, did not mean to deny that men may, in some sense and to some extent, resist the Spirit, the possibility of which is clearly indicated in Scripture; inasmuch as they have most commonly held that, to use the language of our Confession, "persons who are not elected, and who finally perish, may have some common operations of the Spirit," which, of course, they resist and throw off. The truth is, that this doctrine of the certain efficacy or irresistibility of grace is closely and necessarily connected with the doctrine of God's purposes or decrees, —the great doctrine of predestination or election, which constitutes an essential part of the Pelagian controversy; and, indeed, it may be regarded as forming the connecting link between the doctrine of converting and renewing grace, as the true cause of all that is good in man, and that of personal election to everlasting life, as the source to which God's effectual operation in working faith in men, and thereby uniting them to Christ, is to be traced. It is the Spirit of God whose supernatural agency restores men to life, and effects in them all that is indeed spiritually good. Whenever this agency is put forth in strength sufficient to effect the object of converting a sinner and uniting him to Christ by faith, it certainly does effect it, just because God had resolved to effect it, and has in consequence put forth the power necessary for doing so. What God

does in time, He from eternity decreed to do, because in the Infinite Mind there is no succession of time, —all things are at once and eternally present to it. When God exercises power, He is carrying into effect an eternal purpose; when He converts a sinner, He is executing a decree which He formed before the world began— before all ages.

The main questions connected with this important subject are these— First, Is God, when He sends forth His almighty Spirit, — when He converts a sinner and unites him to Christ, —influenced, in doing so, by a regard to anything existing in the man, by which He is distinguished from others, or by anything present in him? or is He influenced solely by His own purpose, previously formed, — formed from eternity, —of converting and saving that man? And, secondly, Does this general principle of an eternal purpose to save some men and to pass by the others, or to leave them in their natural condition of guilt and depravity, apply to and regulate God's dealings with all the individuals of the human race? It is admitted by most of the opponents of predestination, properly so called, that God foresees from eternity whatsoever comes to pass; and that since He has foreseen all events, even those which embody the eternal fate of His intelligent creatures, and thus had them present to His mind, He may be said in a certain sense to have foreordained or foreappointed them; so that the question virtually and practically comes to this— Does God predestinate men to eternal life because He foresees that they will exercise faith and repentance? or does He foresee this because He has, of His own good pleasure, chosen them to faith and repentance, and resolved to bestow these gifts upon them in order that they may be saved in the way which He has appointed? If faith and repentance are men's acts, in such a sense that they can exercise them by their own unaided efforts, without God's agency, and can abstain from exercising them, whatever influence He may exert upon them; in other words, if the preventing and invincible grace of God be not the real source and efficient cause of all that is good in men, then the former view may be true, and election to life may rest upon the ground of faith and repentance foreseen; but if not, then the latter view must be true, and it must be certain that God has, of His own good pleasure, of His own sovereign purpose, elected some men to everlasting life, and in the mere execution of this purpose, has, in His own good time, given them, or wrought in

them, faith and repentance.

It is not disputed that God usually gives men spiritual blessings— taking that expression in its widest sense— in a certain order, one being in some sense determined by what has preceded it; but the question is, whether the commencement of spiritual life wrought by God, and the whole series of spiritual blessings conferred by Him, viewed collectively and in the mass, can be really traced to any other cause or source than just this eternal purpose, founded on the counsel of His own will, to save some men, and His actually executing this purpose in time, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which He has established for the salvation of sinners. There is really no medium between an election to life, resting as its foundation upon the faith, repentance, and holiness of individuals foreseen, —which is really no election, but a mere act of recognition, — and a choice or selection of individuals originating in the good pleasure of God, without any other cause known to, or knowable by, us, —a choice or selection followed up in due time, as its certain and necessary result, by the actual bestowal by God upon the individuals elected of all that is necessary for securing their salvation. The latter of these views, we think, it can be proved, is clearly taught in Scripture; and though it no doubt involves much that is mysterious and inexplicable— much that may either call forth presumptuous objections, or profitably exercise men's faith and humility, —yet it certainly accords most fully with the actual phenomena of the moral and spiritual world, and it surely presents -God in His true character and real position as the rightful and omnipotent governor of the world, the arbiter of the eternal destinies of His intelligent creatures. The former view— the only one which can be taken if that of unconditional election be rejected, —besides that it is inconsistent with the statements of Scripture, which plainly supports the opposite doctrine, is liable to the fatal and unanswerable objection, that it leaves everything bearing upon the character and eternal condition of all the individuals of our race undetermined, and, indeed, uninfluenced, by their Creator and Governor, and virtually beyond His control; and degrades Him to the condition of a mere spectator, who only sees what is going on among His creatures, or foresees what is to take place without Himself determining it, or exerting any real efficiency in the production of it, and who must be guided by what He thus sees or foresees in all His

dealings with them. There is really no medium between these two positions. God either really governs the world, and determines the character and destinies of His intelligent creatures; or else these creatures are practically independent of Him, the absolute regulators of their own conduct, and the omnipotent arbiters of their own destinies. And it is surely much more becoming our condition and capacities, even though there was less clear scriptural evidence upon the subject than there is, to lean to the side of maintaining fully the divine supremacy, —of relying implicitly upon the divine justice, holiness, and faithfulness, — and resolving all difficulties, which we cannot solve, into our own ignorance and incapacity; than to that of replying against God, —arraigning the principles of His moral administration, —and practically excluding Him from the government of the most important department of the world which He has created, and ever sustains.

IV. Perseverance of the Saints

Another topic of primary importance, which was treated of fully and formally by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, is what is commonly called the perseverance of the saints;— or the doctrine that men who have once been really enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, and have been born again of the word of God, do never totally and finally fall away from a state of grace, but are certainly enabled to persevere, and are preserved unto eternal salvation.

This doctrine of perseverance is manifestly a necessary part of the general scheme of Christian doctrine, which Augustine did so much to expound and defend; and what is still more important, — for it is not very safe for men to place much reliance upon their own mere perception of the logical connection of doctrines in regard to divine things, —it is, we are persuaded, clearly taught in the statements of Scripture. If the doctrines to which we have already adverted are, indeed, contained in the word of God, the men of whom it is asserted that they will certainly persevere and be saved, are placed in this condition, —viz., that God has from eternity chosen them to everlasting life; and that in the execution of this purpose or decree, He has given them faith and repentance, He has united them to

Christ, and renewed their natures. All this, which could be effected by no power but His own, He has done, and done for the express purpose of saving them with an eternal salvation. Of men so placed—treated by God in such a way for such a purpose—it may surely be asserted with perfect confidence, that He will certainly enable them to persevere, and will thereby secure their eternal welfare. Had God formed no definite purpose of mercy in regard to individuals of our fallen race, we could not have been certain that any would have been saved. Were men able to convert themselves, and to prepare for heaven, in the exercise of their own natural powers and capacities, while it is possible that they might succeed, it is equally possible of any of them, apart from God's electing purpose, that they might fall off and ultimately fail. Were divine grace exerted in such a way and in such a measure, that it was still in the power of any man, in the exercise of his own natural and inherent capacities, to resist it, or to remain unaffected by it, then neither God nor man could speak with anything like certainty in any case of the ultimate result; whereas the very different and opposite state of things, in regard to all these important subjects, which the word of God unfolds to us, and which we have already explained in treating of the subjects of efficacious grace and predestination, makes the final perseverance of all who are thus placed and treated, not only practicable, but ascertainable and certain.

The connection which subsists among these different doctrines, — original and total depravity; converting, efficacious, or invincible grace; eternal election, and final perseverance, —the relation in which they all stand to each other, —the full, compact, and comprehensive view which, in combination, they exhibit of the leading departments and whole substance of divine revelation, of what God has unfolded to us concerning Himself and concerning our race, concerning His plans and operations, and our capacities and destinies, —all this greatly confirms their truth and reality, as it exhibits them all as affording to each other mutual strength and support.

It is right, however, to mention, that in regard to the subject of perseverance there is a certain amount of error and apparent inconsistency to be found in Augustine's works. He held, decidedly and consistently, that all who are predestinated, or elected to everlasting life,

are certainly and infallibly enabled to persevere, and do all in fact attain to salvation; but he sometimes writes, as if he thought that men who had been the subjects of converting and renewing grace might fall away and finally perish.

He held, indeed, that this falling away was of itself a conclusive proof that they had not been elected, and so far he was perfectly orthodox and consistent; but he does not seem to have been quite so certain that, though not elected, and therefore finally perishing, some men might not have been brought for a time by God's grace under the influence of sanctified principles or real holiness, — and yet totally and finally fall away. This notion was inconsistent with the general principles of his system, and is certainly not sanctioned or required by anything contained in Scripture. The Scripture, by what it tells us of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of sin, of the impossibility of men knowing with anything like absolute certainty the true state of the 'character of other', —by reserving the power of searching the heart to God alone, —and by sanctioning the principle obviously involved in the declaration of the apostle, "They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us,"— affords us abundant materials for explaining or accounting for all anomalous cases, all apparent instances of apostasy. And it is not, after all, quite certain that Augustine's statements upon this subject necessarily imply more than that cases of apostasy occurred in individuals who, so far as man can judge, had fairly entered upon the path that leads to heaven, —a position which no one disputes.

If his error really was more serious than this, it is not very difficult to see what tempted him to adopt it: it was the notion which was held in a gross and utterly anti-evangelical form by many of the fathers, and from the taint of which Augustine was not altogether free, of making baptism stand in some measure both for justification and regeneration. A man who rightly understands the nature of justification as a judicial or forensic act, and the true connection both of justification and regeneration with faith in Jesus Christ, by which we are united to Him, and who along with this believes in personal election to life, will not easily fall into the error which Augustine seems in some measure to have

imbibed. The man who has thoroughly clear and scriptural views of what is involved in the change that takes place, both as respects men's state and character, when they are united by faith to Christ, will not readily believe that any in whom this change has been effected by God, will be allowed to fall away and to perish, even though he should not have very clear and distinct views— which, however, Augustine had— upon the subject of personal election. Augustine's error and inconsistency, or rather perhaps his obscurity and confusion, upon this point, is thus clearly enough traceable to what has been called the sacramental principle, as implying an exaggerated sense of the necessity and efficacy of outward ordinances, —from which scarcely any of the fathers, except those who had personally associated with the apostles, are altogether free, and which still continues to be one of Satan's chief contrivances for perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and ruining the souls of men.

We may mention, as a sort of set-off to this defect or error of Augustine's, that Arminius and his immediate followers before the Synod of Dort, while rejecting the other leading doctrines of the Augustinian or Calvinistic system, did not venture at first to deny the doctrine of perseverance, but professed for a time that they had not fully made up their mind regarding it. In the Conference at the Hague— *Collatio Hagiensis*— held in the year 1611, after the death of Arminius, the Remonstrants, or Arminians, after stating fully the provisions made in the gospel for enabling believers to grow in knowledge and in grace, proceed to say: "*Sed an illi ipsi negligentia sua, principium illud, quo sustentantur in Christo, deserere non possint, et presentem mundum iterum amplecti, a sancta doctrina ipsis semel tradita deficere, conscientiae naufragium facere, a gratia excidere; penitus ex sacra Scriptura esset expendendum, antequam illud cum plena animi tranquillitate et plerophoria docere possimus.* Before the Synod of Dort in 1618, however, they had made up their mind on this question, and decidedly rejected the doctrine of perseverance. Something similar to this occurred in the case of John Wesley, whose theological views were almost wholly identical with those of Arminius. In the earlier part of his life, in 1743, he was, he says, "inclined to believe that there is a state attainable in this life from which a man cannot finally fall." But this doctrine he was afterwards led to renounce.

XII. The Worship of Saints and Images

In considering the testimony of the early church— the church of the first three centuries— on the subjects which are still controverted among professing Christians, I adverted very briefly to its bearing upon those topics usually comprehended under the head of the charge of idolatry, which Protestants commonly adduce against the Church of Rome, especially the worship or cultus which she renders to saints and images. Romanists cannot adduce from this period any testimony in favour of the doctrine and practice of their church upon these subjects, though it is true that an unwarrantable and excessive veneration for the memory, and even the relics, of martyrs and confessors had begun to show itself even in this early age; and this was, no doubt, the germ and origin of the gross polytheism which soon after began to prevail. Mr Isaac Taylor, in the second volume of his " Ancient Christianity," has proved that what he calls Demonolatry, or the religious worship and invocation of dead men, prevailed largely in the latter part of the fourth and in the fifth century, and was sanctioned by the most eminent men whom the church then contained, and even by Augustine himself. This had sprung up so readily, though by a gradual process, from the veneration paid to martyrs in the earlier period, and it is so natural to the mind of man, when true religion is in a decaying state, that it came to prevail almost universally in the church, without giving rise to any controversial discussions which might mark the stages of its progress. There can be no doubt that, in the fifth and sixth centuries, there prevailed largely in the church a worship which might be fairly called polytheistic, and on which the monotheism of Mahomet was a decided improvement; though there is no sufficient evidence of the introduction of the formal invocation of saints into the public and prescribed services of the church till the seventh century.

The veneration of relics in the Christian church preceded the , veneration of images, whether paintings or statues; and it is certain that there is no trace of image-worship so long as the Christians were engaged in open conflict with pagan idolaters, and therefore bound to abstain from the

more palpable and offensive forms in which pagan idolatry manifested itself. In the course of the sixth century, after paganism was finally suppressed under Justinian, we find evidences of pictures of Christ and the martyrs being introduced into the churches for ornament, though there is no proof as yet that any religious worship or cultus was paid to them. The process, however, of the corruption of true religion advanced; and as at once the cause and the effect of this, the introduction into the church of the views and practices of paganism continued to go on with increasing rapidity, until in the eighth century, some reaction having arisen against the veneration now generally paid to images, the great contest took place upon this subject, which was certainly carried on with carnal weapons, produced much bloodshed and many crimes, and terminated at last in the establishment of the worship of images, as an ordinary part of public worship, both in the Eastern and the Western Churches, —with this only difference, that in the Eastern or Greek Church, the worship was, and is, restricted to paintings of Christ and the saints, while in the Western or Latin Church it was extended to statues as well as to pictures. The most important epoch in the history of this contest about image-worship, is the second Council of Nice, held in 787, received as an oecumenical council both by the Greek and Latin Churches, and referred to by the Council of Trent, and by Romish writers in general, as establishing, in virtue of its infallibility as representing the universal church, the worship of images upon an impregnable foundation.

It is chiefly upon the ground of giving religious worship to saints and angels, and especially to the Virgin Mary, and to the images of Christ and the saints, that the charge of idolatry, commonly adduced by Protestants against the Church of Rome, is founded; and as this is a topic of some importance and of some intricacy, and as it has given rise to a great deal of discussion, it may be proper to give a brief account of it. And in doing so, we shall advert, first, to the historical department of the question, investigating what the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is, and indicating some of the principal facts connected with its development and establishment; and afterwards give a brief exposition of some of the theological principles that bear upon the settlement of the controversy.

I. Historical Statement

In regard to the religious worship or cultus that should be paid to the saints and angels, and especially to the Virgin Mary, the fullest, the most formal and authoritative statement of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, is that of the Council of Trent. Even in the Council of Trent, the doctrine of the church upon this subject was not very distinctly defined or very clearly explained, although much prominence had been given to it by the Reformers in defending their separation from the Church of Rome. Their doctrines upon the subject of the worship both of saints and images were hastily slurred over in the last session of the council (the twenty-fifth), along with the equally delicate and difficult topics of purgatory and indulgences. With respect to this whole class of subjects, it is evident enough that the Council of Trent avoided giving any very exact or complete exposition of the church's doctrine, probably from a sort of lurking consciousness that it could not well stand a thorough investigation; and likewise in order to leave room for notions on these subjects being propagated, and practices being diffused, among the people, which, when challenged by their opponents, they might not be obliged to acknowledge and defend as the recognised doctrines of the church.

The substance of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects of saints and images is thus stated in the profession of faith of Pope Pius IV., to which every Popish priest has sworn adherence, —that the saints reigning along with Christ are to be venerated and invoked; that they offer prayers to God for us; and that their relics are to be venerated; that the images of Christ and His mother, ever virgin, and those also of other saints, are to be kept, and that due (*debitum*) honour and veneration are to be given to them. There is not much more information as to what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome to be derived from the somewhat fuller statements upon these subjects in the decrees or in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, excepting only, in general, that we ought to have recourse to their prayers, help, and assistance, but that they are not to be worshipped with the same honour as God, or with the species of worship which is admitted to be due to Him alone; and that images are not to be invoked as if anything were to be sought and obtained from them, or as if

any divinity resided in them, the worship that is given to them being to be referred to the objects, —i.e., Christ or the saints, — whom they represent. There is no other declaration of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject of the worship of saints and angels; and what is vague, defective, or ambiguous here, must be supplied from the writings of her standard and approved authors; but on the subject of the veneration of images, we have, in addition, the actings and decrees of the second Council of Nice, held in 787, which is recognised by the Council of Trent, and by the Church of Rome as oecumenical, and therefore infallible; and is expressly referred to in the decree of the Council of Trent as the leading authority upon this point.

The history and character of the second Council of Nice have become an important point in the discussion of this question; and there is certainly nothing in all we know about it that is in the least fitted to conciliate respect or deference to its decisions. Archbishop Tillotson has given a character of this council, which is fully confirmed by the undoubted facts of the case. It is this: " The second Council of Nice pretended their doctrine of image-worship to have descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it most doughtily by texts of Scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit authors, and by fond (i.e., foolish) and immodest stories (as is acknowledged by Pope Adrian VI.) of apparitions and women's dreams, etc., for which I refer the reader to the council itself; which is such a mess of fopperies, that if a general council of atheists had met together with a design to abuse religion by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually." And again he says, " The second Council of Nice, to establish their doctrine of image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest texts of Scripture, that I can hardly believe that any Papist in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true sense of those texts which is there given by those fathers." This council, then, — acting wholly under the influence of a very worthless woman, the Empress Irene (who, having murdered her husband, reigned during the minority of her son), and containing no men of eminence as theologians, no men who have secured for themselves, on any ground, an honourable reputation in the church, but which Papists are obliged by their principles to regard as enjoying the infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost, —decreed,

and established the worship of images in the professing church of Christ, and thus involved it in the guilt of idolatry. The substance of the decree of this council upon this subject was this: that προσκύνησις and ἄσπασμός were to be given to the σέπται και ἅγιοι εἰκόνες of the cross of Christ, His mother, the angels, and all saints; but that this was not to be the same honour or worship that is given to God; that the honour paid to the image passed to the object which it represented; and that he who adores or worships the image, — προσκύνει —worships or adores (the same word) him whose likeness it is.

Papists are now in general ashamed of the grounds or reasons which this council adopted and rested on as the foundation of their decree in favour of the worship of images, —of their silly and childish perversions of Scripture, —of their quotation, as authorities, of works ascribed to some of the fathers, now universally acknowledged to be forgeries, —and of the ridiculous and offensive stories about apparitions and miracles, which were all gravely adduced and founded on by the council, as proofs that images ought to be worshipped. In modern times, they commonly allege that the Church of Rome is bound only by the general final decision of the council, and is not obliged to approve of the grounds or reasons which the council adduced and assigned for it. This, however, is an unwarrantable evasion. The council is universally regarded by Romanists as oecumenical and infallible, —it being represented in this character by the Council of Trent. Its infallibility, of course, originated in the presiding guidance of the Holy Ghost; and if the Holy Spirit really presided in and directed the assembly, as Papists believe to have been the case, they surely must have been preserved from error in the grounds or reasons they assigned for their doctrinal conclusions, as well as in the conclusions themselves, especially when they were professing to be giving the true sense and import of scriptural statements. It is in vain for Romanists to attempt to escape from the responsibility of anything which commended itself to the minds of a body of men, whom, in their collective capacity, they regard as invested with infallibility, in virtue of the Holy Spirit presiding among them. We do not doubt that modern Romanists are heartily ashamed of many things set forth by the second Council of Nice, but there does not appear to be any way by which they can escape from the responsibility of all its deliverances, except by denying its infallibility; and the

impossibility of their denying this, without renouncing some of their most important and fundamental principles, is just one of the many mill-stones which the claims and pretensions of the Church of Rome have fastened immovably around its neck. Besides, it is also deserving of remark, that in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, reference is made, as to an authority upon this subject, not only to the seventh action or session of the second Council of Nice, which contains the general decree, but to several of the preceding actions, in which the grounds or reasons of their ultimate deliverance are set forth; and that we even find in it a general reference to the second Council of Nice, *passim*, which must in all fairness be regarded as sanctioning the general substance of its proceedings and deliverances, not merely its one final decision.

Romish writers encourage their readers in the belief that miracles have been often wrought by images, and that some particular images possess this power in a pre-eminent degree; but they are very unwilling, in modern times, to admit that their church is to be held responsible for this notion, or to be held committed to the reality of any particular miracles; and their unwillingness to face the ridiculous miracles recorded and founded upon by the second Council of Nice, makes them peculiarly anxious to escape from the necessity of defending all its deliverances. And yet it ought to be mentioned to the credit of that council, as being the only symptom of sense or decency observable in its proceedings, that it admitted that the images of that age were not much in the habit of working miracles, and that they had to go back to former generations in order to collect proofs of this description. This feature in their conduct contrasts favourably with that of some Popish authorities in more modern times, who published at the time an official account, with the approbation of the Master of the Sacred Palace, of many miracles wrought by images in Italy in 1796 and 1797. This miraculous power was then exhibited chiefly by the images weeping and groaning, when the French armies under Napoleon entered Italy; and the official account, duly attested, was translated into English, and published in London, under the patronage of the Popish bishops, for the edification and comfort of the faithful. In our own day, the miracle by which images commonly confirm and edify the faithful, is winking.

Some important historical transactions succeeded the second Council of Nice, which, though we cannot enter into any details concerning them, are worthy of being noticed and remembered. Pope Adrian I., who may be said to have presided in this council by his legates, confirmed and sanctioned its proceedings and decrees, which were in entire accordance with his own views. Image-worship, however, as established by this council, met with great opposition in the Western Church, especially in France and Britain, —a plain proof that, at that time, neither the infallibility of councils, nor the supremacy of the Pope, was universally acknowledged. A book was prepared, in refutation of the arguments and conclusions of this council, in the name and by the authority of the Emperor Charlemagne, in the year 790, and transmitted by him to the Pope. This work is usually known under the name of *Liber Carolinus*, or *Libri Carolini*. It is divided into four books, and it openly condemns the whole proceedings of the Council of Nice, adducing no fewer than one hundred and twenty objections against them, declaring "that they contained folly, absurdity, malignity, senseless conjectures, and execrable errors derived from paganism; that the council perverted the Scriptures, and had not produced one relevant quotation from the Bible; that it distorted the extracts from the fathers, perverting the order, the sense, and the words; and had brought forward many puerilities from apocryphal writings." The work contains likewise an excellent and judicious proof from Scripture of the unlawfulness of employing images in the worship of God, or paying to them any external mark of religious honour and veneration. This work Charlemagne sent to Pope Adrian, and his Holiness honoured it with a confutation by his own hand. This work of the Pope has come down to us; it is found in the Collection of Councils, and it may be most justly described in the terms which Charlemagne and Tillotson have applied to the proceedings of the council itself. It defends the whole proceedings of the council, and it exhibits quite as much of what is absurd and despicable. Some specimens of its arguments are given in Forbes' *Instructiones Historico-Theologicae*. Notwithstanding all this, the practice of image-worship was far from being generally approved of and adopted; and in 794, a council was held upon the subject at Frankfort, which had at least as good a title to be reckoned oecumenical as that of Nice, as it consisted of three hundred bishops from France, Germany, Spain, and Britain. This council condemned the

proceedings and decisions of the second Council of Nice, and approved of the Liber Carolinus; and though it did not reject the giving some religious honour to the saints, it laid down general principles, which, if fairly followed out, would have as conclusively shut out the worship of saints as of images.

These facts are exceedingly perplexing to Romish controversialists, both on account of their bearing upon the particular subject of image-worship, and also of their bearing upon the general questions of the authority of councils and the supremacy of the Pope. Some of them have attempted to involve in doubt and obscurity the genuineness of the Liber Carolinus, and the Acts of the Council of Frankfort; but this is too desperate a course, and cannot be presented with anything like plausibility. It is accordingly rejected, —at least so far as the Council of Frankfort is concerned, —both by Baronius and Bellarmine. All that they attempted to establish upon the point is this: that the Council of Frankfort condemned the proceedings and decrees of the Council of Nice, under the influence of two errors or mistakes in matters of fact; —believing erroneously first, that the Council of Nice had decreed that images should receive the same honour and worship as God Himself; and, secondly, that the proceedings of that council had not been confirmed by the Pope. These allegations, however, are not only destitute of evidence, but can be positively and conclusively disproved. It can be easily shown that the Council of Frankfort understood correctly what the Council of Nice had decreed, and was fully aware that the Pope approved of its proceedings, and yet deliberately rejected and condemned it.

There is probably no one of the subjects involved in the controversy between Protestants and Papists, with respect to which Papists are more accustomed to complain that Protestants misunderstand and misrepresent their views, than this one of the worship of saints and images, on which we commonly base the charge of idolatry against them. But the complaint has no foundation to rest upon. We really do not charge them with holding any doctrines upon this subject, but what we can prove that the Church of Rome has sanctioned; and we think we can prove that the admitted and undoubted doctrine, of the Church of Rome affords sufficient grounds for the charges of polytheism and idolatry. We

charge Romanists with no practices in these matters which we cannot prove to be sanctioned by their approved writers, by their authorized books of devotion, and by their own ordinary mode of speaking and acting. We know well enough what it is they hold upon this subject, so far as their church has defined her doctrine regarding it; we know what are the grounds on which she defends the doctrine she maintains; we think we can appreciate aright these grounds, and prove them to be utterly insufficient. We do not charge them with giving to saints and angels the same honour and worship which they profess to render to God; but we allege that they do give religious honour and worship to saints and angels, though they call it inferior, or subordinate in degree, to that which they render to God; and we think we can prove that Scripture not only does not warrant, but forbids, giving any religious honour or worship to saints or angels, and restricts it to God alone. We do not charge them with praying to saints and angels, and applying to them for spiritual blessings, as if they believed them to possess the attributes of Divinity; but we maintain that God claims to Himself alone those services, those expressions of reverence and confidence, which Romanists pay to saints and angels; that He claims them on the ground of His infinite and incommunicable perfections, and that it is unwarrantable and unreasonable in itself, as well as inconsistent with Scripture, to render them to any but God; and on this ground we consider ourselves entitled to assert that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject involves practically and substantially polytheism, —or the introduction of many inferior beings to share in the honour and worship which should be reserved to the one true God alone.

There is, perhaps, greater difficulty in ascertaining, and therefore more probability of our mistaking, the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the honour and veneration that should be paid to the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints. It is certain that the Church of Rome teaches that they ought to be kept in churches, as the Trent Catechism says, "ut excolantur," and that, as a part of the worship of God, religious honour and veneration are to be paid to them; while she also teaches that there is no divinity in them, that they are not to be prayed to, that they are not to be asked or expected to bestow spiritual blessings, and that the veneration paid to them passes, or is transferred, to the object they

represent. If the veneration paid to images passes, or is transferred, to the object they represent, it would seem as if it was not intended that any honour or veneration was due, and was to be paid directly, to the images themselves; and yet the Church of Rome expressly declares that it is right *eis debitum honorem et venerationem impertire, illis honorem et cultum adhibere*, as if they were themselves the direct and proper objects of this veneration and worship. The authorized doctrine of the church upon this subject is thus involved in obscurity and ambiguity, if not inconsistency; and, indeed, there are considerable diversities of opinion on this point among her own most eminent writers. Bellarmine says that there are three different opinions held in the Church of Rome, in regard to the kind of worship— *de genere cultus*— to which images are entitled, — *viz.*, first, that an image ought not in any way to be worshipped in itself, or on its own account, but only that the person represented by it should be worshipped in the presence of the image. This view manifestly comes short of what is taught upon the subject by the Councils of Nice and Trent, which plainly make the images themselves the direct and proper objects of honour and veneration. Secondly, that the same honour and veneration are to be given to the image as to the person it represents; that the same honour is to be given, for example, to an image of Christ as to Christ Himself; and so in like manner in regard to the Virgin and the saints. This view was held by St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, and by other eminent Romish writers. This opinion likewise seems to be inconsistent with the decree of the second Council of Nice, erring by excess as the former does by defect; and the only way in which Bellarmine can explain the fact that many great doctors should have adopted it, is by supposing that they had never happened to see the acts of this oecumenical council, or the work of Pope Adrian in defence of it. Bellarmine himself, with the generality of Romish writers, adopts a view intermediate between these two extremes, and maintains— first, that images are to be worshipped of themselves, or on their own account, and properly— "*imagines per se et proprie colendas esse*— secondly, that they are not *per se* and *proprie* to be worshipped with the same honour as the objects they represent; but, thirdly, that they may receive the same worship as the objects they represent, "*improprie et per accidens.*" And then he lays down this doctrine as a great general principle, intended to combine and harmonize these different views, —*viz.*, that the worship

which in itself and properly is due to images is a certain imperfect worship, that analogically and reductively belongs to that species or kind of worship which is due to the object represented by the image,"*Cultus qui per se, et proprie debetur imaginibus, est cultus quidam imperfectus, qui analogie et reductive pertinet ad speciem ejus cultus, qui debetur exemplari.*" This proposition, in which Bellarmine embodies the essence of the answer to the question as to the kind of worship to be given to images, is not very intelligible, and probably was not intended to be understood; but it exhibits the *ne plus ultra* of what learning and talent could do in explaining the true doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject; and the diversity of opinion subsisting among her most eminent writers, and the perplexity and confusion of her most distinguished champion in expounding this topic, present rather a singular contrast to the facility and confidence with which we often hear Romanists— who are probably as ignorant of the authorized decision of the Council of Nice as St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, was— propound the doctrine of their church on this point, and expose the alleged Protestant misrepresentation of it. We care little for these differences and perplexities, except as exhibiting the falsehood of the common boastings of Papists in their unity in clear and well-ascertained doctrines, and the special difficulties of their position on this question; for the ground we take upon this point is clear and definite, and strikes at the root of all the Romish doctrines and practices, whatever form or aspect they may assume, —viz., that it is unlawful, unwarranted by Scripture, and inconsistent with its statements, to introduce images into the worship of God, and to pay them any religious honour and veneration whatever.

II. Doctrinal Exposition

Having given some account of the real nature and import of the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the worship of saints and images, and of the leading historical circumstances connected with its origin and development; and especially of the second Council of Nice, where the doctrine of the worship of images was first formally established, and of the opposition which its decrees met with, I have now to advert briefly to some of the principal grounds on which the Romish doctrine on the

subject has been assailed and defended.

The tendency to polytheism and idolatry, —i.e., to the religious worship of a variety of beings, distinct from and inferior to the one supreme God, and the introduction of images or visible representations of the objects of worship into religious services, —is a very prominent feature in the character of fallen man, the result and manifestation of man's ungodliness, or his estrangement from the one only living and true God—his aversion to contemplate and realize one invisible Being, on whom he wholly depends for life, and breath, and all things. This tendency has been most fully exhibited in the whole history of our race. The world was soon overspread with polytheism and idolatry, and it still continues to be so wherever the Christian revelation is unknown. This plainly indicates the tendency of fallen man in religious matters; and the full general results of this tendency, as exhibited in the leading features of heathenism, in every age and country, have been undoubtedly most offensive to God, most injurious to religion, and most degrading to mankind.

The leading features of heathen polytheism and idolatry stand out palpably to our observation, even upon the most cursory survey. No one can mistake them. They are manifestly these two, — viz., first, the giving of religious worship and homage to a number of inferior beings along with the one Supreme God; and, secondly, the use of images, or outward visible representations of these beings, supreme and inferior, in the religious worship and homage which are rendered to them. These two features of the common heathen idolatry, as thus generally stated and described, manifestly apply to the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, with respect to saints and images; and her advocates have, in consequence, felt the necessity of pointing out clear distinctions between their case and that of the heathen, in order that they may escape from the charge of idolatry, —a crime so frequently and so severely denounced in Scripture. They are the more anxious to effect this, because it is undeniable that the fathers, to whom they are so much in the habit of referring as authorities, are accustomed, when they are exposing the idolatry of their heathen adversaries, to make statements which, as they stand, decidedly condemn as irrational and anti-scriptural what is now

taught and practised in the Church of Rome. The distinctions which they attempt to set up are chiefly these: First, that the heathen give to these inferior beings the same worship and homage which they render to the Supreme Being— that they worship them all equally as gods; whereas they (the Romanists) give to saints and angels only an inferior or subordinate worship or homage, and reserve to God a higher kind or species of worship that ought to be rendered to no creature; and, secondly, that the heathen worshipped the images of false gods, —i.e., of beings who had no real existence, or were not entitled to any religious respect, —or worshipped them in the belief that the images themselves were gods, or that some divinity resided in them, which could hear prayer and confer blessings; whereas they (the Romanists) worship or venerate only the images of Christ, His mother, and the saints now reigning in heaven, —do not regard these images as possessed of any power of hearing prayers or conferring blessings, and merely employ them as aids or auxiliaries in rendering aright the worship and homage due to those whom they represent, —honouring and venerating the images on their account.

In regard to these allegations of the Romanists, we maintain, — first, that the representations here given of heathenism are not true in fact, and that the alleged distinctions between heathenism and Romanism in these matters cannot be established by satisfactory evidence; and, secondly, that these distinctions are insufficient to shield the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome from the denunciations of heathen polytheism and idolatry contained in the sacred Scriptures and the writings of the fathers. There is good ground to believe, that the more intelligent and reflecting among the heathen, both in ancient and in modern times, perceived and admitted a distinction between the Supreme God and the inferior deities whom they worshipped, and that they paid some regard to this distinction in the kind or degree of worship which they rendered to them; that they had in their minds a distinction between the highest worship and homage due only to the one Supreme God, and an inferior worship or homage rendered to many other beings, —a distinction substantially the same as that which Papists employ in their own defence, though not so fully enunciated or so carefully explained. And with regard to images, there is equally good ground to

believe that the more intelligent and reflecting heathens did not ascribe to them any divinity, or expect from them blessings, any more than the Church of Rome does, and would say little or nothing more about the honour and veneration due to them than the Council of Trent has done. With respect to the allegation that the heathen gave religious worship to beings who had never existed, and to their images, this, in so far as concerns the conviction and belief of the worshippers, is not true, for they believed that the beings whom they worshipped had existed, and did then exist; and so far as concerns the actual reality or matter of fact, the heathens were in no worse condition in this respect than the Romanists are: for it has been proved by satisfactory evidence, that some persons have been canonized by Popes, —and are in consequence entitled to be invoked and worshipped by all Papists, —who never existed; and that others have been admitted into the calendar of saints, and have thus become legitimate objects of Popish worship, who, when tried by the scriptural standard, can be shown to be no more entitled to respect and veneration of any sort than were the inferior deities of ancient Greece and Rome. In short, the condition of heathens, in the more civilised countries, was, in this respect, substantially the same with that of the subjects of the Romish Church. The more intelligent and reflecting heathens no more confounded the crowd of inferior or subordinate objects of religious worship with the one Supreme God, and no more identified images with living and intelligent objects of veneration, than the defenders of Popery now do; and if the general state of sentiment and practice among the common mass of ignorant heathens differed from this, and corresponded more fully with the representations which Romish writers usually give of it, this is nothing more than can be easily paralleled in the Church of Rome; for there can be no reasonable doubt that even at the present day, in countries where Romanism has full and unbroken sway, and where, in consequence, ignorance generally obtains, the great mass of the people exhibit in their prevailing sentiments and practices in regard to saints and images just as gross and palpable polytheism and idolatry as the heathen do. Papists, then, are unable to establish any material or definite distinction between their doctrines and practices with respect to saints and images, and the unquestionable polytheism and idolatry of the heathen.

It is particularly important to notice that the Scripture gives no countenance or support to these distinctions; or— to state the matter in the precise form in which it bears most directly upon the point we are now considering— the Scripture, in condemning polytheism and idolatry, does not base its condemnation of them upon those alleged features of heathen worship on which Papists base the distinctions they try to establish between their own views and practices, and those of the heathen, but on more general and comprehensive grounds equally applicable to both. The Scripture condemns all polytheism, —the worship of other gods, —not upon the ground that the worship or homage rendered to them was the same as, or equal to, that which was, and should be, rendered to the one Supreme God; but on the ground that all religious worship should be rendered only to the one Supreme God, and that no religious worship should be rendered to any other being. It condemns all idolatry or image-worship, not merely upon the ground that those whose images were honoured and venerated were false gods, and were not themselves entitled to religious worship; but on the ground that it is irrational, injurious, and unlawful to introduce images or external visible representations into the worship of the invisible God. There is good reason to believe that the Israelites intended to pay religious worship and homage to Jehovah, the one true God, by the golden calf which Aaron made at their instigation, and that Jeroboam likewise intended to worship the true God, the God of Israel, by the images or visible representations which he set up; and yet these acts are not the less on that account condemned in Scripture as idolatry.

It has also been satisfactorily proved that the substance of what has now been stated in regard to the scriptural mode of representing and dealing with polytheism and idolatry, holds good likewise of the general course of statement and argument adopted by the fathers in their discussions with the heathen adversaries of Christianity.

This obvious and striking resemblance between Romanism and the unquestionable polytheism and idolatry of heathenism, surely affords at least a very strong presumption that the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, in regard to saints and images, are opposed to the word of God, and injurious to true religion, and imposes upon its defenders an

obligation to produce from Scripture very clear and conclusive evidence in support of their views and conduct in this matter. The main question, however, upon this subject, is not so much whether the worship of saints and images, as sanctioned and practised in the Church of Rome, be substantially identical with those of the heathens, nor even whether the terms polytheism and idolatry be strictly and properly applicable to them, though both these questions should be answered in the affirmative; but whether the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon this subject be sanctioned by Scripture, or be, on the contrary, anti-scriptural and unlawful. If it can be proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is opposed to Scripture, and, consequently, that the practice founded upon it is unlawful or forbidden by God, —this, of course, is a sufficient reason why we should on this ground express our decided condemnation of that church; why we should take care that we shall not partake in her sin, and why we should feel constrained to exert ourselves in the use of all scriptural means to rescue our fellow-men from her yoke, by labouring to convince them that Popish priests are blind leaders of the blind; and that from following their guidance, nothing else can be expected than that, along with their leaders, they should fall into the ditch of guilt and misery.

We shall not dwell upon the consideration, though it is both true and important, that unless it can be positively proved from Scripture that some religious worship is due to saints, and that some honour and veneration ought to be paid to images, this is enough to condemn them, inasmuch as Scripture sanctions the general principle, that it is unwarrantable to introduce into the worship of God anything which God Himself has not positively sanctioned; but we shall proceed to advert briefly to the more direct and positive grounds by which it can be proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is opposed to Scripture; and that the practice which she bases upon it is forbidden by God, and is therefore sinful. There can be no doubt that one object of the revelation which God has given to us was to make known to us how He ought to be worshipped, —what the religious services are which He requires of us, and the due performance of which might bear favourably upon our relation to Him, and our eternal welfare. Authoritative information upon this subject was greatly needed, in consequence of the

powerful tendency of fallen man to polytheism and idolatry, as evinced by the general condition of the human race before any written revelation was given them, and by the general condition of mankind still, wherever this written revelation is unknown. The great leading principles which are plainly taught upon this subject in the whole revelation which God has given us, both in the Old Testament and the New, are these: That there is but one God, and no other; one Being who alone is our Creator, our Preserver, and our Benefactor; one Being who alone is qualified to govern, and does govern, the world, —on whom alone we depend for everything we enjoy and expect to attain to; that the worship and homage which we should render to Him, should be regulated by the perfections which He possesses, and by the relation in which we stand to Him; that He alone is possessed of such perfections, and stands in such a relation to us, as to make Him a proper object of religious worship; that His glory He will not give to another, and that He claims religious worship as due to Himself alone, to the exclusion of all other beings; and that He condemns the introduction of images or outward sensible representations of Himself, or of any other beings, into the religious service which He requires of His creatures. This statement embodies the sum and substance of what is manifestly the natural and obvious meaning of many statements contained in Scripture, with which all must be familiar, and which we need not quote. And if the principles now stated are indeed taught in Scripture, they manifestly exclude or prohibit the paying any religious worship or homage to saints or angels, or any creatures whatever, and the introduction of images or visible representations for any purpose into the professed worship of God.

Romanists, of course, are bound, in order to defend the doctrine of their church in regard to the worship of saints and images, to show that these principles are not taught in Scripture; or, if they admit, what they cannot well dispute, that they are laid down there as general truths or doctrines, at least to prove that Scripture warrants us to understand them with some limitations or modifications, and does not require us to hold them in all their extent and absoluteness; and even if they could establish this general position, it would still further be necessary for them to prove that Scripture sanctions just such limitations and modifications of these general principles as will leave room for their precise doctrines in regard

to saints and images. It would be sufficient, indeed, and would accomplish their whole object at once, if they could produce direct and specific proof of what they teach upon these subjects. If they could do this, —i.e., if they could produce satisfactory proof from Scripture that saints deceased are entitled to some religious worship and homage; that they pray for us, and that we ought to pray to them; that they hear or know our prayers addressed to them, and in answer to these prayers, contribute in some way to procure for us the blessings we need; and that images ought to be used in the worship of God, and should receive some religious honour and veneration;— if they could conclusively prove all this, directly by scriptural evidence, then we would be bound to admit that the great general scriptural principles, formerly laid down, are to be understood with such limitations and modifications as to leave room for those Romish doctrines which seem so plainly to run counter to their natural and obvious import; but they can scarcely be said to attempt producing any direct and specific evidence from Scripture in support of their doctrine; for any attempts of this kind which they make, are so despicable as to be unworthy of notice; while, on the other side, we can adduce from Scripture, — in addition to the general principles formerly stated, and in proof that they are to be understood in their natural obvious meaning, —

the facts that angels and the most eminent saints are recorded to have refused the ordinary outward marks of religious worship when offered to them, and to have refused them on the ground that God alone was to be worshipped; and that all that we find in Scripture about images, or outward visible representations in connection with the worship of God, is in a tone of decided condemnation.

The natural obvious meaning of the second commandment in the Decalogue is, that God there, in regulating the mode in which He is to be worshipped, after having in the first commandment claimed religious worship to Himself as the only proper object of it, forbids the making of any likeness of any object, with the view of introducing this likeness into religious worship, or paying to it any of the ordinary external marks of religious honour and veneration. And so sensible are Romanists that this is the natural and obvious meaning of the second commandment, that

they have been accustomed to exclude it wholly, while professing to quote the Decalogue, from the catechisms commonly used in the instruction of their people. Independently of the great general principles taught in Scripture concerning the worship of God, we find there the giving any religious worship to saints and angels condemned by very plain implication, and the introduction of images into the worship of God, and the rendering to them the external marks of honour and veneration, condemned explicitly; and we have nothing of a specific kind in support of the Romish doctrine and practice, that is possessed of any weight or deserving of serious consideration. On all these grounds, we consider ourselves entitled to conclude that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is opposed to Scripture, and that the practice which she founds upon it is forbidden by the law of God.

Papists have, indeed, invented a variety of distinctions to evade the force of the general principles and the specific statements of Scripture, which seem to oppose their doctrines and practices in regard to saints and images; but they are wholly insufficient to serve the purpose for which they are adduced. They all labour, under one radical and fatal defect, — viz., that they have themselves no support from Scripture; and that, therefore, even though they were in themselves true and real, they could not be legitimately employed to explain away, or to limit, or modify a clear scriptural principle or a plain scriptural precept. If the general principles of Scripture are to be limited or modified, — if the specific precepts of Scripture as they stand are to be set aside, — we must find the warrant for doing so in Scripture itself; we must produce materials from Scripture to establish in general the lawfulness and necessity of departing from the natural obvious meaning of the statements founded on, and also, moreover, to sanction the specific deviations from their ordinary meaning, which are contended for, on the other side. And when these considerations are kept in view, it becomes obvious that Papists have not been able to produce any sufficient warrant for limiting or modifying the great scriptural principle that the one Supreme God is the only proper object of religious worship; or for setting ' aside the scriptural prohibition of the introduction of images into religious worship, and giving to them the outward marks of religious honour and veneration. Papists are accustomed to distinguish between a supreme religious worship which is

due only to God, and which they call latria, and an inferior religious worship which is due to saints and angels, and which they call doulia; also between a direct worship, supreme or subordinate, which is due to God, to saints and angels, according to their rank, and a relative worship which is to be paid to images from a regard to the persons whom they represent. But these distinctions, though real in themselves, —i.e., though easily conceivable, —are not suggested to us by Scripture, or set before us there. They are the mere productions of men's natural power of abstracting and distinguishing; and therefore they can be of no avail in affording a warrant, and still less in imposing an obligation, to modify a scriptural principle, or to set aside a scriptural precept. If we could prove directly and positively from Scripture, that saints were entitled to an inferior religious worship, and that images ought to receive a relative honour and veneration, then we might legitimately employ these distinctions in showing how these positions, thus proved, might be reconciled with the other scriptural principles and precepts that seemed to be opposed to them. But in the entire absence of all scriptural support for these distinctions, and in the entire want of any scriptural proof of the lawfulness and obligation of the things themselves, which these distinctions are designed to explain and defend, —this can afford no ground whatever for modifying or setting aside any scriptural statement, or for vindicating the doctrine and practices of the Church of Rome in regard to saints and images from the condemnation which the word of God pronounces upon them.

The only thing like a positive argument which Papists have been able to devise in favour of the worship which they pay to saints and angels, is a statement to this effect, —that all beings ought to be honoured according to their true qualities and their real positions, —that there is a civil honour or worship that is due to men according to their position and our relation to them, —that there is a supreme religious worship that is due only to God, — and that there is something intermediate between these two— viz., an inferior religious worship of which saints and angels are the appropriate objects, and to which they are in consequence entitled. Now, not to dwell upon the utter inadequacy of a vague generality of this sort, to set aside a scriptural principle, and to impose a religious obligation, or upon the consideration that God alone is the source and fountain of

honour, and is alone entitled to determine in what way and to what extent other beings are to be honoured, — and that He has, to say the least, given us no indication of His will that deceased saints and angels should be to us the objects of any services, or should receive from us any outward marks of honour, —we have just to observe, in answer to this argument, that there is no medium between civil worship and religious worship, and that Scripture restricts religious worship to God alone. The only proper foundation of religious worship is the possession of divine perfection, and the power of conferring upon us spiritual blessing and ensuring our eternal welfare. These statements certainly do not apply to saints and angels; and, therefore, whatever sentiments or feelings we may cherish towards them, there is no ground in right reason why we should pay them any religious worship. An inferior religious worship is an absurdity, almost a contradiction; and, accordingly, experience abundantly proves that, however anxious Papists may be in their speculations and explanations to draw the line of demarcation between the supreme religious worship due only to God, and the inferior religious worship due to saints and angels, this line ordinarily and in practice almost wholly disappears. The Council of Trent expressly sanctions praying to saints either vocally or mentally, which is virtually to ascribe to them a power which God claims as peculiarly His own, —that, viz., of understanding men's thoughts, of searching the heart. The invocation of saints implies that everywhere, or in all places, they can and do hear or know the prayers which are addressed to them; and this is virtually to ascribe to them the divine attributes of omnipresence and omniscience: for the ridiculous conjectures which Papists have invented to explain how it is that the saints, without the possession of these attributes, hear or know the prayers addressed to them, are evidently mere evasions, which they themselves do not truly realize, and which exert no practical influence upon their own sentiments and impressions concerning this matter. They profess commonly that they only pray to the saints to pray to God on their behalf; but the Council of Trent directs men to have recourse to the help and assistance as well as the prayers of the saints, — as if the saints could really confer upon them or afford them certain and efficacious assistance in procuring the blessings which they need in order to their eternal happiness. Their authorized books of devotion sanction the practice of asking God to give them spiritual blessings from a regard

to the merits of the saints, which practically implies that the saints are considered as occupying the same relation to God as that which is held by His own eternal Son; and in their ordinary authorized addresses to the Virgin Mary, they are accustomed to ask directly of her the highest spiritual blessings, as if they believed that she had the absolute power of dispensing them,— thus virtually abandoning in practice what they profess to hold in theory, throwing aside the distinction between a supreme and an inferior religious worship, and practically honouring and worshipping a mere creature as if she were possessed of the perfections of the one eternal and infinite Jehovah, and were really able to determine men's everlasting destinies.

A very favourite allegation of the Romanists, in support of their doctrine and practice with respect to the worship of saints, is, that since we are authorized and encouraged to ask saints upon earth to pray to God for us, or on our behalf, there can be no impropriety in our asking the glorified saints reigning with Christ in heaven to pray for us; and that if we have ground for expecting benefit from the one practice, we have as good, or rather better, ground for expecting benefit from the other. This consideration usually occupies a very prominent place in the reasonings of Papists upon this subject; and, indeed, Bellarmine asserts that Protestants have never been able to answer it. But it is easy to show that it has no real weight or relevancy in establishing their views. First, this argument, even if admitted to be sound and valid, applies only to one portion of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, —that which inculcates that we should invoke the saints, or ask them to pray for us. It gives not even the appearance of support to their fundamental doctrine, — that which is the basis and ground of all the rest, —viz., that the saints are entitled to a subordinate religious worship, as including both a certain state of mind and feeling to be cherished in regard to them, and certain outward marks of religious reverence to be paid to them. It gives no appearance of support to the doctrine laid down by the Council of Trent, that we ought to have recourse to their help and assistance, as well as to their prayers; which plainly implies, that they can and do contribute to procuring blessings for us in other ways— though these are prudently not specified— than by their prayers. It gives no appearance of support to the practice sanctioned by their authorized books of devotion,

of asking God to give us spiritual blessings for the sake of the merits of the saints; and even in regard to the simple invocation of saints, or asking them to pray to God for us, — the only portion of the Romish doctrine to which the argument has any appearance of applying, — it is utterly destitute of all real weight. It is manifestly no proof of the conclusion, in support of which it is adduced, —viz., that we ought to pray to saints deceased to pray for us. There is evidently no logical connection between the premises and the conclusion. There is no real argument in the position, that because we ought to ask saints on earth to pray for us, therefore we ought to ask saints in heaven— in circumstances wholly different, both in themselves and in relation to us— to pray for us. The one certainly affords no real positive argument in favour of the other. It might afford a certain slight presumption in favour of it, if there were nothing positive and substantial to be adduced on the other side. It may afford, in the way of analogy, an answer to some of the objections which might be adduced against invoking deceased saints; but it contains no direct positive argument in support of it, and it leaves all our main objections against it wholly untouched.

These considerations are quite sufficient to dispose of this argument, of which Papists make so much use in defending the invocation of saints; but it is easy to show, in addition to all this, that there are most important differences between the two cases, which render the one wholly useless as an argument, or even a presumption, in support of the other. We cannot dwell upon these differences, but will merely state some of them, without entering into any illustration. First, there is clear and unquestionable Scripture authority for the one practice; whereas there is not a vestige of scriptural evidence, bearing directly and immediately, in support of the other. Secondly, the asking and obtaining the prayers of saints or holy men upon earth is a mutual exercise of the general duty of love and kindness, which all men reciprocally owe to each other; whereas the invocation of deceased saints, or the praying to them to pray for us, is, upon Popish principles, a part and a manifestation of a certain religious worship, homage, or reverence, which is supposed to be due to them, but which is inconsistent with the scriptural principle that restricts religious worship to God alone, on the ground of perfections which He alone possesses, and of relations which He alone holds with respect to us.

Thirdly, the asking the prayers of our fellow-men, to whom we have access, can be shown to be rational in all its features and circumstances, —i.e., to be warranted and sanctioned by the known realities of the case, by everything in the known condition and relations of the two parties, — whereas there are things about the invocation of saints which have no rational foundation in the known realities of the case, in the known powers and capacities of saints in heaven, and in the relation in which we stand to them. Fourthly, there is no danger of abuse or mischief in the practice of asking the prayers of our fellow-men upon earth; whereas the invocation of saints in heaven may be shown to have a strong and manifest tendency to be perverted for superstitious and polytheistic purposes, even if it were conceded that it did not necessarily, and in itself, involve directly anything superstitious or polytheistic.

The Romanists are accustomed to dwell much upon the practical utility of images in religious worship, in aiding the mental operations, and guiding and elevating the feelings, especially of ignorant and uncultivated men, in their religious exercises; but the conclusive answer to all they allege upon this point is to be found in the following considerations, which we can merely state without illustrating them. First, the whole history of the world fully proves that the tendency to introduce images, or visible representations of the object of worship, into religious services, is one of the most strongly marked features in the character of fallen and depraved man; and that this tendency, in its manifested results, has ever exerted a most injurious influence upon the interests of religion and morality: and, secondly, that God— who alone is entitled to regulate how He is to be worshipped, and who best knows what is in man, and what is best fitted to form man to the right worship and the full enjoyment of his Creator— has given a positive law, expressly prohibiting the making of images or visible representations of any objects, with the view of employing them in religious worship, and the rendering to them the outward marks of religious honour and veneration; while a great deal may be derived from the history and condition of the Church of Rome to establish the wisdom of this explicit and unqualified prohibition, in its bearing upon man's highest interests— his spiritual welfare.

We might have exhibited the current views and practices of Papists on the

subject of the worship of saints and images, and have given practical illustrations of the undoubted polytheism and idolatry that commonly obtains in Popish countries, especially in regard to what is sometimes called Mariolatry, or the worship of the mother of our Lord, who is practically, to the great mass of Papists, the only deity, the only real object of religious worship. It is right to know something of the current views and practices of Papists upon these subjects, to have just impressions of the real tendencies and results of Popery, wherever its influences are fully developed, and to cherish due compassion for its unhappy victims. But we have thought it better, upon the whole, to direct attention to the unquestionably authorized doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged, which cannot be denied or explained away, and which cannot be set aside as the misrepresentations of adversaries, or the errors and excesses of injudicious friends, or as mere abuses which may be occasionally exhibited in connection with any system. We have explained the undoubted doctrines of the Church of Rome from her acknowledged standard books, and as they are stated and defended by her most skilful champions. We have charged them with nothing which they can deny honestly, and have endeavoured to show that these acknowledged doctrines, with all the care and caution with which they can be stated, and with all the explanations and distinctions by which they can be defended, are not only unsupported by Scripture, but opposed to its statements; and that the practice that is based upon them is forbidden by God, and must be displeasing and offensive to Him, — fitted not to procure His favour, but to call forth His indignation; that it is a mode of acting which He will not only not receive as acceptable service rendered to Him, but which He will visit with tokens of His displeasure. This mode of discussing the subject not only avoids misunderstanding and misrepresenting the authorized doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome on these subjects, but prevents attempts to explain away or to gloss over the real doctrines and practices of that church; and, especially, it serves to prove, that although the authorized doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome on these points may not go quite so far as is sometimes supposed, both by ignorant Protestants and by ignorant Papists, yet that that church is, beyond all question, pledged to doctrines which are opposed to the teaching of Scripture, and to practices which are condemned by the word of God, — that there is a clear course of

conclusive scriptural argument which bears full and direct against her doctrines and practices, however cautiously and carefully stated, and however skilfully and dexterously defended.

Protestants who are not much versant in these matters, who have no very precise notions of what it is they mean to charge against the Church of Rome upon this subject, who have little more than a vague idea that she teaches and practises something very bad on the subject of worshipping saints and images, are apt to be staggered at the extent to which Papists disclaim the doctrines and practices sometimes imputed to them; and if they should be convinced that they have ignorantly imputed to them more error than the Church of Rome can be proved to have formally sanctioned, they are then apt to take these Popish disclamations at a great deal more than their real worth, —to take them as abjurations of almost, if not altogether, everything that is erroneous and objectionable, and on this ground virtually to abandon their whole charge against the Church of Rome on this point. As some process of this sort is not unfrequently going on amongst us, we have thought it best to confine attention in a great measure to a statement of the doctrines and practices to which the Church of Rome, as such, is pledged, without introducing anything that might be objected to, and set aside as a misrepresentation, an exaggeration, an abuse, or a mere private opinion; and to show how much there is, even in the undoubted and universally admitted doctrines of the Church of Rome, that is opposed to the teaching of the word of God, and fitted to corrupt the purity and to diminish the efficacy of true religion. But while we have confined ourselves in a great measure to this department of the subject, we think it important to state two facts which are necessary for the full exposition of this subject, and which can be established by conclusive proof, —viz., first, that the ordinary devotional and practical works, which are commonly in the hands of Romanists, often ascribe more honour and veneration to saints and images, and especially to the Virgin Mary and her images, than the standard books of the church and the statements of her controversial writers sanction, and that thus Papists incur the guilt of trying to diffuse among the people notions and practices which they know to be unauthorized, and which they are conscious they cannot defend when challenged; and, secondly, that the notions and practices prevalent among the people, in regard to

the worship due to saints and images, in countries where Popery has the ascendancy, go far beyond what any intelligent Papist would sanction or defend; while yet no real or vigorous effort is made by the priesthood to discountenance these notions and practices, —a fact strikingly illustrative of the general policy of the Popish system, and of the general tendency and natural results of Popish doctrines upon this particular subject, viewed in connection with the natural tendencies of fallen man. The truth is, that, with the doctrines openly avowed and taught by the Church of Rome upon this subject, idolatry of the grossest and most offensive kind, —idolatry as gross and offensive as that which generally obtains among the heathen, —can be avoided only by means of explanations and distinctions, which the body of the people do not readily understand and apply, and in which no pains are taken to instruct them, except in countries where they come into contact with Protestants.

There is an allegation often made by Romanists, not so much to disprove the charge of idolatry, which Protestants commonly base upon the worship of saints and angels, but rather to deter us from adducing and urging it. It is this— that it is very improbable that the great body of the church should, for so long a period, have fallen into, and continued in, so heinous a crime as idolatry; and that if this charge is well founded, it must imply that all Romanists must be consigned to everlasting misery as idolaters. The examination of the first part of this allegation would lead into an investigation of the whole of those general grounds by which Papists usually attempt to evade a fair discussion of their particular doctrines, according to the standard of Scripture, —i.e., the claims which they put forth on behalf of their church, as the only true church, to indefectibility and preservation from all error. On these we cannot enter; but we would only remark that we do not admit that there is anything in Scripture to establish the falsehood, or even the improbability, of what we allege to have taken place in this matter, and that there is much in Scripture fitted to lead us to expect just such an apostasy as we say the Church of Rome exhibits.

With respect to the inference they deduce from the charge of idolatry— - that all Romanists must endure the wrath of God as idolaters— we deny that this inference is well founded. Their allegation upon this point is not

very consistent with another often made, that men may be faithful subjects of the Church of Rome, and yet never worship saints or images: for there is thus an opening left by which the charge against the church may be retained, while yet some of her subjects may escape the guilt in which the church, as such, is involved. And this, indeed, we hold to be in substance true, though not upon the Romish ground. We believe that there have always been, and still are, in the Church of Rome, men who, in heart, and in the sight of God, were not idolaters, — i.e., who were really and in the main worshipping the one only, living, and true God in sincerity and in truth, and resting on the one foundation which has been laid in Zion. It is not easy for men to determine how far their fellow-men, — subjected, it may be, to great disadvantages as to the means of knowing God's will, and involved in great ignorance and darkness, — may yet have had a real saving knowledge of God and divine things introduced into their minds, and made instrumental by the Holy Spirit in renovating and sanctifying them. We cannot doubt that men possessed of very different degrees of knowledge of divine things, and even professing no inconsiderable amount of error, have, while on earth, been prepared for the enjoyment of heaven. Even during the darkness of the middle ages, when the influence of Popery, in diffusing its corruptions of God's worship and truth, was greatest, and when the access to opportunities of gaining sounder knowledge was least, we meet with men who gave unequivocal evidence of having been born again through the belief of the truth. And we doubt not that the Church of Rome has always contained some such men, — men who were better than their professed principles— men who had not fully yielded to the natural tendency and the full practical influence of the errors which they professed to hold— > men whose character was formed, and whose conduct was regulated, much more by the truth which they embraced than by the error which they conjoined with it— men who were so deeply impressed with a sense of the glory of God and the all-sufficiency of Christ, as that the errors they held upon the honour due to saints and images exerted but a feeble influence upon the general current of their thoughts and feelings.

All this is true, as a matter of fact established by experience, and should not be overlooked. But it is not on this account the less true, that all error in regard to the worship of God and the way of salvation is sinful and

dangerous; that the word of God, and not the actual character of men, is the only standard by which we ought to judge of truth and falsehood, right and wrong; that the Church of Rome has grievously corrupted the truth of God in regard to the way in which He ought to be worshipped, — so much so, that a practice in this matter, accordant with her teaching, fully followed out and fairly applied, involves the sins of polytheism and idolatry, —i.e., the sins of giving to other beings, mere creatures, the honour and reverence which are due only to Him, and of worshipping Him in a way which He has expressly forbidden; and that this is fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon all who submit to her authority and follow her guidance. The greatest sin which a professing church, as such, can commit, is to hold forth and to inculcate erroneous views in regard to the worship of God and the way of salvation. This guilt most fully attaches to the Church of Rome; and the errors which she inculcates upon these subjects are so great, that we can scarcely conceive that any man who fully submits to her teaching, and allows it to exert its full and appropriate practical influence upon his heart and character, can be fairly regarded as worshipping God in truth, or as resting upon Christ for salvation; while we admit that there are men in her communion who, though professing to adopt her creed, and to submit to her authority, have not fully imbibed her peculiar principles, and have escaped to a large extent from their injurious influence. The substance of the matter is this. The Church of Rome systematically mingles a large portion of poison with the wholesome food which she administers, and thus proves that she is under the influence of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; and the natural tendency and ordinary result of this is to ruin men's souls, while some constitutions, by the grace of God, shake off the deleterious influence, and escape, though not without much damage, from mortal injury.

The guilt of idolatry— of giving any religious honour or worship to saints and images— is, under the Christian dispensation, peculiarly aggravated. We have now spread out before us the whole history of our race, plainly declaring how strong and, humanly speaking, irresistible is the tendency of fallen man to polytheism and idolatry, and how injurious this tendency is, in its results, to religion and morality. We have the fullest manifestation of God's displeasure against anything like polytheism and

idolatry, exhibited not only in the particular statements and express provisions of His word, but in the whole history of His dealings with men, especially in His selection of a peculiar people, and in the whole arrangements of the Mosaic economy, which were expressly designed to counteract this natural tendency of men, and to guard His chosen people against it. We have in Christianity the fullest discovery of the perfections of God, and of the relation in which we stand to Him, and we have an external ritual established, characterized by the utmost spirituality and simplicity; and all this enforces the irrationality, the unlawfulness, and the incongruity of any approach to a polytheistic or idolatrous worship. Finally, we have manifested and offered to us in the

Christian system one all-sufficient Mediator between God and man, who is the only image of the invisible God— who has removed every obstacle to our drawing near to God, and asking and obtaining His favour— who has opened up for us a new and living way of access into God's presence, and who has made full provision for the everlasting salvation of all who trust in Him. We find in Him everything we can need: a most full, palpable, and impressive revelation of the Father; infinite merits to procure and deserve for us the divine favour, and all spiritual blessings; human love and sympathy for us (for He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh) far beyond whatever dwelt in any other human heart; the fullest encouragement to have recourse at all times directly to His prayers, help, and assistance, with the assurance that He hears our prayers, that He knows our wants, that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, that Him the Father heareth always, and that He is both able and willing to procure for His people whatever they need. This surely should afford us perfect satisfaction amid our anxieties about our spiritual welfare; and all the more because we know at the same time, that there is no danger that any honour or reverence we pay to Him, any confidence we repose in Him, any love or gratitude we yield to Him, can ever exceed what is rightfully due to Him, since, while He is a partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves, He is likewise God over all, blessed for evermore.

XIII. Civil and Ecclesiastical Authorities

In surveying the history of the church, we see the supreme civil powers, after the age of Constantine, professing to feel an obligation to exert their civil authority for the welfare of the church and the good of religion, and interfering to a large extent in religious, theological, and ecclesiastical matters, professedly in the discharge of this obligation. We see enough to prove that the church, in all its interests, was very materially affected, for better or worse, by this interference of the civil powers. We see disputes between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities about their respective functions and obligations—their powers and prerogatives. We see these disputes coming to a great crisis or era, in the contentions between the Emperor Henry IV. and Pope Gregory VII., when the ecclesiastical power put forth a claim to entire and absolute supremacy over the civil. And this contest between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, —or *imperium et sacerdotium*, as it used to be called, —has continued in every age, down to the present day. It has excited no small interest in our own day; and it is likely not only to continue to be discussed as a question of argument, but to produce important practical results. It may, therefore, be proper briefly to advert to it. The whole topics which have been, or which need to be, discussed with reference to this subject, may be comprehended under these questions: What relation ought to subsist between the State and the Church, or the civil and ecclesiastical powers? and, What are the principles that ought to regulate this relation?

I. Voluntaryism

The discussion of these questions has given rise to four systems of opinion; and we shall begin with the newest or most modern, because it is also, in some respects, the simplest and most sweeping. It is what has assumed to itself, though inaccurately and unwarrantably, the name of the Voluntary system, —a name derived from a partial representation of one of the views to which the principle leads, and not in any respect fairly

descriptive of the principle itself. It amounts in substance to this, —that the only relation that ought to subsist between the State and the Church— between civil government and religion— is that of entire separation; or, in other words, its advocates maintain that nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, not only are not bound, but are not at liberty, to interfere in any religious matters, or to seek to promote the welfare of the church of Christ, as such. This theory, if true, supersedes the necessity of all further inquiry into the principles that ought to regulate the relation between Church and State; for it really implies, that no connection should subsist, or can lawfully subsist, between them. All the other answers which have been given to the question propounded, assume the falsehood of this theory, and are based upon an assertion of the opposite principle, —viz., that nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, are entitled and bound to aim at the promotion of the interests of true religion, and the welfare of the church of Christ; that there are things which they can lawfully do, which are fitted to promote these objects; and that thus a connection may be legitimately formed between Church and State. Hence, in taking a general survey of the subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical powers, it is most natural and convenient to begin with considering this Voluntary principle, as it has been called, since, if true, it supersedes all further inquiry. It has been very fully discussed of late years. In common with many others, I took part in these discussions, and I have certainly not changed my opinion concerning it. I still believe it to be a portion of divine truth, fully sanctioned by the word of God, and, therefore, never to be abandoned or denied, —that an obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to have respect, in the regulation of their national affairs, and in the application of national resources, to the authority of God's word, to the welfare of the church of Christ, and the interests of true religion. This is the only scriptural truth, and therefore the only matter of principle, which those who support the doctrine of national establishments of religion feel called upon to maintain, or about which they cherish any solicitude. Everything beyond this is of inferior importance.

It is to no purpose to adduce against this truth the doctrine of the unlawfulness of intolerance or persecution, or of the assumption of jurisdiction by civil authorities in religious and ecclesiastical matters: for

the undoubted truth of these doctrines merely limits, or marks out, the sphere within which alone it is competent for the civil authorities to act in the discharge of their obligation, but certainly does not prove the non-existence of the obligation itself, —unless, indeed, it be at the same time proved (and this, we are persuaded, cannot be done) that civil authorities cannot possibly do anything directed to the object of promoting the interests of religion and the church, without necessarily and ipso facto interfering with the rights of conscience, and the freedom, independence, and spirituality of the church of Christ. It is, of course, equally irrelevant, to argue against this truth from the abuses that have been too often manifested in the practical application of it, —as when error instead of truth, a corrupt instead of a pure church, has been aided and promoted by the civil authorities; or when, even though scriptural truth and a pure church may have been aided, there was yet so much that was defective and erroneous in the way in which the civil power interposed, as to do more than to neutralize the benefits resulting from its interference. The most plausible thing that has been alleged upon this branch of the subject is, that the interference of civil authorities in religious matters, as a whole, has been accompanied and followed with a great preponderance of evil to religion. But neither does this, even though it were conceded as a matter of fact, disprove the truth of the general principle of the duty or obligation, —as it may be asserted and proved, on the other side, that the evils have arisen merely from the duty not having been correctly understood, or discharged in a right way.

It is equally little to the purpose to allege, as if in opposition to this truth, that Christ left His church dependent upon the voluntary contributions of His people, without any assistance from, or interference on the part of, civil rulers, and allowed it to continue in this condition for eight hundred years. The fact that He did so is an important one, and is fitted and intended to convey some valuable lessons; but it assuredly does not teach us anything about what the duty of nations and rulers to the church is. The fact referred to affords satisfactory and conclusive evidence of these positions, —viz., that a condition of entire separation from the State, and entire dependence upon the contributions of the people, is a perfectly lawful and honourable condition for a church of Christ to occupy; and that the church may flourish largely, both internally and externally,

without any countenance or assistance from the civil powers, and accomplish fully all its essential objects. It proves this, but it proves nothing more. The conduct of the civil authorities to the church during that period was not certainly the model according to which civil rulers ought to act, —they were not then discharging their duty to the church, for they generally persecuted it. If they were not discharging aright their duty to the church— which, by universal admission, is at least entitled to toleration— and if their non-discharge of duty actually affected the condition of the church, then it is manifest that the manner in which they acted, and the state in which the church was, in consequence, placed, afford no materials whatever for deciding how they ought to have acted; and of course the whole subject of whether any, and if any, what obligations lie upon rulers in regard to religion and the church, is left wholly untouched, to be decided, as every question of truth and duty should be, by the written word.

Attempts have been made to show that, whatever duty or obligation may seem to be upon civil rulers in this matter, the church is interdicted by the law of her Master from entering into an alliance with the State, or accepting assistance from the civil power. That the church is interdicted from sacrificing any of the rights or privileges which Christ has conferred upon her, —neglecting, or promising to neglect, any of the duties which He has imposed upon her, —disregarding, or promising to disregard, any of the directions He has given her, in order to obtain, or as a condition of enjoying, the favour and assistance of the kingdoms of this world, is certain; and assuredly this guilt does at this moment attach to every Protestant ecclesiastical establishment in the world. But it has never been proved, that, if the civil authorities rightly understood their duties, and were willing to discharge them aright, attaching no unwarrantable conditions to their offers of service, they could not render assistance to the church which she might be fully warranted to accept.

These considerations, when expanded and applied, are, I think, quite sufficient to answer the objection by which the scriptural i' principle, — that a general obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to aim, in the regulation of national affairs, at the good of the church of Christ, and the welfare of true religion, —has been opposed; and to warrant us in

maintaining that this is a portion of scriptural truth, which the church ought to hold forth, and which nations and their rulers ought to act upon. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true, that in most cases the interference of the civil power in religious matters has done more evil than good; and that the instances have been very numerous in which churches have consented to sinful interferences upon the part of the civil authorities with the rights and privileges which Christ had conferred upon them. Indeed, I am not sure that any Protestant established church has ever wholly escaped this sin and degradation, except the Church of Scotland at the era of the second Reformation; for even the Revolution settlement, though to a very large extent based upon scriptural principles, was not perfectly free from all defect or imperfection. It was grievously encroached upon by the restoration of patronage in the beginning of last century. Its fundamental principles were overturned by the recent interferences of the civil authorities, so that it became impossible for a man who had scriptural views of what a church of Christ is, and of what are the principles by which its affairs ought to be regulated, to remain in connection with it.

II. Co-ordinate Authorities

Assuming that what has been called the Voluntary principle is untrue, and that nations and rulers have duties to discharge towards the church of Christ which may lead to the formation of an alliance, or union, or connection between them, we return to the question, What are the principles that ought to regulate the relation that may be formed and may subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, as representing the State and the Church? The relation may be formed and carried out either upon the principle of the equality and independence of the two powers, or upon that of the subordination of the one to the other; and under this latter head of subordination, it may be contended either that the Church is, and should be, subordinate to the State, —a doctrine known in modern theological literature in this country under the name of Erastianism, often called on the continent Byzantinism; or that the State is subordinate to the Church, which is the doctrine of the Church of Rome.

The first of these principles, —viz., that of the equality and independence of the civil and the ecclesiastical powers, —the independent supremacy of each in its own proper sphere, and within its own peculiar province, —is that which is sanctioned by the word of God. It has been held in substance, though, it must be admitted, with different degrees of clearness and firmness, by most Protestant writers, but by none so clearly and firmly as by Scottish Presbyterians, who have always been accustomed to condemn all deviations from it, or corruptions of it in theory or in practice, as involving either Erastianism or Popery. The advocates of the Voluntary principle concur with us in thinking that the Church and the State are two co-equal and independent powers, —each supreme in its own province, and in the execution of its own functions; but then they deduce from this principle the conclusion that there can be no union or alliance between them, and that, because distinct and independent, they should always remain separate from each other. We dispute the soundness of this conclusion, and maintain that, in entire consistency with the preservation of their proper distinctness and independence, they may enter into a friendly alliance with each other upon terms of equality, retaining all their own proper and inherent rights and prerogatives, the unfettered exercise of their own functions, —and yet may afford to each other important assistance. Of course, we do not need to prove against them the original distinctness and independence of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, and the necessity of this distinctness and independence being always preserved, — for in this they fully concur with us, —but merely, to show that the existence of this original distinctness and independence, and the necessity of its being always maintained, are not inconsistent with, and do not necessarily obstruct or prevent, the formation of a union or friendly alliance between them. That civil government is an ordinance of God; that nations and their rulers are accountable directly to God, and are not put into subjection to the church or to its office-bearers; and that the members and office-bearers of the church are, in common with other men, subject in all civil things to the powers that be, —are doctrines which can be easily shown to be sanctioned by the word of God. That the visible church of Christ is an independent society, distinct from the kingdoms of this world, having a constitution, laws, office-bearers, and functions of its own; and that civil rulers, as such, have no right to exercise any jurisdiction or authoritative

control in the regulation of its affairs, can be established with equal clearness from the sacred Scriptures. Of course, these doctrines, if true, virtually prescribe the state of things which ought to exist, and to exist always; or, in other words, establish the position, that the relation which ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, is one of equality and independence; and that this equality and independence must ever be maintained inviolate. Practical difficulties may arise from the existence of two equal and independent powers having jurisdiction over the same persons, and operating in some sense within the same sphere, though their provinces are different; and these have been set forth fully both by Popish and Erastian writers, under the head of an imperium in imperio, in order to establish the general position; but the only question is, Does not the word of God represent them as being, and of course make them to be, de jure, distinct and independent? and does not this impose an obligation upon all concerned to regard and treat them as such, and to preserve them as far as possible in that condition. To this question but one answer can be given; and it establishes upon the authority of God's word the truth of the Presbyterian doctrine, —for so may we call it, —that the relation of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, even when they are united together, should be regulated throughout by the principle of their distinctness from, and independence of, each other.

III. Erastianism

"With reference to the theory of subordination, it is to be observed that Papists and Erastians, though running to opposite extremes, start from the same point, and combine in the use of one leading argument, which, they think, proves subordination generally, without determining on which side it lies. It is that to which we have already referred, as based upon the alleged absurdities and mischiefs of an imperium in imperio, from which they infer the necessity of one supreme power, which shall be possessed of ultimate jurisdiction in all matters civil and ecclesiastical. The answer to this we have already indicated, —viz., that the word of God represents them as two distinct societies, with distinct laws and office-bearers, and that we have no right to change their character and government, because of difficulties, actual or apprehended, especially as

we can also prove that these difficulties can be easily adjusted and prevented by the application of scriptural views of the distinctive provinces, functions, and objects of the two powers or societies. Thus far the Papists and the Erastians agree in opposition to the Presbyterians and the word of God; but here they part company, and proceed in opposite directions, —the Erastians ascribing the superiority or supremacy to the civil, and the Papists to the ecclesiastical power. Let us first advert briefly to the Erastian extreme.

The Erastian controversy is much older than Erastus, who flourished soon after the Reformation, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and had Beza for his opponent. Ever since the civil power began in the fourth century to interfere in religious matters, there have been discussions upon this subject. The first topic that was discussed at any length— for no one then disputed the right and duty of the civil magistrate to advance the cause of religion and the welfare of the church— respected the question of toleration and persecution, or the right of the civil power to inflict temporal punishment upon heretics and schismatics. This was defended by Gregory Nazianzen, and also by Augustine in his controversy with the Donatists, who changed his opinion upon the question, and changed it for the worse, having been at one time opposed to the infliction of temporal punishments for religious errors, though he always continued to oppose the lawfulness of putting men to death for heresy. This restriction, which Augustine insisted upon putting on the exercise of the magistrate's right to inflict temporal punishments upon heretics, was soon disregarded; and before the middle of the fifth century (Augustine died in 430), Pope Leo the Great, as he is called, effected and defended the taking away the life of a heretic, —the practice being thus appropriately introduced among professing Christians by the head of that communion, one of whose scriptural characteristics it is, that she is drunk with the blood of the saints. This doctrine was unchallenged, and was acted upon to a fearful extent, till the time of the Reformation, and even then it was not rejected by all the Reformers; for it cannot be denied that both Calvin and Beza maintained the lawfulness of putting heretics to death, —a doctrine which was held by some eminent Protestant divines even in the seventeenth century. It is now universally abandoned, except by Papists, and we need not dwell upon it; but since I have been led to advert to it, I may remark,

in passing, that the defence of the rights of conscience in modern times, in opposition to intolerance and persecution, has been often conducted upon very latitudinarian and dangerous principles, in the way of dwelling upon the difficulty, if not impossibility, of discerning truth, — the innocence almost, if not altogether, of error, —in short, upon grounds manifesting an ignorance or negation of the paramount claims of truth, and the responsibility connected with the discovery and the maintenance of it. This remark applies not only to Bayle and Voltaire, and to men of that-stamp, but also to Jeremy Taylor and Locke, in their writings upon this subject, and to many in our own day. The best and safest course in setting forth the rights of conscience, and in opposing intolerance and persecution, is to adhere to negative ground, and merely to maintain that no man has a right to dictate or prescribe authoritatively to another in matters of religion, —that it is unwarrantable and unlawful to inflict temporal punishments merely on account of errors in religious opinion, —and that, of course, it is robbery to take away men's property, and murder to take away their lives, merely on this ground.

The Emperors, from the time when they came to make a profession of Christianity, and to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, assumed a large measure of authority in regulating the affairs of the church. The distinction between things without and things within — ἔξω καὶ ἔσω — on which Constantine professed to act, and which to some extent he did observe, was soon forgotten, or interpreted so as to bring almost everything under civil control; and for several centuries, what would be called in the language of modern times gross Erastianism generally prevailed. The first thing that interfered with its dominion was the rising power of the Bishops of Rome, who at length succeeded, to some extent, in depriving the civil power of some of its just rights, and subjecting it to ecclesiastical control. In the disputes between the Popes and the temporal sovereigns, and in the treatises written on both sides in defence of the claims and procedure of the two parties, there seems to have been scarcely an approach made towards sound scriptural views upon the proper relation of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. There was a constant leaning, both in what was done and in what was written, either to the Popish or the Erastian extreme. After the Reformation, many of the Protestant princes succeeded in securing to themselves a large share of

the power in ecclesiastical matters which had formerly been held by the Bishop of Rome, which our Presbyterian forefathers used to say was just changing the Pope, but not the popedom; and in no country were they more successful than in England, in none less so than in Scotland. The alleged merit of Erastus, which has procured for him the honour of being ordinarily spoken of in theological literature as the representative of a set of opinions much older than his time, and which he himself did not do very much towards unfolding and applying, lay in this, that he, more distinctly than any before him, laid down the principle that Christ has not appointed a government in the church in the hands of church officers distinct from the civil magistrate. Though Erastus himself applied this principle chiefly to exclude excommunication, or the exercise of jurisdiction by the church in the admission or expulsion of ordinary members, yet it obviously admits of, and indeed requires, a wider application; and the principle itself, and all that naturally is involved in, or results from, it, has been usually exposed and denounced by Presbyterian divines under the designation of Erastianism. The word is often used, indeed, in a wider sense, as a general designation of views which ascribe a larger measure of authority to the civil magistrate in religious matters, than those who use it regard as warranted by Scripture — just as Pelagianism is often used to designate, in general, views which ascribe a larger measure of power to men to do the will of God, than those who use it think the Scripture sanctions. The general usage of theological writers abundantly warrants this wide and vague application of it; but among Scottish Presbyterians it has been commonly employed in the somewhat more restricted and definite sense which has just been explained.

Although Erastianism, used as a general designation of views which ascribe to civil rulers a power and authority in religious matters which the Scripture does not sanction, may be justly enough described as making the Church subordinate to the State, in opposition to the Popish extreme of making the State subordinate to the Church, yet the direct and formal maintenance of this position has not usually been the form which the controversy assumed. The Papists, indeed, do not scruple openly and explicitly to lay down the doctrine of the subordination of the State to the Church, and think that they can adduce a plausible argument in support

of this doctrine from the higher and more exalted character of the ends or objects for which the church was instituted. Erastians, having no such plausible pretence for laying down an analogous, though opposite, general position, have felt it necessary to go about the elevation of the civil, and the degradation of the ecclesiastical, power in a somewhat more indirect and insidious way; and the most ingenious contrivance they have been able to devise with this view, is to deny that Christ has appointed a distinct and independent government in the church for the regulation of its affairs. They first attempt to give some measure of probability to the position by the principle formerly adverted to and exposed— of the necessity of there being but one supreme government, possessed of ultimate jurisdiction in all things; and then they try to show that, in the scriptural view of the church and its constitution, there is no provision made for the exercise of anything like an independent judicial or forensic authority in deciding controversies or causes that may arise about religious and ecclesiastical matters, —labouring to explain away the scriptural statements by which it has been conclusively proved that the right of deciding judicially or forensically all those questions which must arise wherever a church exists, and is in operation, belongs, by Christ's appointment, not to civil rulers, but to ecclesiastical office-bearers and the church itself. The main question, then, comes to this, —Has Christ appointed a distinct government in the church, with judicial authority for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, and a right of deciding, according to the word of God, all questions that may arise in the discharge of its ordinary functions?— or, what is virtually and practically the same question in another form, —Is it accordant with Scripture, that civil rulers should possess and exercise jurisdiction, or a right of authoritative judicial decision, in ecclesiastical matters?

Perhaps it may be said that men have been often called Erastians who had never denied a distinct government in the church, or ascribed jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters to civil rulers. This is quite true, but it does not by any means follow that the designation was unwarranted. Erastians have commonly been men who were not so much concerned about the maintenance of permanent scriptural truth, or the establishment of general theological principles, as about the promotion of some present selfish object, —defending the existing proceedings of civil

rulers, or palliating their own conduct in submitting to civil encroachments upon the rights of the church. Hence they have usually avoided, as well as they could, the assertion of general positions, — the maintenance of abstract principles, —and have exerted their ingenuity in keeping the true question and its proper merits in the background. Some of them, like the judicious Hooker, have confounded altogether the members of the Church and the State, and have virtually denied that the church is a distinct independent society; others, admitting that it is in some sense a distinct independent society, have denied that this society has a distinct government, or an independent power of judicial decision in ecclesiastical matters, according to the word of God; while others, again, without formally denying a distinct government altogether, have set themselves to curtail the sphere or province within which this government is to be exercised, —especially by fabricating and trying to illustrate a distinction, which is altogether unnecessary and unfounded, between spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. And many more, who might with perfect justice be called Erastians, have abstained wholly from the discussion of general principles, and have confined themselves to an attempt to palliate and gloss over the interferences which the civil authority might happen at the time to be making, and opposition or resistance to which might have proved inconvenient or dangerous. The Erastian constitution of the Church of England was certainly not settled as the result of anything like a deliberate consideration of what, on general scriptural principles, ought to be the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. It was determined solely by the arbitrary usurpations of Henry VIII. and his daughter Queen Elizabeth, and the submission of the church to almost anything which they chose to demand; and the consequences have been, first, that in the thirty-seventh Article of that church, the supremacy which is attributed to the sovereign is described with a considerable measure of vagueness and ambiguity, while there is enough in it to warrant us in ascribing to that church the assertion of the jurisdiction of civil rulers in ecclesiastical matters, in opposition to the word of God; and, secondly, that Episcopalian divines, in defending the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown as established by law, have never ventured to moot the great principles of the question as to the nature and conditions of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in a frank and manly way, or to

discuss general doctrines upon the subject, but have contented themselves with palliating the existing state of things, and adducing examples of the exercise of similar authority on the part of Christian emperors before their powers were curtailed by the Bishops of Rome.

IV. Popish Theory

We have now only to advert to the Popish theory, some knowledge of which is necessary to understand the contests inter imperium et sacerdotium which occupy a very prominent place in the ecclesiastical history of several centuries, and a correct acquaintance with which is necessary in order to see how utterly baseless is the charge which has been so often adduced against the scriptural principles upon this subject — that they are identical with those of the Church of Rome.

This charge has been frequently adduced against Presbyterian principles by Erastians, and it is still a favourite one with them even at the present day. I have had occasion before to show that it requires some portion of knowledge and discrimination to handle aright the charge of a doctrine or practice being Popish; and this subject affords another illustration of the lesson. The practice among Erastians of charging scriptural Presbyterian principles with being Popish, seems to have originated in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. At that period, the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, — which, of course, can be defended only on Erastian grounds, — was assailed by two classes of adversaries— the Puritans or Presbyterians, and the Papists. So far as mere opposition to the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown is concerned, it is quite true that the Presbyterians and the Papists had a common cause to maintain, and supported it to some extent upon common grounds. Its Episcopalian defenders found it no easy matter to answer the arguments of either party upon this subject, and therefore adopted a policy, which has been always a favourite one with Erastians, of evading the real merits of the question, and endeavouring to create a prejudice against their opponents by dwelling upon the mere fact, that Presbyterians and Papists agreed upon this subject, and trying to persuade men to receive this as a proof of the erroneousness of the principles which they held. It is quite true that there

are some points of agreement upon this subject between Presbyterians and Papists; but it is also true that there is a clear line of demarcation between their principles, upon the general subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; and it is not true, —though this is the practical conclusion which Erastians would wish to insinuate, —that there is no medium between Popish and Erastian principles. In so far as Presbyterians agree upon this subject with Papists, they undertake to prove that their views are sanctioned by the word of God; and when this is proved, it is no sufficient reason to abandon them because they are also held — though, as in the case of many other doctrines, held with some grossly corrupt additions— by the Church of Rome.

We would briefly advert, first, to the points in which Presbyterians and Papists agree upon this general subject; and then, secondly, to those on which they differ. The substance of their agreement just lies in this, that they concur in opposing all Erastian principles, —i.e., everything implying, or tending towards, or deducible from, the subordination of the Church to the State, or the ascription to civil rulers of any jurisdiction or right of authoritative control, whether direct or indirect, in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, in the government of Christ's house; and on this ground they concur in opposing the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, and all that is implied in it. They concur also, of course, in the leading scriptural grounds on which they rest their opposition to Erastianism, which are in substance these: first, that though the Scripture imposes upon civil rulers an obligation to promote the interests of true religion and the church of Christ, it does not invest them with any jurisdiction or authoritative control in religious or ecclesiastical matters; i.e., though, to use a distinction in frequent use among the old Presbyterian writers in opposing Erastianism, it gives them a power *circa sacra*, it gives them none in *sacris*; and, secondly, that the scriptural views of the origin and character, constitution and government of the Christian Church, are necessarily and obviously exclusive of the idea of its being subordinate to the State, or of civil rulers having any jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of its affairs. These are the scriptural grounds on which all intelligent opposition to Erastianism must rest; and they are not the less clear and

conclusive because Papists concur with Presbyterians in maintaining them.

Opposition to Erastianism, however, is not a mere negation, when viewed in connection with the scriptural grounds on which it is based. It includes or implies an assertion of some important positive principles with respect to the constitution and government of the church of Christ. And we need not be afraid to say, that there is one great and important scriptural truth upon this subject which, like the doctrine of the Trinity, has been always held by the Church of Rome, and been fully followed out by it to all its consequences, —viz., that the church is a divine institution established by Christ, placed by Him in a condition of entire independence of any secular or foreign control, and invested by Him with full powers of self-government, and complete sufficiency within itself for the execution of all its functions. The doctrine of the church— meaning thereby the statement of the principles of Scripture on the subject of the church— has, as we have had occasion to show, been greatly corrupted by the Church of Rome; but the doctrine just stated, which that church holds, assuredly has the full sanction of scriptural authority, and therefore all men are not only warranted, but bound, to believe it. In this doctrine with respect to the character and constitution of the church, and in the consequent rejection of all secular or civil jurisdiction in the administration of its affairs, Papists and Presbyterians do certainly agree; and whatever may be the motives which induce Papists to maintain it, all Presbyterians who are worthy of the name adhere to it, because they believe and can prove that it is taught in the word of God. In accordance with the general Erastian policy already described, the defenders or palliators of civil jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters have evaded a fair and manly discussion of the scriptural grounds on which their views and conduct have been assailed; and the Episcopalian defenders of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown have always shown a very great unwillingness to lay down any distinct or definite positions by which they might vindicate their own cause; and while often on this account contradicting one another, they have found their principal satisfaction in trying to play off the Presbyterians against the Papists, and the Papists against the Presbyterians, and in producing instances from the earlier history of the church, in which civil rulers assumed as wide a jurisdiction in

ecclesiastical matters as that which they are bound by their position to defend. Calderwood gives the following account of the way in which they usually defended the supremacy of the Crown against the Papists; and it is strikingly descriptive not only of them, but of all who down to our day have acted upon Erastian principles: —" Qui Primatus Hegii jura discere voluerit ex Hierarchicorum contra Pontificios scriptis polemicis, nihil certi reperiet. Nam vel Andabatarum more inter se dimicant, vel de facto potius exempla quorundam Imperatorum a recta norma saepius deflectentium congerunt, quam de jure argumenta proferunt. Ex statutis regni, Commissariorum jurisdictione in causis Ecclesiasticis, et tabulis Hierarchiae, facilius et certius omnia Primatus Hegii jura edoceri possumus."

While this is the ordinary aspect presented by the writings of Erastians, whether engaged in defending the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, or the ecclesiastical supremacy of the civil courts, we find in some Popish writers not only unanswerable arguments against all Erastianism, but likewise much good scriptural matter in defence of the dignity and independence of the church of Christ, brought out occasionally in a tone and spirit which is certainly of a somewhat higher and nobler kind than is usually exhibited in any exposition of the grovelling and secular views of the Erastians. But the Church of Rome has polluted and corrupted all the doctrines of God's word, even those in which she has retained in form a substantially sound profession of the truth; and it is mainly by her errors and corruptions upon the subject of the constitution, and government, and ordinances of the church, and of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, that she has gained and preserved her despotic control over the minds and consciences of men and the regulation of the affairs of the world. She holds the theory that the civil power is subordinate to the ecclesiastical; and she has followed out this theory, both in speculation and in practice, to an extent which has produced much error and much mischief. Presbyterians deny equally the subordination of the civil power to the ecclesiastical, and of the ecclesiastical to the civil. They concur with Papists in holding the distinctness and independence of the Church, and her supremacy in her own province; but they concur equally with the Erastians in holding that the same independence and supremacy belong to the State within its

province. They go this length with both, because the word of God requires it; but they go no further with either, because the word of God forbids it. This scriptural Presbyterian principle has been generally and correctly described as involving a co-ordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons. The co-ordination of powers just means the entire co-equality— independence— of the two powers, each being supreme in its province, and with reference to its own objects and functions; and the mutual subordination of persons means, first, and more generally, that the same persons, if members of the church, are subject to the civil power, and to that alone, in all civil matters, and to the ecclesiastical office-bearers, and to them alone, in ecclesiastical matters, in so far as any earthly authority is entitled to regulate them; and secondly, and more specifically, that civil rulers, if church members, are just as much subject to the control of ecclesiastical office-bearers in ecclesiastical matters as their subjects are, and that ecclesiastical office-bearers are just as fully subject to civil rulers, in all civil things, as any other members of the community. This is the scriptural Presbyterian principle, and it differs clearly and palpably in some most important respects from the common doctrine of Papists.

The Erastians have scarcely anything to allege in favour of the subordination of the ecclesiastical to the civil, except the cavil about an imperium in imperio, in which the Papists agree with them, and which we formerly exposed. The Papists, in addition to this, plead, in support of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, the higher and more exalted character of the ends or objects to which the latter is directed. This affords no ground whatever for subordination in respect of authority or jurisdiction, while the equality of the two in this respect, —their co-ordination as opposed to subordination, —is clearly involved in the views of them which are presented to us in the Scriptures. The leading Popish position, then, is unfounded and untrue. But we have at present to do chiefly with the applications which they make of this position— the consequences which they deduce from it. The position may be regarded generally as ascribing to the ecclesiastical power a right to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over the civil. A learned and liberal jurist of the Gallican school, named Barclay, wrote in the beginning of the seventeenth century a treatise *De potestate papae*, in opposition to the

temporal or secular power of the Pope, which was judged worthy of being answered in a separate work by Cardinal Bellarmine. Barclay laid down this as his fundamental position: "Potestatem ecclesiasticam, et politicam jure divino distinctas, et separatas esse, ut, quamvis ambae a Deo sint, utraque suis terminis conclusa in alterius fines invadere suo jure nequeat, neutrique in alteram imperium sit." Bellarmine admitted the truth of the principal part of this position, but objected to the last clause of it, as involving a denial of the right of the ecclesiastical power to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over the civil. He says, after quoting Barclay's position, "Hoc principium, sive fundamentum in ultima particula falsum omnino esse contendimus, in illis videlicet ultimis verbis, neutrique in alteram imperium sit. Si quidem affirmamus, ecclesiasticam potestatem, distinctam quidem esse a politica, sed ea non modo nobiliorem, verum etiam ita superiorem esse, ut eam dirigere, et corrigere, et in certis casibus, in ordine videlicet ad finem spiritualem, et vitam eternam, eidem imperare possit."

In what, then, do the Papists regard this power of directing, correcting, and commanding, which they ascribe to the ecclesiastical authorities, in respect to the civil, as consisting?

First, it consists in this, that civil rulers are bound to be regulated, in whatever they do in regard to religion, not directly by the word of God, or their own conscientious convictions of what is true or false, right or wrong, but by the decisions and orders of the church; whereas Presbyterians hold that civil rulers have just the same liberty of conscience as ecclesiastical office-bearers, and are just as much entitled and bound to judge for themselves, and with a view to the regulation of their own conduct, and the discharge of their own duty, what is true or false, right or wrong, without being under any obligation to be guided by the decisions or directions of the church, as such, irrespective of their accordance with the word of God. Of course, it is not contended that either civil or ecclesiastical rulers are entitled to form what judgments they please upon any matters of religion, and to be guided merely by what they may sincerely and conscientiously believe. The word of God is the supreme and only standard by which all men, publicly and privately, collectively and individually, in a civil or in an ecclesiastical capacity, are

bound to regulate their opinions and actions in all matters of religion, and in all matters to which its statements may apply. This is an important truth, which should never be overlooked; but what Presbyterians contend for is, that civil rulers have the same independent right of judgment as ecclesiastical office-bearers, —the same access to God's word, — and are equally entitled and bound to judge for themselves as to its meaning, and their consequent duty in matters of faith and practice. Civil rulers are entitled and bound to feel that, in all they may do in regard to religion and the church, it is to God they are responsible, and it is by His word that they ought to be regulated. The Church of Rome, no doubt, professes to be guided by the word of God; but then she insists that civil rulers, in virtue of the alleged subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, shall, without personal investigation, at once take her decisions and decrees as certainly true and righteous, and receive them as directly and immediately regulating the manner in which they are to act, or to exercise their civil power, their control over the persons and properties of men in everything pertaining to religion. The Popish doctrine makes the civil ruler the mere tool or servant of the church, and represents him as bound implicitly to carry out the church's objects, to execute her sentences, and to make everything subservient to the accomplishment of all her designs; while the Presbyterian doctrine represents civil rulers as holding immediately of God, entitled and bound to judge for themselves according to His word, and leaves to them fully and honestly the same liberty of conscience, the same supreme and independent jurisdiction in their own province, as the church claims in hers. Presbyterians have been often charged with claiming the same authoritative control over the conscience and judgment of civil rulers as the Papists do; but the charge is utterly unfounded. Their principles do not require it, —nay, do not admit of it; while the general principle of Popery, as well as its special doctrine upon this subject, demand, in consistency, that they should put forth such a claim, and exert themselves to the utmost to realize or enforce it. The true Presbyterian principle upon this subject is thus admirably stated by Gillespie: 66 The civil sanction added to Church-government and discipline, is a free and voluntary act of the Magistrate. That is, Church-government doth not, *ex natura rei*, necessitate the Magistrate to aid, assist, or corroborate the same, by adding the strength of a law. But the Magistrate is free in this, to do or not to do, to do more

or to do less, as he will answer to God and his conscience: it is a cumulative act of favour done by the Magistrate. My meaning is not, that it is free to the Magistrate in genere moris; but in genere entis. The Magistrate ought to add the civil sanction hie et nunc, or he ought not to do it. It is either a duty, or a sin; it is not indifferent. But my meaning is, the Magistrate is free herein from all coercion, yea from all necessity and obligation; other than ariseth from the word of God, binding his conscience. There is no power on earth, Civil or Spiritual, to constrain him. The Magistrate himself is his own judge on earth, how far he is to do any cumulative act of favour to the Church. Which takes off that calumny, that Presbyterian Government doth force or compel the conscience of the Magistrate."

The second conclusion which the Papists deduce from the general doctrine of the superiority of the ecclesiastical over the civil is, that the church, and especially the Pope as the head of it, has power, or a right of authoritative control, in temporal or civil matters; while Presbyterians, following out fully the principle of the independence and equality, or co-ordination in point of jurisdiction, of the two powers, restrict equally civil and ecclesiastical rulers to their own sphere or province. Some Popish writers ascribe to the Pope direct supreme power in temporal things, holding him to be the Lord paramount of the world, or at least of the Christian world; while others, among whom is Bellarmine, deny to him direct and immediate jurisdiction in civil things, but ascribe to him an indirect authority in these matters, to be exercised in ordine ad spiritualia, which, as he is the judge of when and how far the interests of religion may require him to interfere in secular matters, is just giving him as much of temporal power as he may find it convenient to claim, or may be able to enforce. Erastians have often asserted that Presbyterians claim some similar indirect power in temporal things, or over the proceedings of civil rulers; but the charge is wholly unfounded: for Presbyterians do not ask anything of civil rulers but what they undertake to prove that the Scripture requires of them, and what they are therefore bound to do, not as subordinate to the church, but as subordinate to God's word; and they do not pretend, as Papists do, that the sentences which the church may be warranted to pronounce upon civil rulers, when church members, on the ground of sins committed, affect their civil status or authority, their right

to exercise civil power, and the obligation of their subjects to obey them. It is the doctrine of Presbyterians, as stated in our Confession, that "infidelity, or difference of religion, does not make void the magistrate's just power," —a principle which of course implies, and implies a fortiori, that no step which may be competent to the church, as such, and no sentence which the ecclesiastical authorities may pronounce, can tell authoritatively upon the relation and mutual duties of rulers and subjects, or upon the actual regulation of civil affairs; while the Church of Rome holds that, in the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, there is involved a right on the part of the church, and especially of the Pope as the head of it, to make ecclesiastical sentences affect the status and authority of civil rulers, the validity of civil laws, and the regulation of civil affairs.

The third and last point in which the general doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject differs from that of Presbyterians, is the claim set up by Papists on behalf of ecclesiastical office-bearers, of exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals even in civil or temporal matters, —that is, in questions affecting their persons or property. As the Erastian defenders of the supremacy of the Crown have generally held that the church has no right to exercise ecclesiastical discipline upon the sovereign, its temporal head; in like manner, and upon an analogous, though opposite ground, the Papists claim that the persons and property of ecclesiastics should not be subject to the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil courts, but only to that of separate ecclesiastical tribunals. It is this claim, and this alone, which is intended to be denied in our Confession of Faith, when, after speaking of the just power of magistrates not being made void by infidelity or difference of religion, it adds, to from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted." It is this exemption of the person and property of ecclesiastics from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals, that is commonly intended by Popish writers when they speak of ecclesiastical liberty, or the freedom of the church; and Presbyterians concur with all other Protestants in maintaining that this is a liberty or freedom which Christ has not conferred upon His church, and which, when asserted as a right, runs counter to scriptural views of the authority and functions of civil rulers. Some of the more moderate Papists have declined to ground this exemption upon a divine right or

upon scriptural authority, and have represented it merely as a reasonable and proper concession made to the church by the civil power; but most of them have held it to be necessarily involved in the general principle of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, and to have also directly, and by itself, special warrant in the word of God; while Presbyterians have fully and honestly carried out in this, as in other respects, their great scriptural principles of a coordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons.

It is right to mention that there are one or two incidents in the history of the contentions between King James and the Church of Scotland, which have been represented, and not without plausibility, as involving something like a claim upon the part of the church to this Popish exemption in civil matters from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals. The allegation is merely plausible, and cannot be fully established, —though it may be admitted that some rash and unguarded statements were made upon the occasions referred to. That this is all that can be truly alleged, has been shown by Dr M'Crie's admirable Life of Andrew Melville.

In all these important respects, —those which affect the foundations of the whole subject, —there is a clear and palpable line of demarcation between Presbyterian and Popish doctrines in regard to the principles that ought to regulate the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; and the common Erastian allegation of their identity is proved to be utterly unfounded in fact, and may not unfairly be regarded as an unwarrantable attempt to create prejudice by misrepresentation, and to escape thereby from a fair discussion of the question upon its merits.

The substance of this whole matter is this: Christ requires us to render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Erastians violate the precept by giving to Caesar what is God's, — God's in such a sense that Caesar has no authority, and is entitled to no obedience, in anything regarding it. Papists violate this precept by taking from Caesar what rightfully belongs to him, under the pretence of giving to God what He Himself has given to Caesar, though not to the exclusion of His own paramount control; while Presbyterians, —i.e., all who have been

deserving of the name, and have really understood their own professed principles, —have fully obeyed it, in its letter and in its spirit, by ascribing to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities their true character, their due power, their legitimate jurisdiction, each in its own province; and by maintaining fully and faithfully the exclusive supremacy of God as the only Lord of the conscience, and of Jesus Christ as the only King and Head of the Church, while acknowledging the complete and absolute control of the civil power over the persons and property of all the members of the community.

XIV. Scholastic Theology

The twelfth century produced two works which exerted an extensive and long-continued influence upon theological literature, and are therefore entitled to some share of our attention: Peter Lombard's "Libri Quatuor Sententiarum," or Four Books of Sentences, —the foundation and text-book of the Scholastic Theology; and the Decree of Gratian, the basis of the "Corpus Juris Canonici," or Canon Law. From the twelfth century till the Reformation, the great body of the writers upon ecclesiastical subjects were divided into two classes, who were called Theologians and Canonists; and the chief occupation of the Theologians was to comment upon Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, while that of the Canonists was to comment upon the Decree of Gratian, and upon the additions made to it during the next two centuries, making up the body of the Canon Law. The scholastic theology has exerted a very considerable influence upon the theology of modern times— not only among Popish but Protestant writers— and the Canon Law has always been, and still is, the basis of the science of ecclesiastical jurisprudence; and therefore all who aspire to the character of well-instructed theologians ought to know something about them. We will first advert to Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, and the Scholastic Theology; and then to Gratian's Decree, and the Canon Law.

The leading feature of the scholastic theology, or the theology of the schools and the schoolmen, as they are called, was the application of the metaphysics and dialectics of Aristotle to the subject of theology. By some its origin is traced back to Augustine; but this notion has no better foundation to rest upon than the facts that that great man manifested a fondness for philosophical speculations, and sometimes indulged in them unnecessarily, and that he discussed every subject in an exact and logical way. Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, who flourished in the eleventh century, and was the principal opponent of Berengarius, is more usually and more justly reckoned, in some sense, the founder of the scholastic theology, inasmuch as he brought, to a considerable extent, both the materials of metaphysical speculation, and the forms of dialectic argumentation to bear— first, upon the discussion of those topics which

were connected with the nature and mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, and afterwards upon some of the other recondite subjects in theology. The history of scholastic theology is usually divided, by those who have treated of it formally and at length, into three periods, — the first extending from the time of Lanfranc till that of Albertus Magnus, who flourished about the year 1220, a period which includes the production of the Four Books of the Sentences; the second extending from the time of Albertus till that of Durandus, who flourished about the year 1330, and including nearly all the most celebrated names among the schoolmen, except Lombard, such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, and John Duns Scotus; and the third and last extending for nearly two hundred years from the time of Durandus till the Reformation. It can scarcely be said that these divisions are marked out by any very palpable differences in the mode in which theological subjects were generally discussed in the different periods, though it may be said in general that the defects and mischiefs of the system were not fully developed till the second of these periods, and that no very material change took place during the third either for better or worse; while it produced no men to be compared, in point of ingenuity and acuteness, with some of those who flourished during the second period.

The general object of the schoolmen was to exhibit the substance of Christian truth in a systematic and connected order, — an object undoubtedly of the highest importance, and constituting indeed, when rightly accomplished, the crown and completion of the study of theology as a science; and the great defect of the method they ordinarily pursued was, that they did not adopt a right standard, by seeking to ascertain the meaning of scriptural statements, and then aiming at systematizing, expounding, and defending the truths which the word of God contains. They were almost wholly destitute of right views of what modern divines call the *principium theologiae*, — meaning thereby the source from which theological knowledge is to be derived, and the rule or standard by which theological doctrines are to be judged of. Before the scholastic theology arose, the word of God had come to be very much neglected and superseded, and the knowledge necessary for interpreting it aright was almost universally wanting in the Western Church. It is certain, for instance, that Thomas Aquinas, who was in many respects the most

eminent, and perhaps, all things considered, the most influential of the schoolmen, knew nothing of Greek or Hebrew. Long before their time, it had become the almost universal practice to settle all theological disputes, not by studying the word of God, and ascertaining the meaning of its statements, but by an appeal to tradition, and the authority of the fathers, and to the decrees of popes and councils. The schoolmen certainly did nothing to introduce a sounder method of theological investigation, by appealing to Scripture, and labouring to ascertain the exact meaning of its statements; on the contrary, they may be said to have still further corrupted it, by introducing, in combination with tradition and mere authority, something resembling the rationalistic element of the supremacy of human reason, —not, indeed, that they formally and avowedly laid down this principle, but that their neglect of Scripture, and their unbounded indulgence in unwarranted and presumptuous speculations upon points in regard to which there could manifestly be no standard of appeal but just their own reasonings, had a tendency to encourage it.

This leads us to notice the other great defect of the scholastic theology, and that is, its consisting, to a large extent, of the discussion of useless and unprofitable questions, which cannot be determined, and which would be of no practical value if they could. A very considerable amount of mental activity was manifested in the twelfth, and still more in the two following centuries. There are some of the schoolmen who have never been surpassed in ingenuity, acuteness, and penetration. But being not in general possessed of much erudition, and having adopted erroneous principles of investigation, there was great want of materials on which they might exercise their mental powers; and this state of things tended strongly to produce what is one leading characteristic of their works, —viz., the formation of endless distinctions and differences upon every topic of inquiry, and the broaching and prosecution of all sorts of subtle questions, which, though not admitting of determinate answers, afforded abundant scope for the exercise of the mental powers. Lombard's Four Books of Sentences contain discussions of many useless and intricate questions, —especially in regard to the Trinity, and in regard to angels, — questions with respect to which it may be doubted whether he himself, or any other man, ever fully understood their meaning, and, far more,

whether they could bring any intelligible standard or principles to bear upon their solution. But he exhibited a large measure of reasonableness and moderation in this respect, as compared with his successors. A large proportion of the writings of the schoolmen are just commentaries upon Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, which most of them took as their text-book; and in these commentaries they started and prosecuted innumerable questions of the most intricate, and at the same time trifling, description, and, in the investigation of them, often manifested an acuteness and penetration which, if better directed, and under more judicious guidance, might have contributed to produce important and valuable results.

This feature of the scholastic theology is fitted to impress upon our minds the importance and necessity of our being careful to keep in view the object of ascertaining whether the various questions that may be started really admit of a definite and certain solution or not. Indeed, when any question is proposed to us, the first inquiry that should suggest itself is, whether there be, indeed, any standard by which it can be tried— any available materials by which it may be decided in one way or another. The schoolmen seem never to have entertained the question of settling the limits between what could be known and decided, and what could not; and in their ordinary practice it is certain that they entirely disregarded it. I am persuaded that the Scriptures contain materials for deciding many more of the questions, both of a doctrinal and practical kind, which have been discussed among theologians, than might at first sight appear, and that they are fitted to be much more extensively a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path than many seem to suppose. Still there can be no reasonable doubt that many questions have been discussed among theologians which, though connected with scriptural topics, the word of God affords no materials for determining; and there has certainly been no period in the history of theological literature when so many questions of this sort were started, and were eagerly and zealously discussed, as during the prevalence of the scholastic theology. In regard to the more obvious and important topics in theology, they rested mainly upon the authority of the fathers, developing much more fully the germs of errors and corruptions which, are to be found in the writings of the ancients; but then they constructed upon these an almost endless series of distinctions

and questions, of which no profitable use could be made, and which ran up into investigations that could never be brought to any certain or satisfactory result.

As the schoolmen did not adopt a right rule or standard for deciding theological questions, —as they did not employ a right method of investigation, —and indulged in presumptuous speculations upon many useless questions, which admit of no clear or certain solution, —it is plain that they possess but little of that which constitutes the highest and most direct value of theological works, — viz., establishing scriptural truths upon a firm foundation, and exposing anti-scriptural errors by satisfactory arguments. It must not, however, be concluded that they are of no value now to the student of theology, or that they should be entirely neglected. They are fitted indirectly to teach and illustrate some important lessons, attention to which may tend to guard against some practical errors. The scholastic theology forms an important era in the history of theological science; and this of itself proves that some useful instruction may be derived from it. Very extraordinary mental powers, even though greatly perverted in their use and application, were then brought to bear upon the study of theological subjects; and it holds more or less true of all sciences, that, in whatever circumstances great intellectual power has been brought to bear upon them, some useful lessons may be learned from the results that have been produced. But besides these more vague and indefinite advantages of some knowledge of the scholastic theology, there are others of a more direct and extensive kind. The labours of the schoolmen, though they have done little or nothing to establish truth or to expose error in a satisfactory and conclusive way, have done much to affect the way and manner in which theological subjects have been ever since discussed. Many of their distinctions have been found to be of great use in explaining and defending some of the doctrines of theology, and have been extensively and successfully employed for that purpose by modern theologians. Just as, were there no other reason why it is necessary that educated men should be acquainted with the classical writers of antiquity, this consideration of itself would be sufficient to enforce the necessity of studying them, —that they have exerted so powerful and extensive an influence upon the literature of almost all modern nations, that we

cannot fully understand and appreciate the literature of our own country without some acquaintance with the authors of Greece and Rome; so, in like manner, the writings of the schoolmen have exerted so much influence upon the way in which theological subjects have been since discussed, that some acquaintance with them is highly useful, if not necessary, to open the way to a full comprehension and appreciation of modern writers upon systematic theology.

Every one must feel that it is interesting and useful to have some knowledge of the general condition of the church just before the great era of the Reformation. Now, the works of the schoolmen exhibit the condition in which Christian doctrine, —at all times a most important feature in the aspect of the church, —was found at the time when the Reformers were raised up by God for improving it. The scholastic theology was the immediate antecedent, in historical progression, to the theology of the Reformation, and the former exerted no inconsiderable influence upon the latter. The writings of the Reformers not unfrequently exposed the errors and defects of the theology of the schoolmen, which they regarded as one of the bulwarks of the Popish system; and this fact of itself renders it desirable to possess some knowledge of their works. The Reformers themselves do not make very much use of scholastic distinctions and phraseology, as they in general avoided intricate and perplexed discussions; but when, in subsequent times, more subtle disputations upon difficult topics arose among Protestant theologians, it was found necessary, if these topics were to be discussed at all, to have recourse to a considerable extent to scholastic distinctions and phraseology; and it was also found that the use and application of scholastic distinctions and phraseology were fitted to throw some light upon questions which otherwise would have been still darker and more perplexed than they are. In reading the writings of modern divines, who were familiar with the scholastic theology, we are not unfrequently struck with the light which their definitions and distinctions cast upon obscure and intricate topics; while, at the same time, we are sometimes made to feel that an imperfect acquaintance with scholastic literature throws some difficulty in the way of our fully and easily understanding more modern discussions in which scholastic materials are used and applied. Take, for example, Turretine's system, a book which is of inestimable value. In the

perusal of this great work, occasionally some difficulty will be found, especially at first, in fully understanding its statements, from ignorance of, or imperfect acquaintance with, scholastic distinctions and phraseology; but, as the reader becomes familiar with these, he will see more and more clearly how useful they are, in the hands of a man like Turretine, in bringing out the exact truth upon difficult and intricate questions, and especially in solving the objections of adversaries. These considerations may perhaps be sufficient to show that it is worth while to give some degree of attention to the study of scholastic theology, so far at least as to acquire some acquaintance with the distinctions and the language of the schoolmen.

These observations, however, regard chiefly the scholastic mode of discussing theological subjects, —the dress or garb which the schoolmen wear; and it may now be proper to say a few words in regard to the substance of the doctrine which they generally taught. The schoolmen were generally faithful adherents of the Church of Rome, and flourished at a period when that church had very grossly departed from the faith once delivered to the saints. Their doctrine, consequently, upon most of the leading points of Christianity, is substantially Popish. Still there were some circumstances connected with them, which tended to some extent to preserve them from error, and which still render them in a certain measure useful witnesses against some of the corruptions of Popery. The first and most important of these is, that many of them relied greatly upon the authority of Augustine, and followed to a large extent the system of doctrine which he taught. This, of course, kept them right in some measure upon the doctrines of grace, though some of them grievously corrupted the simplicity of scriptural truth upon these subjects, by an infusion of the philosophy of Aristotle. We formerly had occasion to mention, that the writings of Augustine exerted a most salutary influence upon the doctrine of the church; and that a large portion at once of the orthodoxy and of the piety that appeared in the Western Church for about a thousand years, was to be traced more or less directly to his labours and writings. He was almost the only one of the fathers in whose writings the subtle dialectic minds of the schoolmen could find anything that was congenial, and many of them adopted and defended his leading views of divine truth. This was well for them, and

well for the church; for there is reason to believe that, even in the age of the schoolmen, the doctrines of Augustine, which are the doctrines of the word of God, were sometimes made instrumental by God's Spirit in promoting the conversion of sinners. The Church of Rome has always professed to revere the authority of Augustine, while yet the general strain of the practical teaching of most of her writers has been commonly of a Pelagian cast; and in so far as it has been so, the authority of some of the leading schoolmen may be adduced against it, and in support of the leading truths which have been held by the great body of Protestants.

There are two other facts about the schoolmen which enable and authorize us to adduce some of them as witnesses and authorities against the Church of Rome: First, there are some points controverted between Protestants and Papists, in which modern Papists have shown much anxiety to explain away the true doctrine of their church, or to involve it in obscurity and perplexity, but with respect to which the schoolmen speak out in a clear and explicit way; thus affording at least a very strong presumption that the softenings and modifications of modern Papists are brought forward for merely controversial purposes. The schoolmen generally, —including Thomas Aquinas, and some others, who have been even canonized in the Church of Rome, — held that images were to be worshipped with exactly the same species of veneration and homage as the beings whom they represented; that, of course, the images of Christ are to be worshipped, as He is, with latria, or the supreme worship due to God; the images of the Virgin Mary, as she is, with hyperdulia; and images of the saints, as they are, with dulia. This principle they openly and explicitly taught as the common doctrine of the church, without being censured by any ecclesiastical authority, — a fact which shows that it was then generally believed and embraced; though it is no doubt true, as Bellarmine says, that it is inconsistent with the decision of the second (Ecumenical Council of Nice, which the Church of Rome is bound by her principles to regard as infallible; and all this has proved very embarrassing to Bellarmine and other Popish controversialists.

The other fact to which we referred, is in some respects of an opposite description, but equally true in itself, and equally relevant to the object which we have mentioned;— it is this, that the writings of the schoolmen

make it manifest that there are some of the doctrines of modern Popery established by the Council of Trent, and therefore binding upon the Church of Rome, which were not generally held during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The evidence of this fact has been adduced in a variety of particulars by Protestant controversialists, —and it is peculiarly annoying to their Popish opponents, —but we cannot illustrate it in detail. Nothing can be more certain than that the Popish system was gradually formed, and was not fully completed till the Reformation, or rather till the Council of Trent; and this not by the fair development of what previously existed in germ or embryo, but by inventions and additions unsanctioned by the word of God, and in opposition at once to its particular statements and its general spirit. And the writings of the schoolmen have afforded to Protestants some valuable materials for establishing this important position.

The only persons among the schoolmen with whose writings men who have not special opportunities and most abundant leisure are likely to gain any acquaintance, are Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas, —the former of whom flourished in the twelfth, and the latter in the thirteenth century. Lombard's Four Books of Sentences form, as we have explained, the foundation and the text-book of the scholastic theology; and he himself is commonly known among the schoolmen as the Master of Sentences, or simply the Master. His general object in preparing his Four Books of Sentences, was to give a summary of Christian doctrine as then commonly held by the church, and to establish it from the writings of the fathers, especially Augustine; and in this he was considered to have succeeded so well, that most of the schoolmen just composed commentaries upon his Sentences. His opinions, however, were not universally adopted, though his work is to a considerable extent a compilation; and it is no very uncommon thing among his numerous commentators to add, after quoting one of his Sentences, —*Hic magister non tenetur*. His work is of a manageable size. The order of the different topics is a good deal similar to what we find in modern works on systematic theology. The first book treats of God, His attributes, and especially the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the second, of the works of creation, especially angels and man; the third, of the person and work of Christ (though on this latter point, —the work of Christ, —it is very

brief and imperfect), and the standard and rules of moral duty; and the fourth and last, of the sacraments and the government of the church. This arrangement, in its leading features, is not very unlike that adopted in Calvin's Institutes; with these differences, that Lombard divides into two what Calvin embodies in one in his first book, under the title, "De cognitione Dei Creatoris," and that he passes over in the most perfunctory way, or treats as virtually included in the subject of the sacraments, many of the important topics discussed in Calvin's third book, under the title, "De modo percipiendae Christi gratiae." From what we have had occasion to mention in explaining the views of Augustine, it might be expected that Lombard did not clearly understand, and that he says very little about, the subject of justification, and its connection with the work of Christ as its ground, and with faith as its instrument. Luther, who was accustomed to rail with much severity against the scholastic theology, admits the merit and usefulness, and points out the chief defects, of Lombard's work in the following words: — "Lombardus in conciliatione patrum est diligentissimus, et se longe superior. Nemo ipsum in hoc genere superabit, nullis in conciliis, nullo in patre tantum reperies, quam in libro sententiarum. Nam patres et concilia quosdam tantum articulos tractant, Lombardus autem omnes. Sed in praeceptis illis articulis de fide et justificatione nimis est jejunus, quamquam Dei gratiam magnopere praedicet. Before leaving Lombard, it is proper to mention that his work contains what may be fairly regarded as a very strong testimony to the deep hold which Presbyterian principles had of the general mind of the church down even to a very late period. After giving an account of the seven orders or ranks of the clergy, according to the common notions of the Papists, he adds the following remarkable statements: — "Cumque omnes spirituales sint et sacri, excellenter tamen canones duos tantum sacros ordines appellari censent. Diaconatus scilicet et presbyteratus, quia hos solos primitiva ecclesia legitur habuisse, et de his solis praeceptum Apostoli habemus."

Thomas Aquinas may be regarded as having exerted, in some respects, a greater influence even than Lombard upon the state of theological science, as he was a man of higher talent, indulged to a much greater extent in discussions and speculations of his own, and has been much more implicitly followed by Popish writers. Even to this day St Thomas is

quoted as an oracle by Popish writers on systematic theology, although his authority has greatest weight with them when he is furthest from the truth. His principal work is entitled "Summa Theologia;" and as many schoolmen wrote commentaries upon Lombard's Books of Sentences, and were thence called Sententiarii, so not a few of them wrote commentaries upon this work of Aquinas, and were hence called Summistae. A dispute has been raised as to whether or not this work was really the production of Aquinas, but there does not seem to be any sufficient reason to doubt its genuineness. It is, like Lombard's, a system of theology, and it is divided into three parts. The first treats of the nature of theology, of God and His attributes, and of the Trinity. The second part treats wholly of what is usually called moral theology, and is divided into two portions, the one discussing general questions in Christian morality, and the other particular virtues and vices; and these are usually quoted under the titles of prima secundae, and secunda secundae. The third part treats of the means of attaining to true virtue; and under this general designation includes at once the person and work of Christ, the sacraments, —a topic which Aquinas has very fully and minutely elaborated, —and the government of the church. Aquinas was an Augustinian, and his works contain some sound and important matter in illustration and defence of the doctrines of grace, though he manifested to a much greater extent than Augustine did the corrupting influence of the sacramental principle, now much more fully developed, in perverting the doctrines of the gospel. Augustinianism was not likely to be universally acceptable in an age in which personal piety was at a very low ebb; and, accordingly, John Duns Scotus opposed himself to Aquinas, leaning generally to the Pelagian or Arminian side, and was followed in this by a considerable number of the schoolmen. The disputes between the Thomists and the Scotists, as they were called, so far as they turned upon theological questions, —for there were some controversies upon mere metaphysical subjects mixed up with them, —were connected chiefly with the principles of the Augustinian system, and involved to a large extent a discussion of the points afterwards controverted in the Church of Rome between the Dominicans and the Franciscans, between the Jansenists and the Jesuits; and among Protestants, between the Calvinists and the Arminians. And in this great controversy, which will last as long as the carnal mind is enmity against God, —for it is at bottom just a controversy between God and man, —the

works of Aquinas afford some useful materials; not so much, indeed, for establishing the truth from the word of God, but for answering the objections of opponents founded upon general considerations of a philosophical or metaphysical kind, — and thus may be said to contribute somewhat to the confirmation and defence of a system of doctrine which is at once clearly set forth in the plain statements of God's word, and is in entire accordance with the dictates of sound philosophy, though very likely to call forth the opposition and enmity of the proud heart of unrenewed men.

There is a work connected with this subject which a few years ago excited a good deal of interest in the theological world, — viz., Dr Hampden's Bampton Lectures, entitled, "The Scholastic Philosophy, considered in its relation to Christian Theology." This work is undoubtedly highly creditable to the talents and erudition of its author; it is fitted to serve some useful and important purposes, and it certainly affords no sufficient grounds for the charges adduced against it by men who were chiefly influenced by indignation against Dr Hampden's zealous and well-known opposition to Tractarian heresy. The work, however, is one which ought to be read with care and caution, as it is, I think, fitted to exert a somewhat unwholesome and injurious influence upon the minds of young and inexperienced theologians, and to afford to the enemies of evangelical truth materials of which it is easy to make a plausible use. The great leading object of the work is to explain in what ways the philosophical and theological speculations of the schoolmen have influenced the theological opinions of more modern times, and the language and phraseology in which these opinions have been commonly expressed; and in developing this interesting topic, Dr Hampden has brought forward a good deal that is ingenious, true, and useful. But, at the same time, the mode in which he has expounded some of the branches of the subject, has a certain tendency to lead men, who may know nothing more of these matters, to take up the impression, that not only the particular form into which the expositions of Christian doctrine have been thrown, and the language in which they have been embodied, but even the matter or substance of the doctrines themselves, are to be traced to no higher source than the speculations of the schoolmen of the middle ages. There is no ground for asserting that this was the intention

of the author, but it' is a use which may with some plausibility be made of the materials which he furnishes; and this application of them is certainly not guarded against in the work with the care which might have been expected from one who was duly impressed with the importance of sound views in Christian theology, —a defect, however, which is to a large extent supplied by an elaborate introduction prefixed to the second edition. It is also a defect of this work, and tends rather to increase the danger above adverted to, that it contains nothing whatever in the way of pointing out the advantages that may be derived from the study of scholastic theology, in illustrating and defending the true doctrines of Scripture.

XV. Canon Law

About the same time when Peter Lombard published his Four Books of Sentences, which were the foundation of the scholastic theology, —viz., about the middle of the twelfth century, —Gratian published his Decree (Decretum), called also "Concordia Discordantium Canonum." This work was the foundation of the canon law, the ecclesiastical law of the Church of Rome, which for a long period was much studied, occupied a large share of men's attention, and exerted no small influence upon the condition of the church and the general aspect of theological literature. There had been collections of canons on subjects of ecclesiastical jurisprudence published long before Gratian's time. The most celebrated of these were the "Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Africanae," and the "Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Universalis," both of which were compiled during the fifth century, and embodied most of the canons on matters of discipline which had been passed by any preceding councils. They were added to from time to time, as new canons were passed, and especially after the Quin-Sextine Council, or the council in Trullo, in the end of the seventh century, approved of former canons, and passed a good many more of its own. The progress of the Papal power materially changed both the principles and the practice of ecclesiastical law, and rendered necessary and produced many new canons, and other less formal ecclesiastical regulations. It was only towards the latter part of the eleventh century, during the pontificate of Gregory VII., that the true Papal principles were fully developed, —those principles on which it has been well said that the Church of Rome has ever since acted when she had the power to enforce them, and proclaimed when she had no reason for concealing them. The Pseudo-Isidorian decretals, as they are commonly called, —fabricated about the eighth century in the name of the early Popes, — had now, by the zealous exertions of the Bishops of Rome, and especially of Nicolas I., been generally received as genuine and authoritative, and had contributed greatly to extend and confirm the usurpations of the Papal See. And many serious encroachments had now been made by the ecclesiastical authorities upon the civil province, though met occasionally, for a time and in particular countries, by as serious

encroachments of the civil power upon the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. These circumstances naturally suggested the expediency of compiling a fuller system of ecclesiastical law, adapted to the existing condition of the church; and this, accordingly, was undertaken by Gratian, a monk and professor at Bologna, whose work was received with great applause.

Even after the publication of the Decree of Gratian, additions were made to the rites and ceremonies of the church; and the claims of the Popes to a right of interference in the regulation of all its internal affairs, so far as they thought it for their interest to interfere, were considerably extended. This rendered new canons and regulations necessary; and these, accordingly, were issued, in considerable abundance, by Popes, and by councils acting under their immediate control, during the latter part of the twelfth, the whole of the thirteenth, and the early part of the fourteenth centuries. These were collected, digested under different heads, and published at different periods, by Gregory IX., Clement V., Boniface VIII., and John XXII., chiefly under the name of Decretals, but partly also, in the later and less formal and complete portion of them, under the name of Extravagantes. The Decretals of Gregory IX., in five books; the Sextus, or Sixth, divided also into five books; the Clementine Constitutions, in five books, containing the canons and regulations sanctioned by the Council of Vienne, under Clement V.; the Extravagantes of John XXII.; and the Extravagantes Communes, also in five books, containing the famous bulls of Boniface VIII., — form, with the Decree of Gratian prefixed to them as the first part of the work, the Corpus Juris Canonici, or the ecclesiastical law of the Church of Rome. The work was completed long before the Reformation, and the whole of this mass of matter was carefully Revised and corrected by Gregory XIII., and published by his authority in 1582.

It is to be observed, with respect to what is contained in the Corpus Juris Canonici, that it is only the Decretals, Gregorian and Sextine, the Clementines and Extravagantes, as they are called, which have received the formal and explicit sanction of the head of the Romish Church, that are to be regarded as being, strictly speaking, and as they stand, ecclesiastical law. The Decree of Gratian was sanctioned by the Popes as the authorized text-book for teaching canon or ecclesiastical law in

schools and universities, and thus came practically to have much of the force and authority of law. But it has never been formally sanctioned by the Romish Church, or by the Pope as the head of it, in such a way as to authorize us to assert that everything contained in it may simply, because it is contained there, and irrespective of any authority it may receive from the original source from which it is taken, be held as strictly binding upon the Church of Rome or the Pope. There are perfectly sufficient reasons, as we shall afterwards notice, why the Popes have abstained from giving a formal authoritative sanction to the Decree of Gratian. The Decretals, Clementines, and Extravagantes, are, of course, received implicitly by all Papists who believe in the personal infallibility of the Pope, since all that they contain either emanated directly from Popes speaking *ex cathedra*, or received their explicit and formal sanction as the public and authoritative law of the church. But they are not received implicitly, —or irrespective of some other authority attaching to some portions besides that derived from their having emanated from Popes, or having been sanctioned by them, — by those who hold the principles on which the Gallican liberties are based. Then canon law sanctions all the highest and most extravagant claims of the Popes, and their immediate adherents; and some of these the Gallican church maintains to be both unfounded in themselves, and destitute of any such sanction from the church, or from any authority entitled to represent it, as to be binding upon its members. The great body of the canon law, in both parts, —i.e., in the Decree of Gratian, which forms the first part; and in the second part, which consists of the different materials above specified, —and indeed the whole of it, with the exception of the rubrics or titles attached to the different sections, consists of extracts from ecclesiastical authorities of various classes; and Papists, except those who believe in the personal infallibility of the Pope, —and even these, in so far as the Decree of Gratian is concerned, —are accustomed to estimate the weight due to its different statements by referring back to the original authority, whatever it might be, from which the particular portion was taken, and do not admit that their mouths are to be shut by the mere fact of its being found in the "Corpus Juris Canonici." While the Decree of Gratian, or the first part of the canon law, is, upon the grounds now explained, inferior in authority of a strictly legal or forensic kind to the second, it is of much more value and importance, with reference to the ordinary general objects of

theological or ecclesiastical study, inasmuch as it exhibits the substance of the law and practice of the church, in so far as concerns government and discipline, from the time of the apostles till the twelfth century.

The Decree of Gratian consists of three parts, —the first being divided into a hundred Distinctions; the second being divided into thirty-six Causes, and the Causes again being subdivided into Questions, and containing, under the thirty-sixth Cause, a full treatise upon penitence, or the penitential discipline of the church; and the third, treating of consecration (including under this name the administration of the sacraments), and divided into five Distinctions. The materials of which it consists are threefold, —viz., the canons of councils, the dicta of the fathers, and the decrees and decisions of Popes from the earliest times, upon all the leading topics comprehended under the heads of government, worship, and discipline. It thus, independently of its direct and proper character as an exhibition of the system of ecclesiastical jurisprudence which has actually obtained in the church, contains much interesting and valuable matter, bearing upon the subject of ecclesiastical antiquities and ecclesiastical history; though it is right to mention that it is not always safe to trust to the accuracy of Gratian's quotations and historical references, or to the perfect correctness of the rubrics or titles which he prefixes to them, and which are sometimes not fully warranted by the extracts themselves, the substance of which they profess to contain. The contents of the Decree possess intrinsically just the degree of weight or authority that is due to the fathers, popes, and councils, from whom they are taken; but however humble may be the view we may entertain of their weight as authorities in matters of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, this does not affect the value of the materials they contain, as throwing light upon the actual administration and history of the church at different periods.

All who attempt to expound and illustrate the principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, profess to lay its foundations upon the word of God; but long before Gratian compiled his Decree, a huge and elaborate system of ecclesiastical law had been invented, a large portion of which could not be traced even remotely to Scripture, and which seemed as if suited and intended for a society of a different kind from the church of Christ, as

represented to us in His own word. In considering the subject of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, it should never be forgotten that the constitution of the church of Christ, its laws and government, were settled by Christ himself in His word, and cannot be changed or modified by any other or subsequent authority. The first point, therefore, is to ascertain from the study of the Scriptures, what Christ Himself has enacted or sanctioned in regard to the constitution and government of His church, and the way in which its affairs ought to be regulated; and then to discover what general principles He has laid down as to the way in which any power or authority He may have vested in His church, or any portion of it, for the administration of its affairs, is to be exercised. The views which are sanctioned by Scripture upon these points should constitute the basis, and regulate the whole superstructure, of ecclesiastical jurisprudence; and men, in studying this subject, are bound to take care that, in the first place, they understand what the word of God declares or indicates as to the character, objects, and constitution of the kingdom of Christ, the mode in which its affairs ought to be conducted, the office-bearers He has appointed, and the way and manner in which their functions ought to be discharged. There is important information upon all these points given us in Scripture, not indeed drawn out in detail, but embodied in great principles and general rules, which ought never to be disregarded or violated. It is only what is contained in, or may be fairly deduced from, Scripture, that is possessed of anything like authority in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs; and though ecclesiastical office-bearers are warranted to lay down rules or regulations for securing that those things which Christ has required and appointed to be done, be done decently and in order, it should not be forgotten that the tendency which has been constantly exhibited by the ecclesiastical authorities, and which reached its full development in the canon law, so well adapted to what the National Covenant of Scotland calls the Pope's temporal monarchy and wicked hierarchy, has been to convert their ministerial into a lordly authority, —to assume the place of legislators for Christ's church, as if it were their kingdom and not His, as if they were lords over His heritage, entitled to administer its affairs according to their own pleasure, or at least according to their own views of what was best fitted to promote its interests, and to bring its most solemn censures to bear upon men merely for disregarding their despotic

commands. Ecclesiastical jurisprudence, as exhibited in its full growth in the canon law, presents a huge mass of unnecessary and lordly legislation, not only unsanctioned by Scripture, but coming altogether in its general character, and independently of specific enactments and provisions, to contradict the whole spirit and scope of scriptural principles, by which the subject ought to be regulated, and to frustrate the object that ought to have been aimed at.

It was to overturn this huge system of unnecessary and lordly legislation in the church of Christ, and to reduce the lawrs of men to their proper level, that Calvin and the other Reformers were at so much pains to establish the principle that mere human laws, whether civil or ecclesiastical, do not per se bind the conscience. But while this danger ought to be carefully guarded against, this does not affect the lawfulness of a certain ministerial authority competent to ecclesiastical office-bearers, or the importance of the study of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, or the desirableness of knowing what enactments and regulations have been laid down and followed out for the administration of ecclesiastical affairs since the establishment of the church, —the causes that produced them, the grounds on which they were defended, and the influence which they exerted. Everything bearing upon these topics, is not only interesting and valuable historically, but is fitted to afford useful lessons as to the principles and rules by which the affairs of the church ought to be conducted, especially when events of an unusual character and magnitude arise. The Decree of Gratian, exhibiting as it does the substance of the whole legislation of the ecclesiastical authorities from the foundation of the church, presents, of course, a great mass of unnecessary, erroneous, and injurious provisions, while it contains also many traces of its earlier and purer discipline. The Church of Rome has been often subjected to much inconvenience, from its professing to adhere to the original and ancient doctrines, canons, and practices of the church. It was from the necessity of appearing to follow out this profession that Gratian admitted into his Decree so much of the earlier and purer discipline of the church, though it plainly enough indicated a state of things in regard to church government, and the general regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, very different from that which obtained after the Bishops of Rome had succeeded in erecting their marvellous

despotism; and it was for this reason again that the Popes avoided giving to it the formal and explicit sanction of law. There are a considerable number of passages to be found in the first part of the canon law, taken from the earlier fathers and councils, and even from some of the earlier Popes, which afford testimonies and authorities against the laws and practices of the modern Church of Rome, and which have been collected by Protestant writers, and applied in that way. Traces are to be found in the canon law of the ancient comparative soundness of doctrines, in the more limited sense of the word, but it is chiefly on the subject of government and discipline that it treats; and on these points we have embodied in the canon law some important testimonies from early authorities in favour not only of Protestant, but of Presbyterian, principles. It may be worth while to advert to one or two of these.

We have seen that Peter Lombard, in his Four Books of Sentences, bears explicit testimony to this, that the apostolic and primitive church had but two orders of office-bearers, —presbyters and deacons; and we find in the Decree of Gratian an assertion of the identity of bishops and presbyters. In the first part of the Decree we find inserted two very important passages of Jerome on this point, which are quite sufficient of themselves to overturn the whole argument in favour of Prelacy, in so far as ecclesiastical antiquity is concerned; and we find, moreover, that to one of them (Distinct. 95, c. 5) Gratian himself has attached the following rubric, which, beyond all question, correctly describes the mind of Jerome in the passage quoted: "Presbyter idem est qui Episcopus, ac sola consuetudine prsesunt Episcopi Presbyteris." It is also beyond all question certain, that the canon law teaches, as part of the discipline and practice of the early church, the principle of non-intrusion in the only honest sense of it, —in the sense in which we hold it. We have the following explicit statements upon this point. The first is from a letter of Pope Coelestine, addressed to the bishops of Gaul in 428: "Nullus invitatus detur episcopus; Cleri, plebis et ordinis consensus et desiderium requirantur,"— where the clergy and the people are put upon the same footing in the election of a bishop, and where not only the "consensus," but the "desiderium" of both is made equally imperative. Where this was law, of course, the opposition of either the clergy or the people was in itself a conclusive bar to the appointment of a bishop. Another is taken

from a letter addressed by Pope Leo the Great to the bishops of Macedonia, in the year 445. It contains these words: "Si forte vota elegantium in duas se diviserint partes, metropolitani iudicio is alteri preferatur qui majoribus et studiis juvatur et mentis, tantum ut nullus invitis et non petentibus ordinetur, ne civitas episcopum non optatum aut contemnat aut oderet." When a division arose in the election of a bishop, the metropolitan was to use his influence to effect, if possible, the election of the one who was at once most acceptable and best qualified; but whatever he might do in the matter, there was one thing that was in no case to be tolerated, and that was, that any one should be appointed a bishop unless the people wished and desired him; and the reason assigned for this at once establishes, beyond the reach of question or cavil, the meaning and the reasonableness of the enactment, —viz., lest the people having got a bishop whom they did not like, — "non optatum," whom they never wished for, —should despise him or hate him. These were the views of the Popes of the fifth century, and this of itself warrants us to conclude a fortiori that they were the views of the whole church of that period, though the Popes were not then acknowledged as its sovereigns, and also of the preceding ages; and it does give them some additional weight or authority, —i. e., it affords additional evidence that they had been always reckoned fundamental principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, —that even in the twelfth century they were inserted in the canon law, and have ever since occupied a place there.

But while the decree of Gratian contains not a little from the earlier councils and fathers that savours of the purer doctrine and discipline of the ancient church, and affords testimonies and authorities against the modern Church of Rome, it also contains a great deal more that is thoroughly imbued with the genuine Popish policy of Gregory VII. and his successors. Gratian constantly quotes as genuine the spurious decretal epistles of the early Popes. Their insertion in the canon law contributed, on the one hand, to confirm and perpetuate their authority and influence, and, on the other, to secure the patronage of the Popes to Gratian's work. Indeed, Gratian has made it sufficiently evident, that one leading object he aimed at in preparing his Decree, —and, we cannot doubt, that one leading object the Popes had in view in patronizing it, —was to exalt the power and authority of the Papal See, to raise it to supreme and universal

dominion. And when to all the matter tending to this object which Gratian in the twelfth century collected, were added the decretals and bulls of a similar tendency of Innocent and Boniface, and the other Popes of the thirteenth, and early part of the fourteenth, century, we need not wonder that the canon law was generally regarded by the Reformers as one of the great engines devised for the promotion of Papal despotism, and well adapted for that purpose; or that Luther, in revenge for the burning of some of his books by the Papal authorities, should have publicly consigned the canon law to the flames, along with the bull which Pope Leo had published against him. He afterwards wrote a treatise to explain the reasons of his conduct in taking this step, and, among other things, produced thirty passages from the canon law containing sentiments quite sufficient to justify its being burned. In this work he thus states what he considered to be the sum and substance of the canon law: "Papa est Deus in terris, superior omnibus coelestibus, terrenis, spiritualibus et secularibus. Et omnia papae sunt propria, cui nemo audeat dicere: quid facis?" He admits that there are some good things in the canon law, especially in the first part of it, the Decree of Gratian: "Quod si in illis etiam aliquid boni inesset, ut de decretis fateri cogor, totum tamen eo detortum est, ut noceat, et papam in sua antichristiana et impia tyrannide confirmet;" and then he adds the following observation, which is important in connection with some of the extracts we have given from it: "Omitto, quod nihil eorum prae nimia diligentia observatur, nisi quod malum et noxium est, servasse." Still the canon law, and especially the canons of the ancient councils which are embodied in the first part of it, has formed the basis of the ecclesiastical law, even of Protestant churches, pointing out what were the topics on which it was found that enactments and regulations were needed in the administration of the affairs of the church, and affording some assistance in deciding what these regulations should be, and how they ought to be modified and applied, —as well as throwing much light upon the condition and history of the church at the periods to which its different portions relate. On all these grounds, the study of it is deserving of some time and attention from those who desire to be thoroughly acquainted with the history of the church, and with the different leading departments of ecclesiastical literature. If ecclesiastical jurisprudence is to be studied, then the canon law, which is the basis of it, and which contains a full collection of all the

principal materials out of which this department of theological science has been constructed, must receive some degree of attention. The reasons for giving some degree of attention to the study of the canon law, are thus put by Buddaeus with his usual judgment and good sense: "De jure canonico aliter protestantes, romanae ecclesiae addictos aliter sentire, res ipsa itidem docet. Nulla autem, aut exigua ejus apud protestantes cum sit auctoritas, non omni tamen ideo apud eos destituitur usu. Praeterquam enim, quod in foris adhuc quodammodo obtineat; et ad indolem papatus eo rectius introspectendam plurimum confert, et antiquitatis ecclesiasticae studio inservit, cum primis varia, eaque interdum egregia veritatis testimonia, contra ecclesiae romanae errores nobis suppeditat."

There is a class of writers who have given much attention to the study of ecclesiastical jurisprudence and the canon law, who have been in the habit of alleging and labouring to prove that it is only from the canon law that the idea of a distinct and independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction} not subject to civil control, has been derived; and that it was through this channel that it found its way into the Protestant churches. This, of course, is just one mode of putting the charge which we formerly examined and exposed, —viz., that the scriptural Presbyterian principle of a distinct government and jurisdiction in the church, independent of civil control, is a Popish doctrine; and with the truth or falsehood of that general charge must this particular allegation stand or fall. The canon law and the practice of the Church of Rome certainly present ecclesiastical jurisdiction in a very odious and offensive aspect; but there is no great difficulty in drawing a clear line of demarcation between Presbyterian and Popish principles upon this subject, and preserving in theory at least, —though experience seems to indicate that the practice is not quite so easy, —both to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, their own proper province, and their own separate jurisdiction. The civil magistrate, —meaning thereby, the supreme civil power, in whomsoever vested, —has assuredly all that he is entitled to, when he has absolute control, under God, and without the intervention of any human authority claiming jurisdiction in the matter, over the persons and the property of all men, ecclesiastics equally with the rest of his subjects. The consciences of men and the church of Christ are not subject to his jurisdiction; over them he not only is not entitled, but is not at liberty, to claim or to exercise any

authoritative control. " God alone," says our Confession of Faith, " is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His word or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." The conscience, —that is, the convictions which men entertain as to what they ought to believe and do in all matters of religion and morality, —is subject to God alone, and to be guided only by His word. The church of Christ, the other great province excluded from the jurisdiction of the civil power, is to a large extent comprehended under the general head of conscience, where there is no room for the authoritative interference of any human power, civil or ecclesiastical, inasmuch as men's duties as office-bearers and members of the church should be regulated only by the word of God, and their own conscientious convictions as to what His mind and will is. But the church of Christ is also a visible society, which has outward and visible " business to administer, and in which certain visible and outward -processes must be continually going on; such, for instance, as the admission of men to office and to membership, and the retaining them in, or removing them from, the outward privileges attaching to these positions. Where such processes are going on, there must be some provision for determining the questions which are certain to arise; and from the very nature of the case, the decision of them must necessarily assume something more or less of a judicial or forensic character. And the whole controversy virtually comes to this: Are these questions, and questions such as these, —which must arise wherever a church of Christ exists and is in full operation, and the decision of which is necessary in the transaction of its ordinary business as a visible society, —to be determined by the word of God, or by the law of the land? Are they to be ultimately decided, so far as human power can decide them, by ecclesiastical office-bearers or by civil functionaries? No particular doctrine as to the spiritual effects of ordination and admission to ordinances, on the one hand; or of deposition and excommunication, upon the other, at all affects this question. They are viewed here and in this connection simply as an act of outward jurisdiction in foro exteriori; and the question is, By what standard and by what parties are these points to be ultimately decided? And here there is really no medium between, on the one hand, assigning to the church as a distinct independent society, — or, upon Presbyterian principles, to ecclesiastical office-bearers, — a right of regulating its own affairs, managing all its own

necessary business according to the word of God; and, on the other, depriving it of all judicial or forensic authority even in these matters, except what is derived from the State, and subject to civil control, —thus reducing it to the level of a corporation, which ordinarily indeed, and when no dispute arises, may be allowed to manage its own affairs according to its own rules, but from whose decisions there is always open an appeal to the ordinary civil tribunals as to a higher authority.

While these principles, when fully acted on, secure to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities their own separate provinces, and their own independent jurisdiction according to the word of God, the rights of conscience are secured within the church itself by an honest and faithful adherence to the great scriptural principle which, in the Church of Rome and in the canon law, is trampled under foot, —viz., that church power is not lordly, but only ministerial; that ecclesiastical office-bearers, even within their own province, have no right to be making laws or pronouncing decisions, merely according to their own judgment and discretion, but that they should do nothing in these matters except what the word of God requires them to do in the discharge of the necessary duties of their place, and are bound to do it all according to the standard which Christ has prescribed, their decisions being entitled to respect and obedience only if consonant to the word of God; and all men, civil rulers and private individuals, being not only entitled, but bound, to judge for themselves, with a view to the regulation of their own conduct, and upon their own responsibility, whether they are so or not.

The substance of the whole matter is this: The conscience of men, as comprehending all that they are bound to believe and to do in matters of religion and morality, whether as concerning things civil or things ecclesiastical, is subject to God alone, no human power having any jurisdiction or authoritative control over it. The province of the civil magistrate comprehends the persons and the properties of his subjects; over these in the case of all his subjects, and even although in particular cases they may be mixed up with ecclesiastical matters, he has supreme jurisdiction, being subject to God only, and not to any human power. The province of the ecclesiastical authorities is the administration of the ordinary necessary business of the church as a distinct visible society, the

regulation and execution, according to the word of God, of the functions that must be discharged, and of the work that must be done, wherever Christ has an organized church in full operation, —consisting chiefly, in all ordinary circumstances, of admitting to, and excluding from, the possession of office and the enjoyment of outward privileges in that society. And as neither the civil nor the ecclesiastical authorities have any direct jurisdiction within the other's province, so neither is entitled indirectly to extend its authority beyond its own. The power of the civil magistrate is lordly; in other words, God, his only superior, not having prescribed a constitution and laws for states, civil rulers have a large measure of discretion in regulating national affairs as may seem most expedient, and may thus, if they choose, attach certain civil consequences to ecclesiastical decisions. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction, besides being restricted to ecclesiastical matters, —i.e., to those things which constitute the ordinary necessary business of Christ's visible church, —is, even in regard to these things, purely ministerial; there is no room for discretion, it must be regulated solely by the word. And this principle, when fairly and honestly acted upon, and not employed— as it has always been in the Romish Church— as a pretence for unwarranted usurpations upon the civil power, or depriving it of its just rights, necessarily excludes all compromise, —all deference whatever to civil interference as affecting either directly or indirectly the settlement of ecclesiastical questions, the admission of men to office or to ordinances in the church of Christ.

XVI. Witnesses for the Truth During The Middle Ages

There is a subject, partly historical and partly doctrinal, that has occupied a good deal of attention in the controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome, to which it may be proper, at this point, to advert. We refer to the opposition made by individuals or churches, during the middle ages, to the Church of Rome; or the inconsistency between their doctrines and those of modern Papists, and the use or application made of this, either in evidence or in argument. The general subject, thus stated, comprehends a considerable number of important topics which have been discussed with great fulness of detail, but to which we can only very briefly refer.

Papists have been accustomed to assert that the doctrines now held by them have been all along maintained by the great body of the church, in unbroken succession, from the time of the apostles downwards; and they have laboured to show that whenever any man or body of men adopted any opposite doctrines, they were in consequence condemned and rejected by the church in general as heretics, or, at least, schismatics. Upon the ground of an allegation to this effect, they found a claim in behalf of the Church of Rome to be regarded as the one church of Christ, with which He has been ever present since He ascended up on high, preserving it from all error, and maintaining it as the pillar and ground of the truth; while, on the same ground, they adduce it as an argument against Protestantism, that it had no existence before the time of Luther, who broke in upon the cordial harmony with which, it is said, the whole Christian world was then, and had for many ages been, receiving the doctrine and submitting to the authority of the Roman Church.

We have said enough, formerly, to show how futile is the claim put forth by the Church of Rome to apostolicity, as implying the maintenance of the doctrine of the apostles handed down in unbroken succession from their time; and how utterly unknown, for several centuries, was the notion that the Church of Rome was the catholic church of Christ, or that

it was necessary to be in communion with the Bishop of Rome in order to be regarded as a part of the catholic church. Protestants do not admit, of course, that there is any necessity to point out and ascertain the time and circumstances in which any particular doctrine or practice was first introduced into the church, in order to prove that it did not descend from apostolic times. We are warned in Scripture that heresies would come in privily, that the tares would be sown while men slept; and it is a fundamental principle of Protestantism, which, when once established upon its own proper evidence, must never be rejected or forgotten, that it is by the Bible alone that we can certainly determine what is true and what is false in religion; and that there is not, and cannot be, any obligation to receive anything as apostolic, unless it be either contained in, or deducible from, the apostolic writings. Still, though it is ex abundanti, Protestant writers have undertaken to show, and have shown, the origin and growth of many of the peculiarities of Popery, —have brought out fully the time and circumstances in which they were invented; and even in cases in which there may not be sufficient historical materials to enable them to do this with exactness and certainty, they have, at least, been able to fix upon a particular period at which they have found that some specific doctrine now held by the Church of Rome was not generally believed by the Christian church, and thus to cut off its connection with the apostolic age. It is true that some of the germs or rudiments of modern Popery can be traced further back in the history of the church, than some of those Protestant writers who have been largely imbued with veneration for antiquity, especially among Episcopalians, have been willing to allow. But it is certain that very scanty traces of any of them can be found during the first three centuries, that most of them were then not held by the church in general, and that many of them were the inventions of a later period.

As Papists lay much stress upon the consideration, that if any innovation in doctrine and practice had been introduced it would have met with opposition, and that this opposition would have excited attention, and thereby have produced some historical memorials, by which it might be shown to be an innovation; some Protestant writers, though denying the soundness of this general principle as a certain test or standard, have made it a specific object to trace minutely in the history of the church, as

far as there are materials for doing so, the opposition made at the time to all the innovations and growing pretensions of the Popes. There is one important and valuable work which is directed specifically to this object, and follows throughout this simple plan, embodying, in the prosecution of it, a great deal of important historical information. I mean the celebrated Momay du Plessis' work, entitled "Mysterium iniquitatis, seu historia Papatus." The leading object of this work is stated in the title to be to show "quibus gradibus ad id fastigii enisus sit (Papatus), quamque acriter omni tempore ubique a piis contra intercessum." The work contains a history of the innovations introduced by the Romish Church, and of the claims or pretensions to authority and supremacy advanced by the Popes from the controversy about Easter in the second century, till the time of the Reformation; followed by an account of the opposition which each met with, and the difficulties that had to be overcome, before it was generally received or submitted to. Much of this, however, belongs to an earlier period in the history of the church, which we have already considered. We have to do now only with the period which succeeded the general adoption of some of the peculiarities of modern Popery, and the subjugation of almost all the Western Church to the Bishops of Rome.

Many Protestant writers have placed the commencement of the reign of antichrist about the beginning of the seventh century, and have fixed upon this era, on the ground that though some of the principal corruptions of modern Popery had not then received the sanction of the church, yet that many of them were generally prevalent, though not in all cases very fully developed; and that about that time claims to supremacy over the whole church were put forth by the Popes, and were in the Western Church pretty generally acknowledged and submitted to. It is certain that, from this period till the Reformation, the Western Church was almost wholly under the control of the Bishops of Rome, and that those who dissented from their doctrines, and set themselves in opposition to their supremacy, were treated by them, and by all who acknowledged their sway, as heretics and schismatics. Popish writers dwell with great complacency upon this period in the history of the church, when nearly all the Western Church submitted to the Popes, and when any opposition to their impositions and exactions was visited not only with spiritual censures, but also frequently with civil pains and

penalties, and sometimes with exterminating persecutions. Protestants think that in the Church of Rome, during this dark and dreary period, they can see, in the light of Scripture, plain traces, both in the doctrines taught and in the practices adopted, of the predicted apostasy, of the great antichrist, the man of sin and son of perdition. And, of course, the proof of this from Scripture is quite a sufficient answer to all the presumptions which the Papists found upon the general prevalence of their system of doctrine and polity for a long period antecedent to the Reformation, and upon the alleged non-existence of Protestantism before the time of Luther. Still they have also contended that a careful investigation of the history and literature of that period affords many materials of a more specific kind for attacking Popery, and for defending Protestantism.

The leading positions which Protestant writers have maintained and established upon this subject are these, —first, that down till the period of the Reformation there continued to exist in the formularies, symbolical books, and other standard works of public authority or in general use in the Church of Rome, traces of a more ancient system of doctrine and discipline different from what now obtains in that communion, and thus affording testimonies against the innovations which she has introduced; and that down till the time of Luther there is a series of writers, who, though living and dying in the communion of the Church of Rome, differed in some points of doctrine from modern Papists, and agreed with Protestants;— evidence being thus afforded, that the modern Romish profession, established and made perpetual and unchangeable by the Council of Trent after the Reformation, had not been universally adopted in all its parts, or at least was not obligatory, when Luther appeared; and, secondly, that those who, from the time when the Roman Church gained an ascendancy over the West, were generally stigmatized and persecuted as heretics and schismatics, held to a large extent Protestant doctrines; and that though, upon Protestant principles, their claim to be regarded as witnesses for the truth must be decided in every instance by ascertaining the accordance of their views with the word of God, yet that, even independently of this, there is much about their general character and history which affords strong presumptions at least that they were right, and the Church of Rome wrong, —and that, consequently, the scriptural

doctrines of Protestants have been held and advocated even in the darkest and most corrupt times.

As an instance of what is commonly adduced in support of the first part of the first of these two positions, I may refer to the well-known and interesting fact, that in the Council of Trent a proposal was made that some things in the Pontifical, —or the authorized directory for ordination, as it might be called, —should be omitted, since they manifestly countenanced the right of the people to a real voice and influence in the appointment of their pastors, in accordance with the unquestionable practice of the primitive church, and thus only afforded a handle to heretics, — i.e., to the Reformers, —who had restored the primitive usage, which of course had been long abandoned in the Church of Rome. I may also refer to the curious and important fact, that even the canon of the mass, as it is called, or the authorized service for celebrating mass, and which the Council of Trent forbade any under pain of anathema to charge with containing any errors, does, while it unquestionably exhibits many gross errors, contain also some statements handed down from purer and more ancient times, which cannot be easily reconciled with some of the modern Popish doctrines upon the subject. With respect to the second part of the first position, —viz., that there was a series of writers in the communion of the Church of Rome down till the period of Reformation, who did not believe in all the modern Popish doctrines, and who, in opposition to these, held some one or more of the doctrines generally taught by Protestants, —the evidence of it could be exhibited only by a series of quotations; and this would require much more space than can be allotted to it. I can therefore only say in general, that a good deal that is curious and very decidedly opposed to the common Popish allegations as to their unvarying unity and harmony, —though, as is the case in most disputes, the settlement of which depends upon an examination of the exact meaning of a number of quotations, leading into some intricate and perplexed discussions, —has been produced by Protestant writers; and mention some of the authors where a collection of these materials may be found.

Among the fullest repositories of materials of this sort in our language are Bishop Morton's "Catholike Appeale for Protestants, out of the

confessions of the Romane Doctors," and the appendix to the third book of Field's work on "The Church." But the fullest and most complete work upon this subject is the "Confessio Catholica" of John Gerhard, a celebrated and very learned divine of the Lutheran church. The appendix to the third book of Field on the church is directed to the object of establishing the following bold and startling position: "That the Latin or Western Church, in which the Pope tyrannized, was, and continued, a true, orthodox, and Protestant church; and that the devisers and maintainers of Romish errors and superstitious abuses were only a faction in the same, at the time when Luther, not without the applause of all good men, published his propositions against the profane abuses of Papal indulgences." This general position is monstrously extravagant, and palpably inconsistent with notorious facts. It is too much for any man calling himself a Protestant to maintain that the Church of Rome was a true orthodox Protestant church when Luther appeared, —after one oecumenical council— the second of Nice— had established image worship; another— the fourth great Lateran— had established transubstantiation, and the absolute necessity of auricular confession to the forgiveness of all mortal sins; and, thirdly, the Council of Florence in 1439 had established purgatory, and the supremacy of the Pope over the whole church of Christ. It is, indeed, a position of some importance, — which many Protestants have laboured to prove, and have proved, —that the system of modern Popery, with all its high pretensions to apostolicity and universality, was not fully completed in all its points till the Council of Trent; that there are several doctrines which, by the decrees of that council, are made imperatively binding upon all the adherents of the Church of Rome, the belief of which had not been previously exacted, and with respect to which different opinions, — some of them substantially Protestant, —were actually professed and tolerated within the Romish communion. This is true, and has been proved. It is of some importance in the Popish controversy, when viewed in connection with the ordinary Popish allegations and pretensions. But it is a very different thing to say that, up till the commencement of the Reformation, the Latin or Western Church was orthodox and Protestant. Field, who was a man of great learning, has produced much curious and valuable matter that does establish the first of these positions, but he has certainly not established the position he undertook to prove.

It is not surprising that this part of Field's work is high in favour with the Tractarians. Field's position is in full harmony with their views; and, could it be made out, would free them from some of the difficulties which they feel in defending, upon their High Church principles, their non-connection with the Church of Rome. The difficulty which, before some of them joined the Church of Rome, they had, —and which those of them who have not yet found it convenient to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, and to leave the Church of England, still have, —is to defend the Reformation, and the position of the members of the Reformed churches, from the charge of schism, since the Church of Rome had, they admit, a true apostolical succession, a legitimate authority, and taught at that time no very serious error. Some of them laboured to prove that the Reformers did not leave the Church of Rome, but were expelled from it, and were therefore not responsible for their state of separation. This, however, was not very satisfactory, since the Reformers, by the views which they embraced, afforded fair ground to the Church of Rome, if it was possessed of legitimate authority, and had the same profession as it now has, to expel them. But if, as Field labours to show, what is now the Church of Rome, so far as doctrinal profession is concerned, was, at the time when Luther appeared, but a mere faction within it, —which afterwards, indeed, acquired an ascendancy at the Council of Trent, — then the Reformers did not leave a church at all, or depart from a settled and legitimate communion, but merely adhered to, or rather themselves constituted and continued to be, the soundest portion of an existing orthodox church.

It is proper to mention that Field is not in general, and upon other topics, a supporter of High Church principles. He holds very moderate and reasonable views upon the subject of the distinction of bishops and presbyters, and would not have scrupled to concur in Archbishop Usher's Reduction of Episcopacy; and he maintains and proves that non-intrusion was the doctrine and practice of the primitive church. It is also fair to Field to state that the appendix to his third book, which has chiefly procured for him the favour of Tractarians, and has thereby led to a recent republication of his work, which had become very scarce, was not published till after his death; and that suspicions have been entertained that it was not written by him, but got up under the influence of

Archbishop Laud.

I. Perpetuity and Visibility of the Church

The second position which we mentioned as maintained by Protestant writers, —viz., that among these individuals and bodies of men who, from the rise of antichrist to the Reformation, were stigmatized and persecuted by the Church of Rome as heretics and schismatics, there was a series or succession of persons who held in the main scriptural Protestant principles, and are therefore to be regarded as witnesses for the truth, — leads into a still wider, and, in some respects, more intricate field of discussion. Many topics coming under this general head have been controverted between Protestants and Papists, which, as historical questions, are involved in very considerable doubts and difficulties, and are also interwoven with some doctrinal questions of importance concerning the succession, the perpetuity, and visibility of the church, viewed in connection with Christ's promises. The common Popish allegations upon this subject are these, —that for many centuries before Luther's time, the Church of Rome was, as it were, in possession of the world, as the one catholic church of Christ, and that Protestantism had no existence until it was invented in the beginning of the sixteenth century. They further contend, as a doctrinal or scriptural principle, that Christ has promised, and of course has secured, that He will always have on earth, in unbroken and perpetual succession, a visible organized church, maintaining His truth; and that the application of this scriptural or doctrinal principle excludes all claim upon the part of Protestants to be regarded as churches of Christ, and establishes the claim of the Church of Rome as the only catholic church.

I had occasion formerly to explain the import and bearing of Christ's promises, viewed in connection with the history of the church, and will not now dwell upon this subject as a doctrinal question, but rather advert briefly to some of the historical questions which have been discussed in connection with it. The claim set up by the Church of Rome of being, as it were, in possession of the world as the one catholic church of Christ for many centuries before the Reformation, is refuted by plain and palpable

facts, and especially by the existence of the Greek Church, and other churches in the eastern part of the world. The Greek Church stands, at least, upon a level with the Latin Church with respect to an unbroken visible succession of functionaries and ordinances, to which Papists and other High Churchmen attach so much importance. The Greek has, at least, as good a claim as the Latin Church to a regular visible succession of office-bearers, and of outward organization, from the time of the apostles to the Reformation, and indeed to the present day; and if she is to be deprived of her position and status as a portion of the catholic church of Christ, upon Popish or High Church principles, it can be only by establishing against her the charge of heresy or schism. Accordingly, Popish controversialists have adduced these charges against her, while some Protestant writers have laboured to show that, at least upon Popish principles, the charge cannot be established. If Scripture be adopted as the standard, some very serious errors, in matters both of doctrine and practice, can be established against the Greek Church; but not quite so serious an amount of error as can be established, by the same standard, against the Church of Rome. And if we are to be guided in this matter by some general regard to the views and practice of the early church, then it is quite certain that the Greek Church is more conformed to the primitive standard than the Roman. Indeed, the Greek Church may be said to have retained in her public profession, with a considerable measure of accuracy, and still to possess, what was reckoned orthodoxy in the fourth and fifth centuries, with the exception of adopting the decrees of the infamous second Council of Nice. And even in regard to this subject, her guilt is less than that of the Church of Rome, as she does not require from her subjects the maintenance of any particular views, or the adoption of any particular practices, in regard to the worship of images or pictures. Whether tried, then, by the standard of Scripture or of the early church, the Greek Church is far less corrupt than the Latin; and, except upon the assumption that the Bishops of Rome are, *jure divino*, the monarchs of the whole church, and warranted to exclude from its pale, as they think proper, is better entitled than the Popish to be regarded as a portion of the catholic church of Christ. The main ground on which the Papists charge the Greek Church with heresy, is their denial of the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as from the Father; and on this point Protestants generally agree with Papists in thinking the

Greek Church to be in error. But they usually maintain that this error is not such a heresy as to invalidate any claim she might otherwise have to be regarded as a portion of the catholic church. The fact that the Latins have excommunicated the Greeks, is no sufficient proof that the latter are schismatics.

On these grounds, it is manifest that the claim set up by the Roman Church to be regarded as having been virtually in possession of the Christian world for many centuries before the Reformation, as the whole catholic church of Christ, is altogether destitute of foundation. Whatever claims of this kind may be put forth by the Roman Church, may, with at least equal plausibility, be advanced by the Greek Church. The existence of the Greek Church, possessed of an unbroken visible succession of functionaries and of outward organization from the apostles' times, has been employed with good effect by Protestant writers in their discussions with Papists about the succession and perpetuity of the church, though it cannot be said, in this application of it, to rise above the dignity of an *argumentum ad hominem*. It exposes the claim which the Papists are accustomed to adduce in opposition to the Protestants, to the possession of the world as the catholic church antecedent to the Reformation. And it has somewhat affected the way in which the discussion of the general topic of an unbroken visible succession, as an alleged mark of the true church, has been conducted. Some Papists, anxious to avoid a strict investigation into the subject of the purity and apostolicity of doctrine, — the only thing of fundamental importance in estimating the character and claims of any professed church, — have been disposed to make an unbroken visible succession of outward organization from the apostles' times a sufficient proof by itself of purity and orthodoxy, and of a title to all the alleged rights of the catholic church, or a portion of it. But the case of the Greek Church, adduced in argument by the Protestants, compelled them to abandon this extreme view, and to content themselves with maintaining that an unbroken visible succession is but a *sine qua non* of a well-founded claim to orthodoxy and legitimate authority; the want of which disproves the claim, but the possession of which is not of itself sufficient to establish it. The Reformers did not admit the necessity of an outward visible succession even for this limited object, and uniformly maintained that it was quite enough at any time for any professing church

to prove, by any competent means, —first, that it held the doctrine taught, and maintained the discipline established, by Christ and His apostles; and, secondly, that it had not presumptuously and contemptuously departed from the external arrangements which had the sanction of Scripture. This is one of the leading general principles on which the defence of the Reformation is founded; but we are not called upon to discuss it further.

Protestants, however, while resting their defence of the Reformation upon this important general principle, have taken some pains to bring out historically the succession and perpetuity of Protestant, as opposed to Popish, doctrine. It is an important and interesting object to trace the history of doctrine and practice in the visible church, independently of any strictly argumentative or controversial purpose to which the result of the investigation may be applied. It is an act of justice to vindicate the character of those whom the apostate Church of Rome stigmatized and persecuted as heretics and schismatics; and in investigating their character and doctrines, Protestant writers have brought out much that is fitted to expose Popish taunts and objections, and to afford some confirmation to Protestant truth. This is the object aimed at, and these are the principal topics involved, in the investigation of the history and opinions of those men who, during the middle ages, were excommunicated and persecuted by the Church of Rome as heretics and schismatics, but who have been generally regarded by Protestants as witnesses for the truth, —as maintaining and preserving, amid abounding corruption and iniquity, the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine. Most of the facts and arguments connected with this subject have been brought to bear upon the history of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, and especially of the former (for they should not be confounded with each other); some Protestant writers having been of opinion that the history of the Waldenses could be traced, and that they could be proved to have preserved the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine and practice, uncorrupted by the great prevailing apostasy, from the fourth century till the Reformation; and all of them holding that the Waldenses present a much fuller and more continuous exhibition of a profession of Protestant anti-Popish doctrine during the middle ages than any other single people with whose history we are acquainted. Mosheim complains that the

history of these topics has never been written with perfect impartiality, and perhaps the complaint is not altogether destitute of foundation. The historical facts of the case, and the application of the different and opposite views of Protestants and Papists concerning the doctrine of the succession, perpetuity, and visibility of the church of Christ, are so closely interwoven with each other, that there is more than ordinary difficulty in maintaining perfect impartiality in the historical investigation, even on the part of those who are in the main in the right. It must also be admitted that some Protestant writers have taken higher ground themselves, and made larger concessions to Papists, on the general subject of an unbroken visible succession of doctrine than the word of God and the promises of Christ required; and have thus felt themselves constrained to undertake to establish more by historical evidence than the facts of the case can be shown to warrant.

II. Waldenses and Albigenses

From a regard to various useful and important objects, Protestant writers have justly considered it a matter of much importance to trace the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, both within and without the pale of the Roman Church, during the dark and dreary period of the middle ages. They have, accordingly, established a succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, in opposition to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, chiefly through Claude, Bishop of Turin, the Paulicians, the Cathari, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, Wickliffe, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, the Bohemian Brethren, and other witnesses for the truth, down till the period of the Reformation. Several works have been prepared by Protestant writers, embodying the testimonies of these witnesses for the truth, in opposition to the doctrines, practices, and claims of the Bishops of Rome. Perhaps the most complete work devoted to this single object is the "Catalogus Testium Veritatis," by Flacius Illyricus, the principal author of the Centuries of Magdeburg, the first great work on ecclesiastical history. His testimonies, however, extend over a much wider space of time than that with which we are at present concerned, as he begins, in adducing his witnesses against the Papacy, with the apostle Peter, and brings forward thereafter a great deal of curious matter from a

great variety of authors spread over nearly fifteen hundred years.

There are very considerable difficulties in ascertaining accurately the doctrinal views of some of these alleged witnesses for the truth during the middle ages, as in most cases we have scarcely any means of knowing what they believed and taught, except from Popish writers, their enemies and persecutors; and we may be pretty confident that the men who murdered them would not scruple to calumniate them. Still there is enough to satisfy us that those individuals and bodies of men whom we have mentioned were not only zealous opponents of the Papacy, were not only innocent of the charges which Popish writers have adduced against them, but that they held, in the main, the great principles of scriptural Protestant truth, and manifested by their lives and by their deaths, — inflicted by the Church of Rome, and endured by them just because of their faithful adherence to these principles, — that they feared God, that they loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they enjoyed the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit.

Some Protestant writers have been of opinion that Christ's promises necessarily imply that there must always be a visible organized church on earth, preserving in unbroken succession the substance of apostolic doctrine. Of course those who take this view of the import of our Lord's promises concede that they are bound, —if they still mean honestly to maintain the Protestant cause instead of betraying it, as the Tractarians do, —to produce some visible church distinct from the Church of Rome, which has preserved from apostolic times the succession of apostolic doctrine. This concession is attended with considerable responsibility, for it is not easy to make out clearly and satisfactorily by historical evidence the condition which it imposes. The Greek Church certainly contrasts favourably in some respects with the Roman, and, so far as its public profession is concerned, is far from being to the same extent corrupted. But while Protestant writers formerly have not scrupled to employ the Greek Church against the Romanists, on the footing of an *argumentum ad hominem*, and have done so with good effect, they have not in general thought it warrantable or safe to found upon it in this argument directly and in their own name, as it were, and *ex veritate rei*, chiefly because of its adoption of the decrees of the second Council of Nice in regard to

image-worship. Accordingly, those Protestants who have conceded the necessity, in order to the fulfilment of Christ's promises, of the constant existence on earth of some one visible church, holding in unbroken succession the substance of apostolic Protestant doctrine, have usually produced the Waldenses and Albigenses, as fully satisfying the conditions of the argument on the ground on which they are disposed to maintain it. Of course they are bound to prove that these bodies have subsisted as churches from a period antecedent to the rise of antichrist, down to the period of the Reformation, preserving during all this time the succession of the substance of apostolic Protestant doctrine in opposition to Popery; and thus connecting the early church, before it had become grossly corrupt in point of doctrine, with the era of the Reformers. This is rather an arduous task, and it is not by any means certain that the fact alleged has ever been thoroughly established by satisfactory historical evidence. When Papists have succeeded in getting any Protestant writers to concede the necessity of an unbroken succession of apostolic doctrine, maintained by a visible church, and find that the case which they generally select is that of the Waldenses and Albigenses, they then bend their whole strength to prove that the condition is not fulfilled in the actual history of these bodies; and it cannot be reasonably disputed that they have contrived to involve the subject, as a question of historical evidence, in very considerable difficulties.

Protestant writers have certainly succeeded in vindicating the Albigenses and the Waldenses of the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and following centuries from the calumnies which Popish writers have adduced against them, and have shown that their doctrines, from the twelfth century downwards, were substantially those now held by the Protestant churches. They have also shown that these bodies existed at an earlier period than that to which Papists commonly ascribe their origin, and they have even made it highly probable that the Waldenses subsisted from the time of Claude, Bishop of Turin, in the ninth century; but it is not by any means so clear that they have succeeded in carrying the succession through them, by any satisfactory historical evidence, from the ninth century upwards into the period when the church is generally regarded by Protestants as not having become fatally corrupted in point of doctrine. A pretty full view of the historical positions usually maintained by Papists

upon this subject, is to be found in the eleventh book of Bossuet's "History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches," and it is against this that the labours of subsequent Protestant writers have been chiefly directed. Indeed, Faber's " Inquiry into the History and Theology of the ancient Vallenses and Albigenses," published in 1838, is just formally an answer to that part of Bossuet's celebrated work, viewed in connection with the notions of the import of Christ's promises generally entertained by Papists, and expounded and applied by Bossuet in the fifteenth or last book of his work. Faber is one of those authors who, though thoroughly and cordially anti-Popish and anti-Tractarian, is yet so much of a High Churchman as to concede that Christ's promises imply the necessity of the constant and uninterrupted existence upon earth of a visible organized church, holding the substance of apostolic doctrine; and he adduces the Albigenses and the Waldenses, or Vallenses, as he calls them, as satisfying this condition. He has brought very considerable ingenuity and learning to bear upon the establishment of his position, and he has thoroughly disproved many of Bossuet's leading allegations. But I am not satisfied that he has established the precise point which he undertook to prove, although he has been bold and rash enough to stake upon the proof of it the whole cause of Protestantism, in so far as it is involved in the real meaning and application of our Lord's promises to His church.

The leading historical positions maintained upon this subject by Bossuet and other Papists are these: —First, that the Albigenses and Waldenses were two sects entirely different from each other in their origin, their location, their doctrine, and their character; secondly, that the Albigenses, settled chiefly in the south-east provinces of France, were the descendants of the Paulicians who came from the East, and were, like them, Manichaeans, and that consequently they cannot be regarded even by Protestants as preserving the succession of apostolic doctrine; thirdly, that the sect of the Waldenses originated with Peter Waldo, or Waldus, of

Lyons, about the middle of the twelfth century, and had no existence before that period; and, fourthly, that these Waldenses, from their origin in the twelfth century down till the Reformation, —during the greatest part of which period they dwelt where they still do, in the valleys of the Cottian Alps, —were rather schismatics than heretics, separating from the

church, like the ancient Novatians and Donatists, rather on questions of discipline than of doctrine; that on all the leading points of doctrine, especially in regard to the Eucharist, they held the views of the Church of Rome, and cannot therefore be consistently adduced by Protestants as maintaining and preserving the succession of apostolic doctrine.

With respect to the first of these positions, it is generally conceded by Protestant writers that the Waldenses and Albigenses were different sects, though they are often in popular usage confounded or identified with each other. The concession of this point, however, does not materially advance the Popish argument. The other three positions have been all disputed by Protestant writers, and we think that, upon the whole, they have been disproved; but, as we have already indicated, we do not regard all this as sufficient to establish the position which Faber has undertaken to defend. With respect to the alleged Manichaeism of the Albigenses, it is true that this charge was usually brought against them by their persecutors, and by the Popish writers of the period; but it is just as true, —and we have it on the same authority, —that they themselves constantly denied that they held any Manichaean principles; that they persisted in this denial till their martyrdom; that no evidence was produced, either at the time or afterwards, that they held the Manichaean doctrine of two principles, original and eternal, or any of its 'legitimate consequences. So that we have in substance just the averment of their persecutors, burdened with the drawback of their having concurred in, or approved of, their having been put to death for conscience sake; and, on the other hand, their own denial of the charge, accompanied and followed by everything that could give it weight. The whole history of the Albigenses, and especially of the way in which they were calumniated and persecuted by the Church of Rome, irresistibly reminds us of the calumnies and persecutions directed against the primitive Christians in the second and third centuries; and the whole character and conduct of these men, as it appears incidentally and unintentionally even in the narratives of their persecutors, is fitted to impress the mind with a strong conviction, that these victims of the cruelty of Papal Rome were men of the same character and principles as the earlier victims of Pagan Rome. Basnage thinks it probable that there were some persons among the separatists from the Church of Rome, in the south of France, who really

were infected with some portion of Manichaeian error; but he maintains that there is no evidence whatever of the truth of the charge in reference to the great body of those against whom it was adduced. In Pope Boniface VIII.'s celebrated Bull "Unam Sanctam," —so famous for the extravagance of the claims which it put forth in behalf of the Papacy, for the silliness of its reasonings, and the grossness of its perversions of Scripture, —we have a curious instance of the slight and insufficient grounds on which the charge of Manichaeism was sometimes based in those days; for the Pontiff there pronounces it to be a specimen of the Manichaeian doctrine of two original principles, to maintain that the civil power is, in its own province, distinct from, and independent of, the ecclesiastical. Faber, in the third chapter of the Second Book of his Inquiry above referred to, has given a very ingenious and plausible, though merely hypothetical, explanation of the way in which— by a not very unnatural or improbable perversion of the real scriptural doctrines of the Albigenses— the accusation of Manichaeism might have originated, without its originators having incurred the guilt of pure and absolute fabrication.

Upon the whole, we think it has been proved that there is no satisfactory evidence that the great body of those who, under the name of Albigenses, were in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries persecuted by the Church of Rome to almost entire extermination, held Manichaeian errors, and that there is no reason to doubt that they were martyred, because, in opposition to the Papacy, they faithfully and honestly maintained apostolic Protestant doctrine; and that having been "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," they are still crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" Bossuet's third and fourth positions, however, concerning the origin and doctrine of the Waldenses, are, perhaps, still more important, so far as the argument is concerned, as Faber professes to be quite willing to rest upon them, even if the Albigenses were given up as Manichaeian heretics. The averment of Bossuet and Papists is, that they originated with, and derived their name from, Peter Waldo, or Waldus, a rich merchant of Lyons, about the middle of the twelfth century; and it is certain that this individual separated from, and opposed, the Church of Rome, —that he gave

abundant evidence of personal piety, —that he exerted himself in translating and Circulating the sacred Scriptures, and in diffusing divine truth, —and thus became in a manner the founder of an anti-Popish sect, and entitled himself to a most honourable place among the witnesses for the truth. But it has also been contended, —and, we have no doubt, proved by sufficient evidence, —that before his time there existed in the valleys of the Alps an orthodox church, separated from, and opposed to, that of Rome; and there is, moreover, some fair ground for believing that Waldo had been himself originally connected with this pure church in the Alpine valleys, —that he taught the same doctrines which they held, and which he had learned from them, —and that afterwards his followers, when expelled from France along with the remains of the Albigenses that escaped the exterminating crusades, took refuge in the Alps, and joined the ancient Waldensian church, which had previously subsisted there, and with whose doctrine they agreed— from which, indeed, in the case of the more immediate followers of Waldo, their doctrines had been derived. We do not mean to aver that all these positions about the connection between Waldo and the old Waldensians of the Alps have been fully proved, but merely that there are a good many considerations which attach to them a high degree of probability, so that we would not hesitate to receive them, as we receive many other historical facts which are not very thoroughly established, while we would certainly not like to rest upon their truth or certainty any point of argument in controversy. The question, then, now is, What further do we know concerning the origin and history of this Waldensian church in the valleys of the Alps? It is certain that this church claimed to itself a remote antiquity, previous to the time of Waldo, and that this claim was generally conceded to it even by Popish writers. Beyond this there is not much that can be fairly regarded as certain, or as established by satisfactory evidence. That a church of this description existed there in the time of Claude of Turin, in the ninth century, —who has been sometimes called the first Protestant, —there is fair reason to believe; and of its continued existence, and its substantial orthodoxy and purity, there is no reason to doubt. This, however, cannot be said to prove the existence of a church maintaining the succession of orthodox doctrine from the ninth to the twelfth century; and beyond the ninth century, in going backwards, there is really nothing deserving the name of evidence adduced in support of a visible organized

orthodox church amid the valleys of the Alps. The Papists certainly have failed in showing that the Waldenses, — i.e., the ancestors of the present Waldenses, in the valleys of the Alps, — derived their origin from Peter Waldo of Lyons in the twelfth century; but Faber, and other Protestants who adopt similar views, have equally failed in tracing, upon sure historical grounds, their unbroken succession as an organized church backwards from the twelfth century to the comparatively purer church of the early ages.

As to Bossuet's fourth position, that the Waldenses did not differ materially in doctrine from the Roman Church, but separated and remained apart from her, rather on grounds of discipline than doctrine, — and therefore cannot be appealed to by Protestants, as preserving, for any portion of time, the succession of apostolic, anti-Popish doctrine, — we have no doubt that it has been conclusively disproved; and that satisfactory evidence has been adduced that, from the Reformation back to the eleventh century, and, in all probability, without any interruption to the time of Claude of Turin in the ninth, they were decidedly opposed, upon scriptural grounds, to the leading features in the system of Popish doctrine, and held in substance the great leading doctrines of Protestantism. This, we think, has been established by Basnage and by Faber, in answer to Bossuet; and it is a fact full of interest and value, and one which must ever invest the history of the Waldenses with an importance which attaches to comparatively few departments in the history of the church.

Upon the whole, then, we are persuaded that the attempt made by Faber and others, to establish, through the Albigenses and Waldenses, an unbroken succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, as held and maintained by a visible organized church, distinct from the Greek and Roman Churches, has failed; and the conclusion, therefore, is, either that our Saviour's promises do not imply and require this, or else that they have been fulfilled in the Greek and Roman Churches, and that these, therefore, must be regarded as having been, at the period of the Reformation, substantially sound and orthodox churches of Christ. It is a singular specimen of injudicious rashness in Faber to have staked so much upon a historical position, of which such meagre evidence could be

adduced, and when there is so little in the terms in which our Saviour's promises are expressed to afford any plausible ground for enforcing the necessity of the concession. It is the duty, indeed, of upright men to guard carefully against the temptation of either perverting our Lord's statements, in order to bring them into accordance with the supposed facts of history; or, on the other hand, of perverting the facts of history in order to bring them into an accordance with the supposed import of our Lord's statements. But Faber, we think, has failed, both in interpreting aright our Lord's words, and in establishing his leading historical position of the unbroken succession of a visible organized orthodox church through the Waldenses; and there is really no difficulty in showing the accordance of the actual facts of history with all that our Saviour's promises can be proved necessarily to imply. His church, though not always appearing in a visible organized form, has never been destroyed from the earth. He has always had a seed to serve Him, —placed, it may be, in great variety of outward circumstances, living some of them within the pale of very corrupt churches, but still holding His truth, and walking in His ways. And the history of the Albigenses and Waldenses, which Faber has done a great deal to illustrate, affords most important and valuable matter for developing the fulfilment of Christ's promises, and assisting us in forming a just appreciation of the true character and tendencies of the great adversary of Christ and His cause — the apostate Church of Rome.

XVII. The Church at the Era of the Reformation

We have now surveyed the history of the church, and especially of the doctrines which it held forth and propagated, and of the discussions to which these doctrines gave rise, from the time of the apostles down to the beginning of the sixteenth century, —the era of the Reformation.

The sixteenth century is a period of surpassing interest and importance in the history of the church, —the most interesting and important, indeed, in many respects, of all, except that in which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, and in which His own inspired apostles went forth to teach all nations in His name. Its leading general characteristic may be said to be, that it presents a remarkable, an extraordinary, manifestation of divine power and divine grace, —of God's special agency in raising up men eminently gifted and qualified by the indwelling of His Spirit; and in so communicating His grace, and so regulating the course of events, as to make these men instrumental in conferring most important benefits upon the church and upon the world. It presents to our contemplation a considerable number of most remarkable men, richly furnished of God with intellectual and spiritual endowments, placed in Providence in peculiarly interesting and trying circumstances, and effecting at length most important and valuable results. The events of this century are fitted, perhaps, more than those of any since the apostolic age, at once to illustrate the great principles of God's moral government in His dealings with His church, and to afford most important practical lessons for the instruction and guidance of His people, both collectively and individually.

The century opens with nearly the whole professing church sunk in abject slavery to the See of Rome, with one of the most infamous miscreants that ever disgraced human nature (Alexander VI.) claiming to be, and regarded by the great body of Christendom as being, the vicar of Christ on earth, and the monarch of His church; and with the whole body of the church, sunk in the grossest ignorance, superstition, and immorality. We

have then presented to our view a very small number of humble and obscure individuals led to raise their voice against this state of things, to expose its inconsistency in all respects with the will of God revealed in His word, and to reject the usurped authority of those who presided over it. We see vast power and extraordinary appliances put forth by the potentates of the earth— civil and ecclesiastical— to crush this opposition, but without success. We see these humble individuals, in the face of difficulties only inferior to those which the apostles encountered, attaining to a measure of success, and achieving results second only to those which inspired men enjoyed and effected, —results bearing most materially upon the temporal and spiritual condition of men, and still largely affecting the state of the world; and in connection with the origin, progress, and results of this great movement, our attention is directed to a long series of interesting transactions, in which the counsels of monarchs, the intrigues of politicians, and the conflicts of armies, were strikingly directed and overruled of God for aiding the efforts of His servants, for frustrating the machinations of His enemies, and accomplishing His own purposes, both of judgment and of mercy. The men whom God employed in this work must be objects of no ordinary interest to all who feel concerned about the promoting of God's glory, and the advancement of His cause. It must be at once useful and delightful to examine who and what they were, what natural endowments they possessed, what spiritual gifts and graces the Lord bestowed upon them; and how their character and conduct were influenced by the circumstances in which they were placed, how they bore their trials, discharged their duties, and improved their opportunities. It is abundantly evident, that, with all their excellences, the Reformers were men of like passions with ourselves, and not unfrequently exhibited in their words and actions the common infirmities of even renewed human nature. But this, too, opens up to us additional sources of interest and instruction in examining their history; for we are not only entitled, but bound, to notice their errors, infirmities, and shortcomings, and the bearing of these upon the cause they supported, and the objects they aimed at, —and thus to learn useful lessons for the regulation of our own views and conduct. It is important to acquire a familiarity with the principal transactions which constitute the Reformation, and with the lives and character of the principal Reformers. But it is not my intention

to dwell upon historical or biographical matter, —to trace the connection of events in providence, however important, —or to delineate the character of men, however excellent and useful. This has been done abundantly in works which are easily accessible. We must restrict ourselves to the theology of the sixteenth century.

This is by far the most important feature in the history of the church of this period. The great distinguishing fact of the Reformation was the revival and restoration of sound doctrine, of the true principles taught in the sacred Scriptures in regard to the worship of God and the way of a sinner's salvation; and another, next in importance to this in a theological point of view, was the way in which this restoration of the true doctrines of God's word was received by the Church of Rome, or, in other words, the formal adoption and consecration by the Council of Trent, in opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers, of many of those errors in doctrine and practice which had been growing up in the church during a period of about fourteen hundred years. The restoration, then, of the doctrine, worship, and government of the church to a large measure at least of apostolic purity, on the one hand; and, on the other, the perpetuation by supposed infallible authority, as the creed of the Church of Rome, of many of the heresies and corruptions which had grown up during the long intervening period, —form the great features of the sixteenth century, in a theological point of view; and the examination of these subjects in the light of God's word will afford abundant materials for profitable and interesting reflection.

The system of theology adopted by the Reformers was, in its leading features, correctly deduced from the word of God, and deservedly retains its place in the symbolical books of most of the Reformed churches. Theological science may, indeed, be said to have been considerably altered and extended since the era of the Reformation; but these changes, in so far as they are improvements, respect more the form and aspect in which the scheme of divine truth is represented and established, than the substance of the materials of which it is composed: they relate much more to the precise meaning of particular statements of Scripture, than to the great general conclusions which ought to be deduced from an examination of its contents. The doctrines of the Reformers with regard

to the total depravity of fallen man, and the utter servitude or bondage of his will, with reference to anything spiritually good, in consequence of this depravity; his inability to do anything for his own salvation, either by meriting aught at God's hand, or by effecting any real improvement upon his own character and condition; his justification by God's free grace upon the ground of Christ's righteousness received by faith alone; the sovereign purposes and efficacious agency of God in providing and applying to men the redemption purchased by Christ; and the true place occupied by the church as a society, by its ordinances and arrangements, and by everything of an external kind, as distinguished from personal union to Christ by faith in God's great scheme of salvation;— on all these points the doctrines of the Reformers can be proved to be in full accordance with the sacred Scriptures, and to have been only confirmed by the assaults which have been made upon them. They have been opposed not only by Papists, but by Protestants. They have been assailed by men who professed to be greatly concerned for the dignity of human nature and the interests of morality. They have been attacked more or less openly by superficial and conceited men, who, professing great zeal for the interests of religion and the conversion of sinners, have devised easier and simpler methods of effecting these results. But the Lord has ever raised up men well qualified to defend these doctrines, and He has ever honoured them as the instruments of accomplishing His purposes of mercy. These doctrines honour Him, and He will honour them. He will continue, as in time past, to make them the instruments, in the hand of His Spirit, of bringing men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto Himself; and as, at the time of the Reformation, He employed these doctrines, and the men to whom He had taught them, for inflicting a deadly wound upon His great adversary, the apostate Church of Rome, so He will continue to employ the same instrumentality in all future contests with the man of sin, until that system, and every other that may set itself in opposition to His revealed will and purposes, shall be destroyed by the breath of His mouth, and consumed by the brightness of His coming.

It is important to mark what the doctrines were, which, at the commencement of the Reformation, the Church of Rome, as such, may be fairly held to have publicly and officially adopted, especially as this

inquiry is connected with some discussions of general interest which have attracted much attention in the present day. I have already referred to Dr Field's celebrated work "On the Church," in the third edition of which, published in 1635, there is an appendix to the third book, where, as the title bears, "it is clearly proved that the Latin or Western Church, in which the Pope tyrannized, was, and continued, a true orthodox and Protestant church, and that the devisers and maintainers of Romish errors and superstitious abuses were only a faction in the same, at the time when Luther, not without the applause of all good men, published his propositions against the profane abuses of Papal indulgences." This doctrine was very acceptable to the Tractarians of our own day in the earlier stages of their progress; because, if true, it enabled them to maintain that the Reformers, at least the Anglican ones, had never seceded from the Latin or Western Church, but had merely reformed, in opposition to the Pope, some corruptions which had grown up in the church, though never sanctioned by it; that it was the same church which subsisted, and of which they were office-bearers and members, before and after the Reformation; and that it was only the novelties introduced by the Council of Trent after the Reformation, and the tyranny of the Papal See in enforcing them, that obstructed the union of the Latin or Western Church upon Catholic principles. These were very favourite notions with the Tractarians for a time, chiefly for this reason, that they enabled them to give a sort of vindication of the Reformation; and, at the same time, to avoid representing it as giving any sanction to the right of men, in the exercise of their own private judgment as to the truth of doctrines, to set themselves in opposition to the authority of the church. At length, however, the more able and honest men among them came to see that this was a weak and indefensible compromise, and convinced themselves that the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent afforded no more adequate ground for renouncing, or remaining in a state of separation from, the catholic church, than those doctrines which had been publicly sanctioned before Luther and Zwingli began the work of Reformation.

Another reason for adverting to this subject, independently of this special argument and discussion, is, that we meet with some diversity of statement even among approved Protestant authors upon the matter

referred to, —most of them, indeed, asserting that there were some important errors which were generally taught in the Church of Rome, but not formally sanctioned by the church, as such, till the Council of Trent; and others, though not absolutely denying this statement, thinking it true only to a very limited extent; while the opposite extreme to this, —viz., that no heresies warranting and requiring secession had been formally and fully adopted by the Church of Rome before the commencement of the Reformation, —has been adopted by others besides Dr Field, who were not Tractarians. I cannot enter into detail upon this subject, —which might easily be drawn out to almost any length as an important department in the history of theology, —but will briefly state the substance of what appears to me to be capable of being established by satisfactory evidence with respect to it, notwithstanding the difficulty, or rather impossibility, —obviously fatal to the ordinary claims and professions of the Papists, —of ascertaining what are, and what are not, oecumenical and infallible councils binding the whole church by their decisions. Unguarded and extreme statements upon this subject are not unfrequently found in Protestant authors; but the general truth upon the point may, I think, be fairly comprehended in the two following positions: — First, the Latin or Western Church, as such, under the dominion of the Pope, had, before the Reformation, publicly and officially sanctioned such doctrinal errors as rendered it lawful and necessary to abandon her communion, and had sanctioned them in such a way that she could not retract them without thereby contradicting and renouncing all her claims to obedience and submission;— and, secondly, there are some important doctrinal errors now forming part of the recognised creed of the Church of Rome, which, though generally taught there before the Reformation, did not receive the formal sanction of the church, as such, till the Council of Trent.

With respect to the first of these positions, —viz., that before the Reformation the Latin or Western Church was officially and irrevocably committed to important doctrinal errors, which fully warranted secession from her communion, —I do not mean to attempt a detail of all the errors that can be established against her, but will merely refer to a few of the most important and notorious.

Protestants have usually received, as scriptural and orthodox, the doctrinal decisions of the first four general councils, and even of the fifth and sixth; though in all of them increasingly, —and especially in the last two, —many deviations from the scriptural primitive practice with respect to the government and worship of the church were countenanced, and too much evidence was given of the growing influence of a worldly and secular spirit in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. But then the very next general council, —the seventh, or the second Council of Nice, in the eighth century, —involved the church, Eastern and Western, —for it is received by the Greek as well as by the Latin Church, —in all the guilt, theoretical and practical, of idolatry; for it formally and fully sanctioned and enjoined the worship of images, —thus at once teaching an important doctrinal error, and sanctioning an idolatrous practice. The Council of Trent, in its decree about the worship of images, founds mainly upon the authority of this second Council of Nice, and certainly gives no decision upon the subject which the acts of that council did not fully warrant; and consequently it pronounced no judgment upon this point, the guilt of which had not rested upon the whole church, as such, for more than seven hundred years before the Reformation: for the opposition made to the decisions of the second Nicene Council by a provincial synod at Frankfort, under the auspices of the Emperor Charlemagne, though a very important historical fact, and very annoying to the Romanists, did not last long, or accomplish much against the prevailing tide of idolatry; and certainly it does not affect the truth of the position, that the decrees of this council in favour of image-worship were received and acted upon by the whole church for many centuries before the appearance of Luther.

The same position holds true in substance of the other leading department of Romish idolatry, or rather polytheism, —viz., the invocation and worship of the Virgin Mary, and of saints and angels. We say in substance, because there is no such formal decision of any oecumenical council preceding that of Trent in support of these practices, and the doctrines on which they are based; and the reasons of this are, that they crept in at an earlier period than image-worship: at least the invocation and worship! of saints, though not of Mary, advanced more gradually, and at length prevailed universally in the church, without calling forth much public opposition, or requiring any formal decision of

a council to maintain them, —facts which emboldened the Council of Trent to perpetrate the deliberate falsehood of asserting that " they were, in accordance with the practice of the catholic and apostolic church, handed down from the earliest period of the Christian religion, and sanctioned by the consent of the holy fathers and the decrees of the sacred councils,"— without thinking it needful to refer to any specific evidence or testimony in support of the allegation. But though there is no formal decision of any oecumenical council previous to the Reformation in favour of the invocation and worship of saints and angels, there can be no question that the doctrine and practice of the church as to the substance of this matter had been conclusively and irrevocably fixed for many centuries, and that the Council of Trent did not go one step upon this point beyond what had been universally approved and practised by the church for many hundred years. It is true that, before the Reformation, there had been discussions and disputes among Romanists themselves as to the kind and degree of the worship or cultus that was to be paid to saints and images, and as to the foundations on which it rested. But the Council of Trent took good care not to decide these knotty points; and they remain undecided to this day, still occasionally giving rise to differences of opinion among the defenders of Popish idolatry. In regard, then, to the important charge of idolatry and polytheism brought by Protestants against the Church of Rome, —a charge including at once doctrinal error and sinful practice, —it is perfectly plain that the whole guilt of it had been incurred by the church, as such, long before the Reformation, and that this guilt was not even aggravated by anything that was done by the Council of Trent. It is true, indeed, that some of the earliest Reformers, and especially Luther, did not rest much upon this charge of idolatry, or see fully, for some time at least, the guilt which it involved; but the Protestant system, as developed and defended by the comprehensive master mind of Calvin, brought out this idolatrous corruption of the worship of God as a leading charge against the Church of Rome, and one of the main grounds that rendered it obligatory to secede from her communion.

The other leading errors which it can be proved that the Church of Rome had officially sanctioned before the Reformation were these: — transubstantiation, —the absolute necessity, in order to forgiveness, of

the confession of all mortal sins, etc., to a priest, — the duty of extirpating heretics, and the right of the church to compel the civil power to aid in this work, —as settled by the fourth or great Lateran Council in 1215;— the supremacy of the Pope as the ruler of the universal church, —and the existence of a purgatory after death, in which believers are punished for their purgation, and in which they derive benefit from the prayers and satisfaction offered for them on earth, —as settled by the Council of Florence in 1435;— the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics, —and the non-obligation of communion under both kinds, or, as it is usually called, *communio sub utraque specie*, or, for the sake of brevity, *sub utraque*, —that is, the use of the cup or wine as well as the bread in the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, —as settled by the Council of Constance.

The fourth or great Lateran Council is unanimously regarded by Romanists as oecumenical and infallible; and though a variety of strange and forced expedients have been tried by some of them, especially by the defenders of the Gallican liberties, to get quit of the authority of those of its decisions that involved an assumption of jurisdiction by the church over the civil power— (as, for instance, by alleging that, in pronouncing these decisions, it did not properly act in its ecclesiastical capacity as a council, but by the authority of the civil powers, who were present in great numbers upon the occasion), —yet the binding ecclesiastical authority of all its other decisions has been invariably maintained in the Church of Rome. It established, then, beyond all question the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the change of the whole substance of the bread and wine, after consecration in the Lord's Supper, into the real flesh and blood of Christ, and the necessity, in order to forgiveness, of the confession of all mortal sins to a priest, —the first a monstrous absurdity, and the other a principle of flagrant tyranny, and tending directly to corrupt the doctrine of justification. In regard to confession, the Council of Trent did little more in substance than repeat the canon of the fourth Lateran Council upon this subject, commonly called "*omnis utriusque sexus*," referring to it by name, and formally approving of it. With respect to transubstantiation, though the Council of Trent has expounded it more in detail, and imposed upon the belief of the church some additional absurdities and extravagances in their explanations of it, so as to cut off

the evasions by which some of the more rational Papists, who flourished in the intervening period, endeavoured to soften or modify the canon of the Council of Lateran; yet there can be no doubt that the whole substance of the doctrine of the church, —of all to which the Church of Rome is even now committed, —was really contained in that canon, and of course became the formal doctrine of the church in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In regard to the Council of Florence, it can scarcely be said to be unanimously admitted to be oecumenical by the Romanists; for its claim to this character is denied by some, though not by all, of the defenders of the Gallican liberties. This denial is based mainly upon its having been set up by Pope Eugenius IV. in opposition to the Council of Basle, which was sitting at the same time, and which the French generally regard as oecumenical. The more decided and consistent defenders of the Gallican liberties maintain that it was illegal and incompetent for Pope Eugenius to dissolve, as he did, the Council at Basle, and to transfer its sittings first to Ferrara, then to Florence; and those more courtly French authors, who, like Natalis Alexander, maintain that the Council of Florence was legitimately convoked, and therefore oecumenical, are virtually forced, in defending this position, to throw their Gallican principles overboard for the time. But, after all, this is more a question of form than substance; for the doctrinal decisions of the Council of Florence have been universally received as sound and orthodox even by those Romanists who entertained great doubts as to the legal question of its formal authority. Upon this point the statement of Alexander is unquestionably well founded. It is in these words: "*Denique Florentina synodus, ratione saltern dogmatum ab ea finitorum, oecumenica totius ecclesiae catholicae consensu praedicatur.* With respect to purgatory, the Council of Florence went at least as far as the Council of Trent, which on this point, and on the kindred topic of indulgences, spoke with extreme caution and reserve, though plainly enough indicating that the acknowledged doctrines of the church upon these points contained more than they thought it expedient at the time to declare. With respect to the supremacy of the Romish See and of the Pope, the decree of the Council of Florence, which does not assert either the Pope's personal infallibility or his superiority over a general council, is admitted in terminis by the Gallican clergy, —and, of

course, by all Romanists, —as the doctrine of the church, though the Ultramontanists do not regard it as going far enough, or bringing out the whole truth upon the subject. And it is quite certain that the Council of Trent did not, by any formal decision, teach any other doctrine upon this fundamental principle of Popery than what the Church had been already committed to by the Council of Florence. Indeed, I do not know any sufficient evidence to prove that the Romish Church, as such, ever has been, or is now, justly chargeable with teaching any other doctrine upon this subject than what was decreed by the Council of Florence, although very many Papists have taught, and without any censure, that the Pope is personally infallible, and is superior to a general council; and although this, which is certainly the prevailing opinion among them, seems to be the natural result to which some of the acknowledged principles of Popery, and some of the grounds on which they are commonly defended, lead. The decision of the Council of Florence upon this subject, contained in what is called the "Decretum Unionis," or the Decree of Union with the Greeks, is this, "that the apostolic see and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy or supremacy over the whole world; that he is the successor of St Peter, the prince of the apostles, the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that in St Peter full power was given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ of feeding, ruling, and governing the universal church." This, then, was the universally and officially received doctrine of the Romish Church for at least nearly a century before the Reformation. All this power and authority were held to belong to the Pope, and to belong to him *jure divino*.

I have said that this decree is admitted in terminis by the Gallican clergy, and, of course, by all Romanists. But it is fair to mention that there is one phrase in it about which some of the French writers have scrupled, unless it be understood and explained in a certain sense. It is the expression, *governing the universal church*." They have no difficulty about ascribing to the Pope, — and that, too, *jure divino*, —a right to govern all the faithful, and all churches; but a right to govern the universal church might be construed so as to imply superiority to a general council, which they refuse to concede to him. A general or oecumenical council is held to represent the universal church, and upon its representing the universal

church its supreme power and authority are based; but even an oecumenical council can scarcely be held to rise higher than the universal church which it represents; and if the Pope has the right to govern the universal church, he might be held by implication to have the right to govern, and, of course, to be superior to, the general council which represents it. Still they do not reject the decree in terminis, as they think it quite capable of a sound sense; but only are anxious to explain that they understand the phrase "universal church" distributively, as they say, i.e., as synonymous with all churches, or every portion of the church, separately considered, and not collectively, as embracing the whole church in its totality represented in a general council. Indeed, Bossuet has shown, in the first book of his great work, entitled, "Defensio declarationis cleri Gallicani," that the French prelates in the Council of Trent objected to the repetition in terminis of the decree of the Council of Florence on the Pope's supremacy, fully admitting, at the same time, that it was capable of a sound sense, consistent with their principles, but afraid that it might also be held to admit of the construction above described, which would have brought it into collision with the Gallican liberties in the article of the superiority of a general council over the Pope; and he praises the candour and moderation of Pope Pius IV. in allowing the subject to be dropped in the council, and to be left without any new decree upon the footing on which the Council of Florence had placed it, and in assigning as his reason, that he did not wish any points to be decided but those in regard to which the fathers of the council were unanimous: "Quare," Bossuetsays, " Pius IV. non agit pugnaciter, neque ea sibi tribuenda contendit, quae multi privato sensu, sed quae omnes communi fide tribuerent, atque a Formula Florentina, recta licet, si bene intelligatur, sed tamen dubia Gallis in tanta re omnem ambiguitatem recusantibus temperandum putat." However, the Florentine formula, as Bossuet calls it, even with the Gallican explanation, — i.e., taking the phrase "universal church" distributively and not collectively, — commits the whole church to the doctrine, as based upon Scripture and divine right, that the Pope is the successor of Peter, that he is the vicar of Christ on earth, the head of the whole Christian church, and invested by Christ with a right to rule and govern all the faithful, and all churches. And this is a doctrine which faithfulness to Christ and His word forbids us to admit, and requires us to renounce; while it also precludes the notion

with which at one time some of the Tractarians seemed to be enamoured, —viz., that if they could only persuade the church of Rome to abandon what they then called the Tridentine novelties, —the innovations introduced by the Council of Trent, — they would willingly acknowledge the Pope of Rome as the patriarch of the whole Western Church, and thus get back, as they imagined, to the catholicity of the fifth century.

The only other topics to which I propose to advert, in illustration of the first general position, are, —the decrees of the Council of Constance as to the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics, — and the non-obligation of communion under both kinds. In regard to the recognised authority of the Council of Constance, the case stands shortly thus. It is regarded by the defenders of the Gallican liberties as oecumenical in all its decisions and actings; while by most other Romanists, the decrees of the fourth and fifth sessions, in which it determined that a general council is superior to a pope, are excepted. But while, on this account, it is not admitted by the Ultramontanists and the immediate adherents of the Pope into the ordinary catalogue of general councils, its decisions upon all other points, except the one specified, are received by them, and by all other Romanists, as oecumenical and infallible; and, therefore, its decrees in regard to keeping faith with heretics, and communion in both kinds, had been fully sanctioned and adopted by the church before the Reformation.

Papists of all sections have in modern times exerted their utmost ingenuity to exempt the Council of Constance and the Church of Rome from the guilt of having sanctioned, as a general principle, the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics, and of having acted upon this principle in the case of John Huss. But all their ingenuity has proved fruitless. It can be proved that this nefarious principle was in substance asserted and acted upon by the Council of Constance in sessions which are admitted by all parties to be oecumenical, and which were afterwards confirmed by the Pope. The Council of Trent has certainly not gone any further in this matter than the Council of Constance had done. In the negotiations which were carried on for a time about the Protestants appearing at the Council of Trent, different forms of safe conduct (*salvus conductus*) were offered to them by the council, which were rejected as unsatisfactory; just as if any safe conduct would have protected them, if the Pope, having them

once in his power, had thought it safe and expedient to put them to death. At length the council, professing to be very desirous that the Protestants should appear, agreed, in their eighteenth session, to give them a fuller and more ample safe conduct than any that had been formerly tendered, to them; and, to remove the apprehensions reasonably inspired by the doctrine and practice of the Council of Constance, they expressly referred to these decisions, formally guaranteed the Protestants against all danger from that quarter, and suspended their force and operation for the present occasion, " quibus in hac parte pro hac vice derogat," —thus affording conclusive proof that the Council of Constance had sanctioned the breaking of faith with heretics, and recognising the principle as still the ordinary doctrine of the church, though its practical operation might be suspended by a competent authority upon a particular occasion.

In regard to communion in one kind, or in both kinds, the Council of Constance had explicitly laid down the doctrine, that there is nothing in Scripture imposing an obligation upon Christians, from deference to Christ's commandment, to communicate in both kinds, and that the church had full power to prohibit the use of the cup or the wine; and it exercised this power in actually forbidding what Christ had so clearly and explicitly enjoined upon His followers. This, then, was the established and undoubted doctrine and practice of the Romish Church for more than a century before the commencement of the Reformation; and the Council of Trent did nothing more upon this subject than repeat the substance of the decree of the Council of Constance, and appeal to the authority of that council in support of their decision.

Thus, then, it appears that, before the Reformation and the Council of Trent, the Romish Church, as such, had by public and official acts incurred the guilt of idolatry and polytheism in worship, heresy in doctrine, and tyranny in government, —had given abundant evidence, not merely by prevalent relaxation of discipline and gross corruptions and abuses in practice, but by public and solemn deeds binding the whole communion, that she had already apostatized from the pure worship and the true doctrine of God, —that she claimed and exercised the right of altering Christ's arrangements, and trampling upon the rights and liberties of His people, —that she required of all her subjects beliefs and

practices which a regard to Christ's honour and authority obliged them to repudiate, —that she required the belief of what was insulting to men's understandings, and the practice of what was opposed to the plain principles of morality; and that, therefore., it was not only warrantable in them, but incumbent upon them, to renounce her authority, to abandon her communion, and to provide for themselves the administration of God's ordinances, and the enjoyment of the means of grace, in a manner more accordant with the scriptural and primitive standard, and in circumstances in which their own consciences might be void of offence, and on which they had better reason to expect the divine blessing.

The second position necessary for bringing out the whole truth upon the state of doctrine in the church at the Reformation, is this, —that there are some important doctrinal errors, now undoubtedly forming part of the recognised creed of the Church of Rome, which, though generally taught in her communion before the Reformation, had not then formally the sanction of the church, as such, and which were for the first time imposed irrevocably by infallible authority in the Council of Trent; and the grounds of this position we would now briefly illustrate.

No one can fail to be struck with the consideration, that in contemplating the principal doctrinal errors which had become part of the formal and recognised creed of the church before the Reformation, there are none which are very closely or directly connected with the essential principles bearing on the way of a sinner's salvation, —none that very immediately impinged upon what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; and yet Protestants now generally charge the Church of Rome with teaching dangerous error upon these most important subjects. In truth, this charge is mainly based upon grounds furnished by the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, upon statements which were sanctioned by that council, but which could not be proved to have been previously adopted by the church, as such, or by any authority entitled, upon her own principles, to represent her. Pelagianism, — which, if we take in also the modified form of it, commonly called semi-Pelagianism, may be held virtually to comprehend all that is anti-evangelical, everything that has been put forth by professing Christians in opposition to scriptural views of the doctrines of grace, —had, chiefly through the influence of Augustine, been

condemned in general, or in the gross, by several Popes in the fifth century, and by the General Council of Ephesus. The decrees of the African Synod in the fifth, and of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, condemning explicitly and in detail Pelagian and semi-Pelagian errors, had, though not formally adopted by the universal church, or by any oecumenical council, been generally treated with respect and deference, when any reference was made to these topics; and no evidence has been produced to prove that, down to the Reformation, the church, as such, had formally and officially incurred the guilt of rejecting or condemning any of the leading principles of the Augustinian system of theology, or of setting itself in direct and palpable opposition to the doctrines of grace. Accordingly, Protestants have had no great difficulty in producing testimonies in support of scriptural or evangelical principles from men who lived in the communion of the Romish Church from Augustine to Luther, and even during the period that intervened between the commencement of the Reformation and the Council of Trent. There can be no question, however, that Pelagian and semi-Pelagian views had deeply tainted the ordinary teaching and authorship of the church long before the Reformation; and, indeed, we may say from the second century downwards.

The truth is, that Pelagian sentiments, or corruptions of the scriptural views of the doctrines of grace, are uniformly found to accompany a low state of personal religion, —these two things invariably acting and reacting upon each other, and operating reciprocally as cause and effect. The whole of the general bearing and tendency of the Romish system was fitted at once to destroy personal religion, and to pervert or eradicate evangelical doctrine. Had Satan not succeeded in effecting both these objects, — although, indeed, the one necessarily implies or produces the other, —his masterpiece would have proved a failure. But he was permitted to succeed; and the consequence was, that, for many centuries before the Reformation, personal piety had in a great measure disappeared from the church; the true doctrines of the gospel, —at least true scriptural views of the way of a sinner's salvation, —were almost wholly unknown. Pelagianism, though not formally sanctioned by the church, pervaded the general teaching of her functionaries; and of the few who were not entirely indifferent about all religion, it might be said, that,

being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

This state of matters, so far as speculative doctrine is concerned, was greatly promoted by the labours and writings of the schoolmen. Many of them were men of acute and vigorous intellect; but personal religion was in the scholastic age at a very low ebb: the humble and prayerful study of the word of God had been wholly abandoned; and the necessary consequence, upon the principle already adverted to, was, that their speculations upon theological subjects assumed, upon the whole, a decidedly Pelagian or anti-evangelical complexion. The schoolmen, indeed, may be fairly and justly regarded as being substantially the Rationalists of the middle ages; and though they continued to hold the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement, —chiefly, it would almost seem, as affording scope and materials for presumptuous, if not profane, speculations, —the general character of their views upon most of the other doctrines of the Christian system, resembled to a considerable extent that of the low Pelagianism of modern Socinians. It is quite true that valuable testimonies in support of some scriptural and anti-Pelagian doctrines have been produced from the writings of the scholastic divines, and especially from the two most eminent of them all, —Peter Lombard, the Master of Sentences, and Thomas Aquinas, commonly called the Angelic Doctor, or the Angel of the Schools, who had also the honour of being canonized. But the points on which these men held anti-Pelagian views, were chiefly (though not exclusively) those which were not matters of pure revelation, which were based upon metaphysical reasonings as well as scriptural statements, —in regard to which powerful and vigorous intellects, if they got anything like fair play, might lead men to sound notions, even though they were not seeking and enjoying the guidance of the Spirit and word of God; and with respect to which error is not so certainly the accompaniment of ungodliness, as in the case of some other doctrines of Scripture, which, perhaps, come still more directly and immediately into contact with the ordinary apprehensions and workings of the human mind when first directed to religious subjects: in short, they were the doctrines of predestination, providence, divine agency, and necessity, —topics on which we have seen in modern times such men as

Hobbes, Collins, and Priestley, —an atheist, an infidel, and a Socinian, — maintaining views in some respects very similar to those which are taught in the sacred Scriptures, and embodied in the scheme of evangelical and Calvinistic truth. Among the schoolmen in general, original sin was very much explained away; and the natural ability of man, as he is, to do the will of God, and to contribute to effect his own salvation, was broadly taught. Justification, as a distinct head of doctrine, was thrown into the background, and was seldom formally discussed; while all scriptural principles regarding it were virtually overturned by the errors held upon the points just referred to, and by the open assertion of the merit of good works, and the justifying efficacy of the sacraments. Pelagian principles upon these important points, though deeply pervading the speculations of the generality of the schoolmen, incurred no opposition or censure from the ecclesiastical authorities, just because they were very congenial to the prevailing sentiments and character of the age in regard to religion. These authorities, indeed, would still have professed, had there been any call to make the profession, that they respected the authority of Augustine, and rejected Pelagianism; while the fact is unquestionable, that the ordinary teaching of the schools and of the pulpit had become Pelagian to its core.

The church, indeed, in its public and official capacity, could not be said to have sanctioned these doctrinal errors; but they pervaded the public teaching of her functionaries, and she made no effort to check them. Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury in the fourteenth century, commonly called Doctor Profundus, whose work, "De causa Dei contra Pelagium," marks an era of some importance in the history of theology, and contains a valuable defence of evangelical truth, though in a somewhat barbarous and scholastic form, deploras bitterly the general prevalence of Pelagian error over the church, and earnestly appeals to the Pope to interpose to check it, addressing him in these words: "Rise, Peter, why art thou sleeping I" But Peter did not find it convenient to hear him, and continued to sleep on; and, in consequence, the Pelagian heresy, in its grossest and most injurious forms, prevailed generally over the whole church in the beginning of the sixteenth century. A large portion of the zeal and energy of the Reformers was directed against these prevalent errors, which they ascribed very much to the influence of the schoolmen

(of whom they commonly spoke in terms of perhaps more than merited contempt), and which they justly regarded as dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to the souls of men. In regard more especially to Luther, it may be said that his main vocation, work, and achievements, were just to expose and resist the prevalent Pelagian heresies which perverted the way of salvation, and corrupted the scheme of divine truth. His earlier opponents, fortified by the authority of the schoolmen, and the toleration at least of the ecclesiastical authorities, were open enough in defending Pelagian error, and in opposing the principles of evangelical truth, —the scriptural doctrines of grace. Before, however, the Council of Trent assembled, the Romanists had been impressed with the necessity of being a little more cautious in their statements upon these subjects, if they wished to keep up the profession which the church had all along made, more or less fully and honestly, of rejecting Pelagianism.

In a production of Melancthon's, which displays all the infirmities of his character, and is in many respects extremely discreditable to him, written in the year 1536, when he was carrying on some negotiations with Francis I. of France, we find the following statement with reference to the growing soundness of Romanists on some of these questions since the commencement of the Reformation, and the consequent probability of an adjustment of all differences by mutual concessions: " *Controversial de justificatione ipsa tempora mollierunt. Nam de multis convenit inter doctos, de quibus fuerunt initio magna certamina. Nemo jam defendit ista absurda quae leguntur apud Scholasticos, quod homines possint Legi Dei satisfacere, quod mereantur remis-sionem peccatorum dignitate suorum operum, quod sint justii, id est, accepti propter propriam dignitatem, et legis impletionem. Omnes jam fatentur fide opus esse, hoc est fiducia in Christum in remissione peccatorum, de qua fide nulla est mentio in Scholasticis. Omnes jam fatentur interesse gloriae Christi, ut illa fides inculcetur hominibus. Convenit item inter Doctos de libero arbitrio, de peccato originis et de plerisque aliis quaestionibus conjunctis.*", There is some truth in these positions, viewed merely as statements of fact, though, taken even in that light, they are far stronger than the evidence warrants: for the Romanists had not become quite so orthodox as Melancthon's statement represents them; while the inference which Melancthon desired to deduce from them, of the possibility and

probability of a reconciliation with Rome, was wholly unwarranted. The Romanists, however, were feeling the necessity of throwing off the gross Pelagianism of the schoolmen, which had generally prevailed, and been defended, at the commencement of the Reformation; and in the Council of Trent their ingenuity was exerted to combine these three objects: First, to find something to condemn in the doctrines of the Reformers; secondly, to avoid as much as possible a formal condemnation of the scholastic doctrines; and, thirdly, to deprive their opponents of any very tangible ground for charging them with Pelagianism. How far they succeeded in combining these objects, we shall afterwards have occasion to consider; and in the meantime we may remark that the investigation will require some care, and is not unattended with difficulties: for it is not really so easy, as might at first sight appear, to explain and to make palpable how it is, and to what extent, that the Church of Rome, as judged nakedly by the decisions of the Council of Trent, does pervert the gospel of the grace of God. But what we have to observe at present, and with reference to the subject under consideration, is, that though at the time of the Reformation the Pelagian heresy prevailed almost universally in the Church of Rome, and though in consequence she incurred great guilt, and did fearful injury to the souls of men, she had not then formally and officially, as a church, given her sanction to Pelagian errors; and that to whatever extent she may be now, as a church, publicly and formally responsible for anti-evangelical principles, directly injurious to the souls of men, —this is owing to her refusing to embrace the pure gospel light which the Reformation introduced, and to the proceedings of her last infallible council. Protestants have generally held, —and we have no doubt that the position can be established, —that the Council of Trent did, in its hatred to the doctrines of the Reformers, and in opposition to its obvious policy and general intention, erect into articles of faith, to be thereafter implicitly received by all men, various points which had formerly been left free as subjects of general speculation, and on which a considerable diversity of opinion prevailed among themselves; and that in this way the Church of Rome has become irrevocably committed to some important doctrinal errors, the guilt of holding which she had not formally incurred in her official capacity at the commencement of the Reformation, and from the guilt of which, therefore, she might then, without any sacrifice of her principles, have escaped, and, of course,

might have been still exempted, but for the decisions of the' Council of Trent.

The main topics of a doctrinal kind which are set forth with anything like minuteness of detail in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, are these: —the rule of faith, original sin, justification, and the sacraments, both generally and particularly; the sacrament of the Eucharist, or of the altar, as they often call it, including the sacrifice of the mass; the sacrament of penance, including the subjects of confession, satisfaction, and absolution; and the sacrament of orders, including the hierarchy, or the ordinary government of the church, —the heads respectively under which these subjects are commonly ranked and discussed in Popish works on theology. Now, upon all these subjects it can be proved, I think, that the Council of Trent irrevocably committed the Church of Rome to important doctrinal errors, which, though in most cases they had prevailed in the church long before, had hitherto been left free as topics of speculation, and had not been explicitly settled by any binding ecclesiastical authority.

The church had not before, in her official capacity, put tradition on a level with the written word, or thrust the apocryphal books into the canon of Scripture, or formally set up her own authority and the unanimous consent of the fathers as the standards according to which the Scripture must be interpreted. These principles had been largely acted upon in the Church of Rome, and with the most injurious effects upon the interests of sound doctrine and pure religion. But the church, as such, had not before incurred the guilt of corrupting the standard of God's truth, and trampling by a general law of universal obligation upon the ordinary rights of men in investigating it. She had, indeed, as we have already seen, required of her subjects the belief of some important doctrinal errors, which the word of God condemned, and which, consequently, a due regard to its authority should have obliged them to reject; but until after the Reformers, rejecting all human authority and mere ecclesiastical traditions in religious matters, appealed to the written word of God alone, the Church of Rome had not fully incurred the guilt of authoritatively and avowedly polluting the very fountains of divine truth, and of making the word of God of none effect.

In regard to original sin, the old decisions of the church against the Pelagians prevented the Council of Trent from going so far astray as otherwise the speculations of the schoolmen might have led them; and, accordingly, the formal symbolical doctrine of Rome upon this subject is much sounder than that of many men who have borne the name of Protestants, though she has contrived by other means to neutralize the wholesome influence which scriptural views of original sin usually exert upon men's conceptions of the whole scheme of divine truth. But the main error which the council imposed upon the belief of the church on this topic, —viz., that concupiscence in the regenerate, by which is meant very much what we commonly understand by indwelling sin, is not sin, — had not before received any formal ecclesiastical sanction, and that, therefore, it might be, and in point of fact was, opposed by some who continued in the Papal communion.

The doctrine of justification occupied a very prominent place in the minds and in the writings of the Reformers. There is no doctrine of greater intrinsic importance, and there was certainly none that had been more thoroughly obscured and perverted for a very long period. Even Augustine's statements upon this point were not free from error and ambiguity; and this doctrine, as we have had occasion to observe in another connection, though the main subject of controversy in the church in the apostolic age, had never again been fully and formally discussed till the age of the Reformation: not certainly because Satan's enmity to the scriptural truth upon this important point had been mitigated, but because he had fully succeeded in condemning and burying it without controversy, and without the formal exercise of ecclesiastical authority. There was, indeed, no previous decision of the church which could be said to have formally and explicitly defined anything upon this subject; and when the Reformers brought out from God's word, and under the guidance of His Spirit, the truth upon this point, which had been buried and trampled on almost since the apostolic age, so far, at least, as concerns a correct scientific exposition of it (for we willingly admit that there were many who, with confused and erroneous speculative views upon the subject, were practically and in heart relying wholly upon the one sacrifice and the one righteousness of Christ), the Church of Rome was free, —unfettered by any previous ecclesiastical proceeding, —to have

embraced and proclaimed the doctrines of Scripture regarding it. We learn from Father Paul, in his history of the Council of Trent, that when the fathers of Trent came to consider the subject of justification, they felt themselves somewhat perplexed, because it was not a subject which they had been accustomed to discuss, as it formed no distinct head in the scholastic theology. Original sin had been largely discussed in the schools, and therefore the fathers were somewhat at home in it. But as to justification, not one of the schoolmen, as Father Paul says, had even conceived, and far less refuted, Luther's views regarding it. The fathers had therefore to proceed upon an unknown track; and as they did not take the word of God for their guide, they introduced for the first time into the formally recognised theology of the Church of Rome, statements which, though cautiously and skilfully prepared, can be shown to contradict the sacred Scriptures, to misrepresent the divine method of justification, and thereby to endanger the souls of men.

The history of the sacraments in the theology of the church is similar in some respects to that of justification. Corrupt and dangerous notions as to their nature, objects, and efficacy, had been early introduced, had spread far, and done much injury to religion; but the church, as such, was just as little tied up at the period of the Reformation by formal and official decisions regarding them, —I mean, chiefly so far as concerns those general points usually discussed by theologians under the head "*de sacramentis in genere*,"— as regarding justification. But there was this important difference, —viz., that the sacraments had been very fully discussed by the schoolmen, both generally and particularly. Indeed, the doctrine of the sacraments, in the endless detail of minute speculation that has been brought to bear upon it, may be said to be very much the product of the disputations of the scholastic theologians. The fathers of Trent, therefore, were at home upon this topic; and having got over the perplexing subject of justification, they disported themselves more freely amid the inventions and speculations of the schoolmen on the subject of the sacraments, and thus introduced into the recognised theology of the church, upon mere scholastic authority, and with scarcely even a pretence to anything like the sanction of Scripture or primitive tradition, a huge mass of doctrine and ceremony, —most of which had been invented and devised during the three preceding centuries, —which the church as such

had never before adopted, —and which was opposed to the teaching of the sacred Scriptures, and fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon the purity of God's worship, the accurate exhibition of the way of salvation, and the eternal welfare of men.

XVIII. Council of Trent

The Council of Trent marks a very important era in the history of the church, because, as has been often remarked, its termination, —which took place in the year 1563, the year before the death of Calvin, —virtually marks the termination of the progress of the Reformation, and the commencement of that revived efficiency of Popery which has enabled it to retain, ever since, all at least that was then left to it, and even to make some encroachments upon what the Reformation had taken from it. How far this result is to be ascribed to the Council of Trent, directly or indirectly; and in what way, if at all, it was connected with the proceedings of the council, are very interesting subjects of investigation to the philosophic student of history. But the importance of the Council of Trent, in a more directly theological point of view, depends upon the considerations, that its records embody the solemn, formal, and official decision of the Church of Rome, —which claims to be the one, holy, catholic church of Christ, —upon all the leading doctrines taught by the Reformers; that its decrees upon all doctrinal points are received by all Romanists as possessed of infallible authority; and that every Popish priest is sworn to receive, profess, and maintain everything defined and declared by it.

God was pleased, through the instrumentality of the Reformers, to revive the truths revealed in His word on the most important of all subjects, which had been long involved in obscurity and error. They were then brought fully out and pressed upon men's attention, and the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent show us in what way the Church of Rome received and disposed of them. After full time for deliberation and preparatory discussion, she gave a solemn decision on all these important questions, —a decision to which she must by her fundamental principles unchangeably adhere, even until her eventful and most marvellous history shall terminate in her destruction, until she shall sink like a great millstone, and be found no more at all.

It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the decisions of the Council of Trent

form the exclusive standard of the doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged; for it is but the last of eighteen general councils, all whose decisions they profess to receive as infallible, though they are not agreed among themselves as to what the eighteen councils are that are entitled to this implicit submission. Still the Reformers brought out fully at length, —though Luther attained to scriptural views on a variety of points only gradually after he had begun the work of Reformation, —all that they thought objectionable in the doctrines and practices which prevailed in the Church of Rome; and on most of these topics that church gave her decision in the Council of Trent. There were, indeed, some questions, — and these of no small importance, —on which the Council of Trent was afraid, or was not permitted, to decide. One of these was the real nature and extent of the Papal supremacy, —a subject on which, though Bellarmine says that the whole of Christianity hangs upon it, it is scarcely possible to ascertain up to this day what the precise doctrine of the Church of Rome is. The Court of Rome succeeded, in general, in managing the proceedings of the council as it chose; but it had sometimes, in the prosecution of this object, to encounter considerable difficulties, and was obliged to have recourse to bribery, intimidation, and many species of fraud and manoeuvring; and even with all this, it was on several occasions not very certain beforehand as to the results of the discussions in the council on some points in which its interests were involved. On this account the Popes were afraid to allow the subject of their own supremacy to be brought into discussion; and those, whether Protestants or Papists, who wish to know the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this important subject, must go back to the Councils of Constance and Florence, and interpret and reconcile their decisions as they best can.

The Church of Rome, of course, can never escape from the responsibility of what was enacted and decided at Trent; but she may have incurred new and additional responsibility by subsequent decisions, even though there has not since been any oecumenical council. And there are additional decisions on some doctrinal points discussed in the Council of Trent, which, on principles formerly explained, are binding upon the Church of Rome, and must be taken into account in order to understand fully her doctrines upon certain questions. I refer here more particularly to the

bulls of Popes Pius V. and Gregory XIII., condemning the doctrines of Baius, the precursor of Jansenius; the bull of Innocent X., condemning the five propositions of Jansenius; and the bull Unigenitus by Clement XI., condemning the Jansenist or Augustinian doctrines of Quesnel, — documents which contain more explicit evidence of the Pelagianism (taken in a historical sense) of the Church of Rome than any that is furnished by the decrees of the Council of Trent. That the bull Unigenitus is binding upon the Church of Rome is generally admitted, and may be said to be certain; and the obligation of the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius and Jansenius rests upon the very same grounds. This is now generally admitted by Romanists, though, at the time when these bulls were published, there were some who denied their authority, and refused to submit to them. It may be worth while to mention, as an evidence of this, that Moehler, the most skilful and accomplished defender of Popery in the present century, having, in the earlier editions of his Symbolism, spoken of a particular opinion in regard to the moral constitution of man before the fall as generally held by the Romish Doctors, but as not an article of faith or *de fide*, and binding upon the church; and having afterwards found, — as, indeed, he might have seen in Bellarmine, — that the denial of the opinion in question had been condemned by Popes Pius and Gregory in their bulls against Baius, retracts his error, and asserts that the opinion must on this ground be received as a binding article of faith.

This incident, though intrinsically insignificant, may be regarded as relatively of some importance, — not only as showing that the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius is acknowledged to be binding upon the Church of Rome, but still more, as illustrating the difficulty of ascertaining what are the recognised and authoritative doctrines of that church, when such a man as Moehler, who had been nine years a professor of theology in a celebrated German university before he published his Symbolism, fell into a blunder of this sort. But although it is certain that, in order to have a full and complete view of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, — the doctrines to which that church, with all her claims to infallibility, is pledged, and for which we are entitled to hold her responsible, — we must in our investigations both go farther back, and come later down, than the Council of Trent; still it remains true, that the

decrees and canons of that council furnish the readiest and most authentic means of ascertaining, to a large extent, what the recognised doctrines of the Church of Rome are, and exhibit the whole of the response which she gave to the chief scriptural doctrines revived by the Reformers; and this consideration has ever given, and ever must continue to give, it a most important place in the history of theology. The Romanists, of course, demand that all professing Christians, i.e., all baptized persons, —for they hold that baptism, heretical or Protestant baptism, subjects all who have received it to the authority of the Pope, the head of the church, —shall receive all the decrees of the Council of Trent as infallibly true, on the ground that, like any other general oecumenical council, it was certainly guided into all truth by the presiding agency of the Holy Ghost.

The style and title which the council assumed to itself in its decrees was, "The holy (or sacrosanct) oecumenical and general Council of Trent, legitimately congregated in the Holy Ghost, and presided over by the legates of the Apostolic See." The title which they were to assume was frequently matter of discussion in the council itself, and gave rise to a good deal of controversy and dissension. Some members of the council laboured long and zealously to effect that, to the title they assumed, there should be added the words, "representing the universal church." This seemed very reasonable and consistent; for it is only upon the ground that general councils represent the universal church, that that special appropriation of the scriptural promises of the presence of Christ and His Spirit, on which their alleged infallibility rests, is based. This phrase, however, was particularly unsavoury to the Popes and their legates, as it reminded them very unpleasantly of the proceedings of the Councils of Constance and Basle in the preceding century; for these councils had based, upon the ground that they represented the universal church, their great principle of the superiority of a council over a Pope, and of its right to exercise jurisdiction over him; and the Papal party succeeded, though not without difficulty, in excluding the expression.

It would, indeed, have been rather a bold step, however consistent, if the members of the Council of Trent had assumed the designation, "representing the universal church;" for they were few in number, and a

large proportion of them belonged to Italy, —being, indeed, just the creatures and hired agents of the Popes, and some of them having been made bishops with mere titular dioceses, just for the purpose of being sent to Trent, that they might vote as the Popes directed them. In the fourth session, —when the council passed its decrees upon the rule of faith, committing the church, for the first time, to the following positions, of some of which many learned Romanists have since been ashamed, though they did not venture openly to oppose them, —viz., that unwritten traditions are of equal authority with the written word; that the apocryphal books of the Old Testament are canonical; that it belongs to the church to interpret Scripture, and that this must be done according to the unanimous consent of the fathers; and that the Vulgate Latin is to be held authentic in all controversies, —there were only about fifty bishops present, and a minority of these were opposed to some of the decisions pronounced. During most of the sittings of the council there were not two hundred bishops present, and these were almost all Italians, with a few Germans and Spaniards; and during the last sittings, under Pope Pius IV., when the council was fuller than ever before, in consequence of the presence of some French bishops and other causes, the largest number that attended was two hundred and seventy, of whom two-thirds— one hundred and eighty-seven— were Italians, thirty-one Spaniards, twenty-six French, and twenty-six from all the rest of the universal church.

If all oecumenical councils are infallible, and if the Council of Trent was oecumenical, and if all this can be demonstrated a priori, then of course we are bound to submit implicitly to all its decisions; but Protestants have generally been of opinion that there was nothing about the Council of Trent which seemed to afford anything like probable grounds for the conviction, that it was either oecumenical or infallible. It was certainly, in point of numbers, a very inadequate representative of the universal church. The men of whom it was composed had not, in general, much about them which, according to the ordinary principles of judgment, should entitle their decisions to great respect and deference. The influences under which the proceedings of the council were regulated, and the manner in which they were conducted, were not such as to inspire much confidence in the soundness of the conclusions to which they came. In short, the history of the Council of Trent is just an epitome

or miniature of the history of the Church of Rome; exhibiting, on the part of the Popes and their immediate adherents, and, indeed, on the part of the council itself, —for the Popes substantially succeeded in managing its affairs as they wished, though sometimes not without difficulty, — determined opposition to God's revealed will, and to the interests of truth and godliness, and a most unscrupulous prosecution of their own selfish and unworthy ends; indeed all deceivableness of unrighteousness— the great scriptural characteristic of the mystery of iniquity. There is a very remarkable passage in Calvin's admirable treatise, "De necessitate Reformandae Ecclesiae," published in 1544, the year before the council first assembled, in which he describes minutely by anticipation what the council, if it were allowed to meet, would do, how its proceedings would be conducted, and what would be the result of its deliberations; and it would not be easy to find an instance in which a prediction proceeding from ordinary human sagacity was more fully and exactly accomplished. Abundant materials to establish its accuracy are to be found not only in Father Paul, but in Pallavicino himself, and in other trustworthy Romish authorities.

Hallam, in his *History of the Literature of Europe during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, has, in his great candour, made some statements about the Council of Trent, of which the Papists boast as concessions of "an eminent Protestant authority," though I really do not know that Hallam had any other claim to be called a Protestant, except that he was not a Romanist. He says, "No general council ever contained so many persons of eminent learning and ability as that of Trent; nor is there ground for believing that any other ever investigated the questions before it with so much patience, acuteness, temper, and desire of truth....Let those who have imbibed a different opinion ask themselves whether they have read Sarpi" — i.e., Father Paul— "through with any attention, especially as to those sessions of the Tridentine Council which preceded its suspension in 1547 and he intimates that he regards this view as diametrically opposed to the representations usually given of the subject by Protestants. Now, in regard to this statement of Hallam's, we have to remark, first, that there is good ground to regard it as representing the council in too favourable a light; and, secondly, that there is not at bottom much in it which Protestants in general have

disputed, or have any interest in disputing. That the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability is undoubtedly true, and has never been questioned. The Church of Rome has almost always had some men of great learning and ability to defend its cause. That it contained at least as many men of learning and ability as any of the previous general councils, —most of them held in times when these qualifications were not particularly abundant, —may also be admitted as highly probable, if we may be allowed to except the first Council of Nice. There is no reason, however, to think, as Hallam alleges, that the Council of Trent contained many men of this description. There is good reason to believe that the learning and ability which existed were to be found much more among the divines and the generals of monastic orders, who were present merely as counsellors or assessors, than among the bishops, who were the only proper judges of the points that came before the council for decision. It is plain, indeed, from the whole of Father Paul's history, that though there was much disputation in the council upon a great variety of topics, this was confined to a very small number of individuals, —there being apparently but few, comparatively, who were qualified to take part in the discussions. There were very few men in the Council of Trent who have been known in subsequent times for anything except their being members of that council, —very few who have acquired for themselves any distinguished or lasting reputation in theological literature.

Still, that there were men in the Council of Trent who were well acquainted with the fathers and the schoolmen, and who were able to discuss, and did discuss, the questions that came before them, with much ability and acuteness, is undeniable. Father Paul's history fully establishes this, and no Protestant, so far as I know, has ever, as Hallam seems to think, disputed it. As to the alleged patience, temper, and desire of truth with which the discussions were conducted, it is admitted that Father Paul's history does not contain a great deal that openly and palpably disproves the allegation, so far as the divines who usually took part in the discussions were concerned. And this ought to be regarded as an evidence that Father Paul did not studiously make it his object, as Romanists allege, to bring the council into contempt; for it is a curious fact that Cardinal Pallavicino, the professed advocate of the council, whose work Hallam admits he had never read, brings out some facts, not

noticed by Father Paul, which give no very favourable impression of the patience and temper of some of the fathers: as, for instance, of one bishop, in the course of a discussion, seizing another by the throat, and tearing his beard; and of the presiding legate and another cardinal who was opposed to the interests of the Pope, discharging against each other fearful torrents of Billingsgate.): As to their alleged desire of truth, it is of course not disputed that the fathers of the council honestly believed the doctrinal decisions which they pronounced to be true, —that where a difference of opinion appeared upon any point, they laboured to convince those who differed from them of their error, and did occasionally succeed on some minor points in producing a conviction to this effect. The theologians who guided the doctrinal decisions of the Council of Trent, no doubt represented fairly enough the theological sentiments that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome before the council assembled. Those of them who had studied theological subjects were of course acquainted with the Protestant arguments before the council was called; and the Reformers certainly did not expect that the council would make their opponents sounder theologians, or more disposed to submit to scriptural evidence, than they had been before. They appeared in the council just as they had done in their polemical writings against the Reformers; and they certainly afforded no evidence that, in virtue of the supposed presiding agency of the Holy Ghost, they either had a greater desire of truth, or actually attained it more fully than formerly.

Protestants, then, do not dispute that the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability; that the doctrinal decisions of the council were in accordance with what the great body of its members really believed to be true; and that considerable pains were taken to put forth their doctrines in the most unobjectionable and plausible form. The leading general statement which Protestants are accustomed to make in regard to the Council of Trent, so far as this aspect of it is concerned, is in substance this, —that there is nothing about it that entitles its decisions to any great respect or deference; and the main grounds upon which they hold this conviction are these: —that its members were few in number, viewed as representing the universal church; that they were not, in general, men at all distinguished for piety, learning, and ability; that, on the contrary, the great body of them were grossly and notoriously

deficient in those qualities; that a large proportion of them were the mere creatures of the Pope, ready to vote for whatever he might wish; that the general management of the proceedings of the council was regulated by the Court of Rome, with a view to the promotion of its own selfish interests; that when difficulties arose upon any points in which these interests were, or were supposed to be, involved, all means, foul or fair, were employed to protect them; and that such was the skill of those who, in the Pope's name, presided over the council, and such the character and the motives of the majority of those who composed it, —that these means, directed to this end, seldom if ever failed of success. All this has been established by the most satisfactory historical evidence; and when this has been proved, it is abundantly sufficient to warrant the conclusion, that the decisions of such a body, so composed, so circumstanced, so influenced, are entitled to but little respect; that there is no very strong antecedent presumption in favour of their soundness; and that they may be examined and tested with all freedom, and without any overpowering sense of the sacredness of the ground on which we are treading.

The two main objects for which the council was professedly called, were, —to decide on the theological questions which had been raised by the Reformers, and to reform the practical corruptions and abuses which it was admitted prevailed in the Church of Rome itself; and its proceedings are divided into two heads, — doctrine and reformation, —the latter forming much the larger portion of its recorded proceedings. It was chiefly on the topics connected with the reformation of the church that the influence of the Pope was brought to bear, —for it was these chiefly that affected his interests; and it was mainly the proceedings upon some of the subjects that rank under this head, which brought out the true character of the men of whom the council was composed, and the influences under which its proceedings were conducted. The Popes were not much concerned about the precise deliverances that might be given upon points of doctrine, except indeed those which might bear upon the government of the church. Upon other doctrinal subjects, it was enough for them to be satisfied that, from the known sentiments of the members of which the council was composed, their decisions would be in opposition to all the leading principles advanced by the Reformers, and in accordance with the theological views that then generally prevailed in the

Church of Rome. Satisfied of this, and not caring much more about the matter, the Popes left the theologians of the council to follow very much their own convictions and impressions upon questions purely doctrinal; and this gave to the discussions upon these topics a degree of freedom and independence, which, had any unworthy interests of the Court of Rome been involved in them, would most certainly have been checked.

The accounts given by Father Paul of the discussions that took place in the council upon doctrinal subjects are very interesting and important, as throwing much light both upon the general state of theological sentiment that then obtained in the Church of Rome, and also upon the meaning and objects of the decrees and canons which were ultimately adopted; and, indeed, a perusal of them may be regarded as almost indispensable to a thorough and minute acquaintance with the theology of the Church of Rome as settled by the Council of Trent. There are two interesting considerations of a general kind which they suggest, neither of them very accordant with "the desire of truth" which Hallam is pleased to ascribe to the council, —first, that the diversity of opinion on important questions, elicited in the discussion, was sometimes so great as apparently to preclude the possibility of their coming to a harmonious decision, which yet seems somehow to have been generally effected; and, secondly, that a considerable number of the doctrines broached and maintained by the Reformers were supported by some members at least in substance, although it seems in general to have been received by the great body of the council as quite a sufficient argument against the truth of a doctrine, that it was maintained by the Protestants. The great objects which the council seems to have kept in view in their doctrinal or theological decisions were these, —first, to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers as full and complete as possible; and, secondly, to avoid as much as they could condemning any of those doctrines which had been matter of controversial discussion among the scholastic theologians, and on which difference of opinion still subsisted among themselves. It was not always easy to combine these objects; and the consequence is, that on many points the decisions of the Council of Trent are expressed with deliberate and intentional ambiguity. The truth of this position is established at once by an examination of the decrees and canons themselves, and by the history both of the discussions which preceded

their formation, and of the disputes to which they have since given rise in the Church of Rome itself. It was probably this, with the awkward consequences to which it was seen that it was likely to lead, that induced Pope Pius IV., in his bull confirming the council, to forbid all, even ecclesiastical persons, of whatever order, condition, or degree, upon any pretext whatever, and under the severest penalties, to publish any commentaries, glosses, annotations, scholia, or any sort of interpretation upon the decrees of the council, without Papal authority; while, at the same time, he directed that, if any one found anything in the decrees that was obscure, or needed explanation, he should go up to the place which the Lord had chosen, —the Apostolic See, the mistress of all the faithful.

It cannot be denied that a great deal of skill and ingenuity were displayed in the preparation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and that advantage had been taken of the discussions which had taken place since the commencement of the Reformation to introduce greater care and caution into the statement and exposition of doctrine, and thus ward off the force of some of the arguments of the Reformers. There is certainly not nearly so much Pelagianism in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, —so much of what plainly and palpably contradicts the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, —as appears in the writings of the earlier Romish opponents of Luther, though there is enough to entitle us to charge the Church of Rome with perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and subverting the scriptural method of salvation.

The canons of the council, as distinguished from the decrees, consist wholly of anathemas against the doctrines ascribed to the Reformers. And here a good deal of unfairness has been practised: advantage has been taken, to a considerable extent, of some of the rash, exaggerated, and paradoxical statements of Luther, much in the same way as in the first bull of Pope Leo condemning him; and in this way statements are, with some appearance of authority, ascribed to Protestants which they do not acknowledge, for which they are not responsible, and which are not at all necessary for the exposition and maintenance of their principles. Leo, in his bull, which was directed avowedly against Luther by name, might be entitled to take up any statement that he had made; and Luther did not complain, in regard to any one of the statements charged upon him, that

he had not made it. But it was unfair in the Council of Trent to take advantage of Luther's rash and unguarded statements, for exciting odium against Protestants in general, who had now explained their doctrines with care and accuracy.

A further artifice resorted to by the Council of Trent in their canons condemning Protestant doctrines, is to take a doctrine which Protestants generally held and acknowledged, —to couple it with some one of the more extreme and exaggerated statements of Luther or of some one else, —and then to include them both under one and the same anathema, evidently for the purpose of laying the odium of the more objectionable statements upon the other which accompanied it. Some of these observations we may afterwards have occasion to illustrate by examples; but our object at present is merely to give a brief summary of the leading general points that should be remembered concerning the decrees and canons of the council, and kept in view and applied in the investigation of them.

XIX. The Doctrine of the Fall

The decrees and canons of the Council of Trent exhibit the solemn and official judgment of the Church of Rome, which claims to be regarded as the one holy, catholic church of Christ, on the principal doctrines which were deduced by the Reformers from the word of God. The first decision of the council upon doctrinal controversial points is that which treats of the rule of faith; but on the consideration of this subject I do not intend to enter. The next was the decree of the fifth session, which professes to treat of original sin; and to the consideration of this topic, in so far as it formed a subject of discussion between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, I propose now to direct attention.

I. Popish and Protestant Views

The phrase Original Sin, —peccatum originis, or peccatum originate, —is used by theologians in two different senses; the things, however, described by it in the two cases differing from each other only as a part does from a whole, and the words, consequently, being used either in a more extended or in a more restricted sense. Sometimes the phrase is employed as a general comprehensive description of all the different elements or ingredients that constitute the sinfulness of the state into which man, through Adam's transgression, fell; and sometimes as denoting only the moral corruption or depravity of his nature, the inherent and universal bias or tendency of man, as he comes into the world, to violate God's laws, which, being the immediate or proximate cause of all actual transgressions, constitutes practically the most important and fundamental feature of his natural condition of sinfulness. It is in this latter and more restricted sense that the phrase is most commonly employed, and it is in this sense that it is used in the standards of our church. The words original sin, indeed, are not directly used in the Confession of Faith, but they occur both in the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms; and though, in the Shorter Catechism, it might be doubted, as a mere question of grammatical construction, whether the words, "

which is commonly called original sin," applied only to the "corruption of his whole nature," which is the immediate antecedent, or included also the other ingredient or constituent elements of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which had been also previously mentioned, —viz., the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the want of original righteousness, —yet any ambiguity in this respect is removed in the fuller exposition given under the corresponding question in the Larger Catechism, where it is plain that the statement made as to the common meaning of the words "original sin," applies it only to the corruption of our nature, —the inherent depravity which is the immediate source of actual transgressions. This observation, however, regards only the meaning of a particular phrase, for the whole of the elements or ingredients of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, are usually expounded and discussed in systems of theology under the general head *De Peccato*; and it is impossible fully to understand the doctrine of Scripture in regard to any one division or department of the subject, without having respect to what it teaches concerning the rest.

The subject of the moral character and condition of man, both before and after the fall, —treated commonly by modern continental writers under the designation of Anthropology, —was very fully discussed by the schoolmen; and in their hands the doctrine of Scripture, as expounded by Augustine, had been very greatly corrupted, and the real effects of the fall — the sinfulness of man's natural condition— had been very much explained away. The doctrine which was generally taught in the Church of Rome, at the commencement of the Reformation, upon this subject, the Reformers condemned as unscriptural, —as Pelagian in its character, —as tending towards rendering the work of Christ, and the whole arrangements of the scheme of redemption, unnecessary and superfluous, —and as laying a foundation for men's either effecting their own salvation, or at least meriting at God's hand the grace that is necessary for accomplishing this result. And yet, when the Reformers explained their doctrine upon this subject, in the Confession of Augsburg and other documents, the Romanists professed that they did not differ very materially from it, except in one point, to be afterwards noticed; and on several occasions, when conferences were held, with the view of bringing about a reconciliation or adjustment between the parties, there

was much that seemed to indicate that they might have come to an agreement upon this point, so far as concerned the terms in which the substance of the doctrine should be expressed. The substance, indeed, of what the Scriptures teach, and of what the Reformers proclaimed, in regard to the bearing of Adam's fall upon his posterity, and the natural state and condition of man as fallen, had been so fully brought out by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, and had through his influence been so generally received and professed by the church of the fifth and sixth centuries, that it was quite impossible for the Church of Rome, unless she openly and avowedly renounced her professed principle of following the authority of the fathers and the tradition of the early church, to deviate far from the path of sound doctrine upon this subject. It was, however, no easy matter to combine, in any decision upon this subject, the different and sometimes not very compatible, objects which the Council of Trent usually laboured to keep in view in its doctrinal deliverances, —viz., to condemn the doctrines of the Reformers, and to avoid as much as possible condemning either Augustine or the leading schoolmen, who still had their followers in the Church of Rome, and in the council itself.

Their decree upon this subject consists of five sections, of which the first three are directed only against the Pelagians, and are acknowledged by Protestants to contain scriptural truth, so far as they go, —though they are defective and somewhat ambiguous; the fourth is directed against the Anabaptists; while the fifth alone strikes upon any position which had been generally maintained by the Reformers, and is still generally held by Protestant churches. The Protestants exposed the unreasonableness and folly of the council beginning its doctrinal decisions with a condemnation of heresies which had been condemned by the church for above a thousand years; and which, except in the article of the denial of infant baptism, had not been revived by any in the course of those theological discussions on which the council was avowedly called upon to decide. "Quorsum obsecro," says Calvin upon this very point, —for we have the privilege of having from his pen what he calls an " Antidote" to the proceedings of the first seven sessions of the council, those held under Paul III, a work of very great interest and value, —" Quorsum obsecro attinebat tot anathemata detonare, nisi ut imperiti crederent aliquid

subesse causae cum tamen nihil sit." Although Protestants have admitted that the first four sections of the decree of the Council of Trent are sound and scriptural, so far as they go, and could be rejected, in substance at least, only by Pelagians and Anabaptists, they have usually complained of them as giving a very defective account, or more properly no account at all, of the real nature and constituent elements of original sin, or rather of the sinfulness of man's natural condition in consequence of the fall. This complaint is undoubtedly well founded; and the true reason why the subject was left in this very loose and unsatisfactory condition was, that a considerable diversity of opinion upon these points prevailed in the council itself, and the fathers were afraid to give any deliverance regarding them. Indeed, upon this very occasion, Father Paul, —from whose narrative Hallam, as we have seen, formed so favourable an opinion of the ability and learning of the council, and of the desire of truth by which its members were actuated, —tells us that, while some members strongly urged that it was unworthy of a general council to put forth a mere condemnation of errors upon so important a subject, without an explicit statement of the opposite truths, the generality of the bishops (few of whom, he says, were skilled in theology) were not able to comprehend the discussions in which the theologians indulged in their presence, about the nature and constituent elements of men's natural condition of sinfulness, and were very anxious that the decrees should contain a mere rejection of errors, without a positive statement of truth, and should be expressed in such vague and general terms as should contain no deliverance upon these knotty points, lest they should do mischief by their decision, without being aware of it. So that it would seem that the honest ignorance and stupidity of the great body of the members of the council contributed, as well as reasons of policy, to the formation of the decree upon original sin, in the vague and unsatisfactory form in which we find it.

The council began their investigation of each doctrinal topic by collecting from the writings of the Reformers a number of propositions, which appeared to them *prima facie* erroneous, in order that their truth might be carefully examined and decided upon; and it is remarkable, that in the propositions selected from the writings of the Reformers to be the groundwork of the decree on original sin, as given by Father Paul, there

are several important doctrines laid down in regard to the nature and constituent elements of man's natural and original sinfulness, on which, in the decree ultimately adopted by the council, no decision, favourable or unfavourable, was pronounced.

The substance of the scriptural truth taught by the Council of Trent, — and, of course, still professedly held by the Church of Rome, — on the subject of original sin, in opposition to the Pelagians, is this: that Adam's first sin caused or effected a most important and injurious change upon the moral character and condition of himself and of his posterity; that he thereby lost the holiness and righteousness which he had received from God, and lost it not for himself alone, but also for us; that he transmitted (transfudisse) to the whole human race not only temporal death, and other bodily sufferings of a penal kind, but also sin, which is the death of the soul; and that the ruinous effects of the fall upon man's moral and spiritual condition cannot be repaired by any powers of human nature, or by any other remedy except the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, all this is true, or accordant with the word of God; and it has been held by all Protestants, except those whom Protestants have usually regarded as not entitled to the name of Christians, — I mean the Socinians. The truth thus declared by the Council of Trent might be fairly enough regarded as embracing the sum and substance, the leading and essential features, of what is made known to us in Scripture with respect to the fall of man, and its bearing upon his moral condition; and Calvin, accordingly, in his *Antidote*, did not charge the doctrine of the council, thus far, even with being defective. Indeed, it may be remarked, in general, that the first Reformers did not speculate very largely or minutely upon the more abstract questions directly comprehended under the subject of original sin, being mainly anxious about some important inferences deducible from man's natural state of sinfulness, which bore more directly upon the topics of free-will, grace, and merit; though it is also true, as I have already observed, that the fathers of Trent had before them certain doctrines taught by the Reformers, in regard to the nature of original sin, which they thought proper to pass by, without either approving or condemning them.

It came out, however, in the course of subsequent discussions, that

certain corrupt notions in regard to original sin, which had been held by some of the schoolmen, but which seemed to be condemned, by implication at least, by the Council of Trent, were still taught by leading Popish divines, who contended that the council had intentionally abstained from deciding these questions— had used vague and general words on purpose— and had thus left free room for speculation and difference of opinion; and Protestant theologians were thus led to see that, even for the maintenance of the practical conclusions bearing upon the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit, —about which the Reformers were chiefly concerned, —a more minute and exact exposition of the nature and constituent elements of original sin was necessary. This, together with the discussions excited by the Synergistic controversy in the Lutheran church, and by the entire denial of original sin by the Socinians, towards the end of the sixteenth century, led to a fuller and more detailed investigation of the subject by Protestant divines, and produced those more minute and precise expositions of the real nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness, which are fully set forth in the writings of the great theologians of the seventeenth century, —which have since been generally embraced by orthodox churches, —and which the compilers of our standards regarded as so important, that they embodied them even in the Shorter Catechism, among the fundamental articles of Christian doctrine. There, the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell is declared to consist "in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which (viz., the corruption of nature) is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it." As this doctrine, in substance, though certainly not so precisely and definitely expressed, was under the view of the Council of Trent, as having been taught by the Reformers, —and as one leading defect of the decree they adopted was, that it gave no explicit deliverance regarding it, —it is in entire accordance with our present object, and may not be unprofitable, to make a few explanatory observations upon this view of the nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness introduced by the fall.

II. Guilt of Adam's First Sin

The first ingredient or constituent element of the sinfulness of man's natural condition, is the guilt of Adam's first sin. Now, the general meaning of this is, that men, as they come into the world, are, in point of fact, in such a position that the guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to them, or put down to their account; so that they are regarded and treated by God as if they themselves, each of them, had been guilty of the sin which Adam committed in eating the forbidden fruit. If this be indeed the case, then the guilt of Adam's first sin, imputed to his posterity or charged to their account, is an actual feature of their natural condition of sinfulness; and, from the nature of the case, it must be the origin and foundation of the other ingredients or constituent elements of this condition. If true at all, it is the first and most important thing that is true about men, that they sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression.

It is true, indeed, that, in a synthetic exposition of men's natural estate of sin, the attention would naturally be directed, in the first place, to the actual personal moral character and tendencies of men as they come into the world, and to the actual transgressions of God's law, of which they are all guilty, —a subject which is not so entirely one of pure revelation, on which a variety of evidence from different sources can be brought to bear, and in the investigation of which an appeal can be made for materials of proof more directly to men's own consciousness, and to experience and observation. But when the actual corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, as certainly resulting from this feature of their natural character, are established from Scripture, consciousness, and experience, it must be evident that the doctrine that, in virtue of God's arrangements, the human race was federally represented by Adam, and was tried in him, — so that the guilt of his first sin is imputed to them, and they are in consequence regarded and treated by God as if they had themselves committed it, —is so far from introducing any additional difficulty into the matter, that it rather tends somewhat to elucidate and explain a subject which is undoubtedly difficult and mysterious, and in its full bearings lying beyond the cognizance of the human faculties. The federal connection subsisting between Adam and his posterity, —the bearing of his first transgression upon their moral character and condition, —the

doctrine that God intended and regarded the trial of Adam as the trial of the human race, and imputed the guilt of his first sin to them, —is undoubtedly a matter of pure revelation, which men could never have discovered, unless God had made it known to them; but which, when once ascertained from Scripture, does go some length to explain and account for— to bring into greater conformity with principles which we can in some measure understand and estimate— -phenomena which actually exist, and which must be admitted, because their existence can be proved, even though no approach could be made towards explaining or accounting for them. And when it is ascertained from Scripture that all mankind sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression, then the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them, or held and reckoned as theirs, to the effect of making them legally responsible for its consequences, —legally liable to condemnation and punishment, —is naturally and properly placed first in an analytic exposition of the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

The imputation of the guilt or reatus of Adam's first sin to his posterity, as the basis and ground in fact, and the explanation or rationale pro tanto in speculative discussion, of their being involved in actual depravity, misery, and ruin, through his fall, was certainly not denied by the Council of Trent. On the contrary, it seems to be fairly implied or assumed in their decree, though it cannot be said to be very explicitly asserted. Indeed, the position which this doctrine held at that time in controversial discussion, was materially different from that which it has generally occupied at subsequent periods; and some explanation of this point is necessary, in order to our understanding and estimating aright the statements of some of the Reformers on this subject. An impression generally prevails amongst us, —countenanced, perhaps, to a certain extent, by some of the aspects which the controversy on this subject has occasionally assumed in modern times, —that the doctrine that men are involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin, —that that sin was imputed to his posterity, —is the highest point of ultra-Calvinism, —a doctrine which the more moderate and reasonable Calvinists— including, it is often alleged, Calvin himself— rejected; and that it is the darkest and most mysterious view that has ever been presented of men's moral condition by nature; while yet the fact is certain, that, at the time of the Reformation, this doctrine was held by

many Romanists, —by some of the theologians of the Council of Trent, who were not Calvinists, —and that it was applied by them for the purpose of softening and mitigating, or rather of explaining away, the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

It is true that there have been Calvinistic theologians who, admitting the entire corruption of the moral nature which men bring with them into the world, and the universality of actual transgression of God's law as certainly resulting from it, have not admitted the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and this fact has contributed to strengthen the impression which I have described. They have, however, taken up this position just because they have not discovered what they count sufficient evidence of this imputation in Scripture. Now, it is conceded that there is a greater variety and amount of positive evidence, not only from Scripture, but also from other sources, for the actual moral depravity of men's nature, and for the universality of actual sins in their conduct, than for the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity. It is also conceded that the admission of the existence and universal prevalence of a corrupt moral nature, —and, as a certain consequence of this, of actual transgressions, —in all men, is of greater practical importance, in its natural and legitimate bearing upon men's general views and impressions with respect to the scheme of salvation and their own immediate personal duty, than a belief of the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin. But it seems plain enough that the doctrine of the actual moral depravity of men's nature, —certainly and invariably producing in all of them actual transgressions which subject them to God's wrath and curse, —as describing an actual feature of their natural condition, is really, when taken by itself, and unconnected with the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, in some respects more mysterious and incomprehensible than when the doctrine of imputation is received to furnish some explanation and account of it. The final appeal, of course, must be made to Scripture: the question must be decided by ascertaining whether or not the word of God teaches the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and on this we are not called upon here to enlarge. But there is certainly nothing more awful, or mysterious, or incomprehensible, in the one doctrine than in the other; and there is no ground whatever why the rejection of the doctrine of the imputation of

the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, as distinguished from that of their universal moral depravity as an actual feature in their condition, should be held to indicate, as many seem to suppose it does, moderation and caution, or an aversion to presumptuous and dangerous speculations.

The Council of Trent, though not giving any very explicit deliverance upon this subject, has at least left it free to Romanists to profess and maintain, if they choose, the views in regard to the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity which have been usually held by Calvinistic divines; and those Romish theologians who have made the nearest approach to sound Protestant doctrine upon other points, have uniformly spoken very much like Calvinists upon this point. Even Cardinal Bellarmine, though he showed no leaning to the comparatively sound theology taught in his own time by Baius, and more fully in the seventeenth century by Jansenius, has laid down positions upon this department of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which contain the whole substance of what the strictest Calvinists usually contend for. He expressly asserts that the first sin of Adam, "*omnibus imputatur, qui ex Adamo nascuntur, quoniam omnes in lumbis Adami existentes in eo, et per eum peccavimus, cum ipse peccavit;*" and again, "*in omnibus nobis, cum primum homines esse incipimus, praster imputationem inobedientiae Adami, esse etiam similem perversionem, et obliquitatem unicuique inhaerentem.*" Upon the assumption of taking *peccatum* to mean an actual transgression of God's law, he would define the original sin of mankind to be "*prima Adami inobedientia, ab ipso Adamo commissa, non ut erat singularis persona, sed ut personam totius generis humani gerebat;*" and, lastly, he makes the following very important statement, most fully confirming one of the leading positions which we have endeavoured to illustrate: —"*Nisienim ponamus, nos in Adamo, et cum Adamo vere peccasse, nulla ratione explicari poterit, quomodo in parvulis recens natis sit aliqua vera culpa: et hoc Catholicum dogma non tam supra rationem, quam contra rationem esse videbitur. Nam quidquid dicamus in parvulis ex peccato Adami haerere, sive reatum, sive aversionem, sive gratiae privationem, sive quid aliud; illud nullo modo parvulis vitio dari, ac ne esse quidem poterit, nisi processerit ab actione libera, cujus actionis illi aliquo modo participes fuerint.*" And, after reasoning at some length in support of this position, he concludes,

— "Maneat igitur quod supra diximus, non posse in parvulis aliquid esse, quod habeat culpas rationem, nisi participes fuerint etiam ipsi praevaricationis Adae."

We propose now to notice the discussions which have subsequently taken place among Protestants as to the right mode of explaining the bearing of Adam's first sin upon the character and condition of his posterity; and from this we hope it will appear that those who have denied the doctrine of imputation in words, have either been obliged to admit it in substance, or else have fallen into greater difficulties in the exposition of their views than those which they were labouring to avoid.

That Adam's first sin exerted some influence upon the condition of his posterity, and that this influence was of an injurious or deteriorating kind, is so plainly taught in the Bible, that it has been admitted by all who have professed to believe in the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures, except Socinians and nationalists, whose denial of original sin in any sense, combined with their denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ, warrants us in asserting that, whatever they may sometimes profess or allege, they do not truly and honestly take the word of God for their guide. Modern nationalists indeed, to do them justice, admit frankly enough that the doctrine of original sin, including even the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, was plainly taught by the Apostle Paul; while they do not regard this as affording any sufficient reason why they should believe it. Wegscheider admits that it is impossible, in accordance with the principles of philology and exegesis, to deny that Paul taught this doctrine; while yet he does not scruple to say, "*Imputatio illa peccati Adamitici, quam Paulus Apostolus, sui temporis doctores Judaeos secutus, argumentationibus suis subiecit, ad obsoleta dogmata releganda est, quae et philosophiae et historiae ignorantia in magnum verge pietatis detrimentum per ecclesiam propagavit et aluit.*"

Among those, however, who have made a somewhat more credible profession of receiving the sacred Scriptures as a rule of faith, —and who, in consequence, have admitted the general position, that the fall of Adam exerted some injurious influence upon the condition of his posterity, — there has been a great diversity of opinion, both as to what the effects were which resulted from that event, and as to the nature of the

connection subsisting between it and the effects which in some way or other flowed from it. Some have held that the only effect entailed by Adam's sin upon his posterity was temporal death, with the bodily infirmities and sufferings which lead to it, and the sorrows and afflictions which its universal prevalence implies or produces. Others have held that, in addition to this, it introduced, and in some way transmitted, a deteriorated moral nature, or otherwise placed men in more unfavourable circumstances; so that their discharge of the duties which God requires of them is more difficult than in Adam's case, and is marked to a greater extent, and more frequently, if not universally, by failure or shortcoming, than it would have been had Adam not fallen. And under this general head there is room for many gradations of sentiment as to the extent of the deterioration, the strength and prevalence of the tendencies and influences that lead men to commit sin, and involve them in the actual commission of it, —gradations approaching indefinitely near, either to the first view already explained, or to the third now about to be stated. A third class, believing in the entire corruption of the moral nature which all men bring with them into the world, and in the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, regard all this, upon the testimony of Scripture, as in some way or other caused or occasioned by Adam's sin. It is obvious enough that those who advocate the first two of these views, —comprehending almost all who are commonly classed under the name of Arminians, —have just ascribed to the fall of Adam as much as they thought it could fairly and justly bear; and that, —as they felt constrained by the testimony of Scripture to regard as in some way or other connected with Adam's sin, whatever of sin and suffering actually existed among men, —they have been somewhat influenced in their views as to the actual facts or phenomena of men's condition, by certain notions as to the possibility of admitting Adam's sin as in some way explaining or accounting for them. This mode of contemplating the subject, however, is unreasonable, and is fitted to lead into error. The right mode of dealing with it is just to investigate, fully and unshrinkingly, the actual facts and phenomena of the case; to find out thoroughly and accurately, by a fair and fearless application of all competent means of information, what the moral character and condition of men are; and then to consider what can be ascertained as to the cause or origin of this state of things. There would not, we think, have been so many who would have denied that

man's moral nature is at all corrupted, had it not been for the perverting influence of the impression that, consistently with justice, Adam could not have transmitted to his posterity any evils but such as were of a merely temporal character; and more would probably have yielded to the strength of the evidence from Scripture and observation in support of the entire depravity of men's moral nature, and the certainty and universality of actual transgressions, had it not been for the fancied difficulty of connecting in any way this state of things, if admitted, with the first sin of the first man.

We are not, however, at present considering the general subject of the actual moral character and condition of men by nature, but only the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the nature of the connection subsisting between that event and the effects which in some way flowed from it. And in doing so, we will assume for the present the truth of the third and last of the views we have stated, —that, viz., which, upon most abundant grounds, furnished both by Scripture and experience, represents the moral nature of men as wholly depraved, and as certainly leading, in every instance of a human being who attains to the age and condition of moral responsibility, to actual transgressions of God's law. We assume this at present, not merely because we think it can be conclusively proved to be the truth, —the actual state of the case, —a real phenomenon which exists, —which should be explained and accounted for, if possible, but which must be admitted, whether it can be accounted for or not; but also because it is only upon the assumption that this is the actual state of the case, that the difficulty of accounting for it becomes serious and formidable, and because our chief object at present is merely to show that those who, admitting all this to be a reality, —as all Calvinistic divines, and some of the more evangelical Arminians, have done, —yet deny the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, do not thereby escape from any real difficulty, and only introduce greater darkness and mystery into the whole matter.

So long as men are regarded as being by nature exposed merely to temporal evils, or as being placed only in unfavourable moral circumstances, —which yet by their own strength, or by some universal grace, either actually furnished or at least made accessible to all men,

they can overcome or escape from, —there is no great difficulty in explaining the whole matter by the undoubted right of God, as Creator and Governor of the world, who, all must admit, may give to His creatures different degrees of happiness and of privilege as He chooses, provided He does not make their existence upon the whole miserable, a curse and not a blessing, without their having furnished a ground for this by their own demerit. It is otherwise, however, if the case be as Calvinists maintain it is, — viz., that the moral character which all men bring with them into the world is such as certainly and necessarily to lead them into actual transgressions, which, unless divine grace specially interpose, subject them to God's wrath and curse, not only in the life that now is, but also in that which is to come. Here difficulties present themselves which we cannot but feel are not fully solved or explained by God's mere right, as Creator and Governor, to bestow different degrees of happiness and privilege upon His creatures. If the fact, indeed, as to the actual moral character and condition of men be once fully established, we may need to resolve it, for want of any further explanation, into the divine sovereignty; and even if we could in some measure explain it, —i.e., in the way of pushing the difficulty one or two steps further back, for that is really all that can be done on any theory, —we must resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty at last. Still, upon the Calvinistic view of the actual phenomena, the real state of the human race by nature, we cannot but feel that the mere right of God, as Creator, to bestow upon His creatures different degrees of happiness and privilege, does not afford any real solution or explanation of the difficulty; and we are in consequence warranted to inquire if there be any other way of solving it, or of making any approach towards a solution of it.

There have, indeed, been a few Calvinistic divines, more remarkable for their boldness and ingenuity than for the soundness of their judgment, — and among others Dr Twisse, the prolocutor or president of the Westminster Assembly, —who have held that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the facts of the case and their certain results, the matter could be positively explained and vindicated by the principle of God's right to bestow different degrees of happiness and privilege upon His creatures, and have even ventured to take up the extraordinary ground, —the only one, indeed, on which their position can be maintained, —viz., that an

eternal existence even in misery is a better and more desirable condition than non-existence or annihilation, and is thus, upon the whole, a blessing to the creature, and not a curse; and that, consequently, God may bestow it or effect it as a result of sovereignty, without its being necessary that there should be any previous ground in justice to warrant this. But this notion is so diametrically opposed at once to the common sense and the ordinary feelings of men, —and, what is of far more importance, to the explicit and most solemn and impressive declaration of our Saviour, "Good were it for that man that he had never been born," —that it has not been generally adopted by Calvinistic divines, and has only served the purpose of furnishing a handle to enemies.

Those, then, who hold the Calvinistic view of the state of the case with respect to the moral character and condition of men, may not unreasonably be asked whether they can give any other account of the origin, or any explanation of the cause, of this fearful state of things. Now, in the history of the discussions which have taken place upon this subject, we can trace four pretty distinct courses which have been taken by theologians who all admitted the total native depravity of mankind: First, some have refused to attempt any explanation of the state of the case, beyond the general statement that Scripture represents it as in some way or other connected with, and resulting from, the fall of Adam, and have denied, expressly or by plain implication, the common Calvinistic doctrine of imputation. A second class, comprehending the great body of Calvinistic divines, have regarded it as, in some measure and to some extent, explained by the principle of its being a penal infliction upon men, resulting from the imputation to them of the guilt of Adam's first sin. A third class, while refusing to admit in words the doctrine of imputation, as commonly stated by orthodox divines, have yet put forth such views of the connection between Adam and his posterity, and of the bearing of his first sin upon them, as embody the sum and substance of all, or almost all, that the avowed defenders of the doctrine of imputation intend by it. And, lastly, there is a fourth class, who, while professing in words to hold the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, yet practically and substantially neutralize it or explain it away, especially by means of a distinction they have devised between immediate or antecedent, and mediate or consequent imputation, —denying the former, which is the

only true and proper imputation, and admitting only the latter.

It is quite plain that it is only the first two of these four divisions of theological opinion that can be regarded as important, or even real and substantial. For, on the one hand, those who belong to the third class, though showing an unnecessary fastidiousness as to some portion of the general orthodox phraseology upon this point, and an unnecessary disposition to find fault with some of the details of the doctrine, and with some of the particular aspects in which it has been represented and explained, and thereby lending their aid to injure the interests of sound doctrine, may yet be really ranked under the second class, because they admit the whole substance of what the doctrine of imputation is usually understood to include or involve; while, on the other hand, those who belong to the fourth class, admitting imputation in words, but denying it in reality and substance, belong properly to the first class. Still it is true that these four distinct classes can be plainly enough traced in a survey of the history of the discussions which have taken place upon this subject. It is scarcely necessary to say, that all these various parties profess, while maintaining their different opinions, to be just giving forth the substance of what they respectively believe that Scripture teaches or indicates upon the subject, and that the points in dispute between them can be legitimately and conclusively decided only by a careful investigation of the true meaning of its statements. We are not called upon here to enter upon this investigation, and can only make a few general observations upon the leading positions.

It is conceded to the supporters of the first view, that the leading position they are accustomed to maintain, —viz., that the facts or phenomena of the case, the universal moral depravity and actual personal guilt or sinfulness of men, being once conclusively established by satisfactory evidence, they are not bound, as a preliminary to, or an accompaniment of, receiving the facts or phenomena as proved, and calling upon others to receive them, to give any account or explanation of the origin or cause of this state of things, —that this position is altogether impregnable, and cannot be successfully assailed. They are entitled to resolve it into the divine sovereignty, without attempting to explain it, and to contend that since this state of things does exist, it must be consistent with the

character and moral government of God, though we may not be able to unfold this consistency. The supporters of the doctrine of imputation take advantage of this principle, as well as those who differ with them on this point. No man pretends to be able to comprehend or explain the doctrine of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon the present character and condition of men. All admit that it involves mysteries which human reason, enlightened by divine revelation, cannot fathom; and that, after all our study of Scripture, and all our investigation of the subject, we must resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty, and be content to say, "Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." All that is contended for by the advocates of the doctrine of imputation is, in general, that Scripture suggests and sanctions certain ideas upon the subject, which commend themselves to our minds as tending somewhat to explain and illustrate this mystery; to interpose one or two steps between the naked facts of the case, and the unfathomable abyss of God's sovereignty; and thereby to bring this subject somewhat into the line of the analogy of things which we can in some measure understand and estimate.

The supporters of the first view are right, so far as they go, in saying that Scripture makes known to us that the first sin of Adam was, in some way or other, connected with the moral character and condition of his posterity, —that the one was in some way the cause or occasion of the other. But they are wrong in holding that Scripture teaches nothing more upon the subject than this, and, more particularly, in holding that it gives no sanction to the doctrine of imputation, as commonly held by Calvinistic divines. We cannot admit that this vague and indefinite statement of theirs, though undoubtedly true so far as it goes, fills up or exhausts the full import of the apostle's declarations, —that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, —that by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, — that by one man's disobedience many were made, or constituted sinners and of other information given us in Scripture upon this point. But we are not called upon to dwell upon this topic; and we proceed to observe that the views which we regard as suggested and sanctioned by Scripture, —i.e., the ideas which go to constitute and to explain the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, —do tend somewhat to

illustrate this mysterious subject, and, at least, do not introduce into it any additional difficulty.

In order to the first sin of Adam exerting any real influence upon the moral character and condition of his posterity, he and they must have been in some sense or respect one; i.e., some species of unity or identity must have subsisted between them, as the ground, or basis, or rationale of the influence exerted, of the effect produced. This is admitted by all; and the question, indeed, may be said to turn mainly upon the nature and foundation of this oneness or identity. Some have supposed that there was a sort of physical oneness or identity between Adam and his descendants, whereby they existed in him as the plant in the seed, or the branches in the root, and thus, existing in him in a sort of literal physical sense, sinned in him and fell with him, —his sin and fall being thus theirs, and of course justly imputed to them, and involving them in its penal results. Augustine seems to have held the idea of a literal personal oneness; and not a few Calvinistic writers have used language that seemed to imply some notion of this sort. Jonathan Edwards certainly gave some countenance to this notion, though he seems to have combined, if not identified, it with the next mentioned species of identity, —that based upon Adam being the progenitor of the human race, and producing beings like himself. This idea has no sanction from Scripture, and is indeed quite unintelligible as a supposed description of an actual reality. Adam was undoubtedly the actual progenitor of the whole human race, and this certainly constitutes, in a certain sense, a oneness or identity between them. It seems to be a law of nature, that where there is a process of generation, a being should produce one like himself, —of the same nature and general qualities with himself. This natural oneness or identity, viewed in connection with this law, has been applied to explain the bearing of Adam's sin upon his posterity. And the explanation just amounts to this, —that Adam having, by his first sin, become, in the way of natural consequence, or penal infliction, or both, wholly depraved in his own moral nature, transmitted, in accordance with the law above described, the same moral nature, — i.e., one wholly depraved, —to all his descendants. This view is generally adopted by those who deny the doctrine of imputation; but they scarcely venture to put it forth as throwing any real light upon the difficulty, or even changing its position;

for, as the laws of nature are just the arrangements or appointments of God, — the modes or channels through which He effects His own purposes, —to put forth this as the explanation of the bearing of Adam's first sin upon the moral character and condition of his posterity, is merely to say, that God established a constitution or system of things, by which it was provided that the moral character which Adam might come to possess should descend to all his posterity; and that as he came, by his first sin, to have a depraved nature, this accordingly descended to all of them. Now, this is really nothing more than stating the matter of fact, as a matter of fact, and then tracing the result directly and immediately to a constitution or appointment of God. In short, it just leaves the matter where it found it, —it interposes nothing whatever between the result and the divine sovereignty, and does nothing whatever towards explaining or vindicating that divine constitution or arrangement under which the result has taken place. At the same time, it is to be remembered that the fact that Adam was the natural progenitor of the whole human race is universally

admitted; that it is in no way inconsistent with the doctrine of imputation; and that if any advantage is derivable from the application of the law, that "like begets like," it is possessed as fully by those who believe as by those who deny this doctrine, while those who deny it have no other principle to adduce in explanation.

The peculiarity of the doctrine of imputation, as generally held by Calvinistic divines, is, that it brings in another species of oneness or identity as subsisting between Adam and his posterity, viz., that of federal representation or covenant headship, —i.e., the doctrine that God made a covenant with Adam, and that in this covenant he represented his posterity, the covenant being made not only for himself, but for them, including in its provisions them as well as himself; so that, while there was no actual participation by them in the moral culpability or blameworthiness of his sin, they became, in consequence of his failure to fulfil the covenant engagement, in, or incurred reatus, or guilt in the sense of legal answerableness, to this effect, that God, on the ground of the covenant, regarded and treated them as if they had themselves been guilty of the sin whereby the covenant was broken; and that in this way

they became involved in all the natural and penal consequences which Adam brought upon himself by his first sin. Now, this principle, viewing it merely as a hypothesis, and independently of the actual support it receives from Scripture, not only does not introduce any additional difficulty into the question, but does tend to throw some light upon this mysterious transaction, by bringing it somewhat under the analogy of transactions which we can comprehend and estimate, though it is not disputed that it still leaves difficulties unsolved which we cannot fully fathom. If this were seen in its true light, and if thereby the special prejudice with which many regard this doctrine of the imputation of the guilt or reatus of Adam's first sin to his posterity were removed, it might be expected that all who admit the total depravity of human nature as an actual feature of men's natural condition, of which they can give no account or explanation whatever, would be more likely to yield to the weight of the positive evidence which Scripture furnishes in proof of the doctrine that all mankind sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression.

III. The Want of Original Righteousness

The second ingredient or constituent element of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, and in which all men now are by nature, is the want of original righteousness; and the explanation of this, too, is connected with some controversial discussions which prevailed at the time of the Reformation, and with some topics which have been since controverted between Romanists and Protestants. The statement in the Catechism, in which the want of original righteousness is represented as one of the features or elements of the estate of sinfulness into which man fell, contains, by plain implication, an assertion of these positions, —that man, before his fall, had righteousness, or justice (*justitia*, as it was commonly called), entire rectitude as an actual quality of his moral nature or constitution; that no man now, since the fall, has naturally this original righteousness; and that it is a sin in men, one of the real features of the sinfulness of the estate into which they fell, that they have it not. This original righteousness which man had before the fall, is usually taken as designating not merely innocence or freedom from everything

actually sinful, and from all bias or tendency towards it, but something higher and nobler than this, —viz., the positive, entire conformity of his whole moral nature and constitution— not merely of his actions, but of the innermost sources of these actions, in his desires and motives, in all the tendencies and inclinations of his mind and heart— to all the requirements of the law, which is holy, and just, and good. Original righteousness, thus understood, Protestants have usually regarded as comprehended in the image of God, in which man was created; and they have generally considered the fact that he was created in God's image, as affording evidence that he was created with original righteousness.

We have not, indeed, in Scripture any very direct information as to what the image of God in which man was created consisted in; and hence some variety of opinion has been entertained upon this point. Some have held that the image of God consisted in the mental powers and capacities which constituted man a rational and responsible being; the Socinians, who usually contrive to find in the lowest deep a lower deep, view it as consisting only in dominion over the other creatures; while most men have been of opinion that it must have included, whatever else it might imply, entire conformity of moral nature and constitution, according to his capacity, to God's character and laws. We can scarcely, indeed, conceive it possible that God would have directly and immediately created any other kind of rational and responsible being than one morally pure and perfect, according to his capacity or standing in creation; and we would have required very strong evidence to lead us to entertain any doubt of this, even though we had not been told that God created man after His own image. And we are plainly told in Scripture that the image of God, into which man is to be renewed, —according to which he is to be made over again, as the result in God's chosen people of the mediation of Christ, and the operation of His Spirit, —consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; from which the inference is fully warranted, that in these qualities consisted, principally at least, the image of God in which he was created.

Romanists do not dispute that Adam, before the fall, had original righteousness as an actual quality of his moral character, or that, by his sin, he lost it, not only for himself, but for his posterity, —and that all

men now come into the world without it; and, indeed, a large proportion of the most eminent Romish divines maintain that this want of original righteousness— *caentia* or *privatio originalis justitioe*— is the principal, if not the sole, ingredient of the sinfulness of men's natural condition; and that the decree of the Council of Trent leaves them at full liberty to assert this. It is Socinians only who deny that man ever had an original righteousness. As their fundamental principle upon this whole subject is, that men have now the very same moral nature or constitution as Adam had when he was created; and as they do not ascribe to men as they now come into the world what is usually understood by original righteousness as a positive quality, but merely innocence of nature, or freedom from all moral depravity, combined with full power to do whatever God requires of them, they of course deny that Adam ever possessed it. But while the Church of Rome admits that Adam, before his fall, had original righteousness as a positive quality of his moral character, she maintains that this original righteousness was not natural to him, but supernatural, —i.e., that it was not comprehended in, or did not result from, the principles of his moral nature, as originally constituted, but was a supernatural gift or grace, specially or extraordinarily conferred upon him by God; and, in order to bring out more emphatically the distinction between the *pura naturalia*, as they call them, in Adam, and this supernatural gift of original righteousness, many Popish writers have contended that this supernatural gift was not conferred upon him along with the *pura naturalia* at the time of his creation, but at a subsequent period. And it is certain that the Council of Trent intentionally and deliberately framed its decree upon the subject in such terms as not to preclude the posteriority in point of time of the bestowal of the *supernaturalia* upon Adam, for the original draft of the decree set forth that Adam by his sin lost the holiness and justice in which he was created, —*sanitatem et justitiam in qua creatus fuerat*, —and when it was represented to them that this would be a condemnation of those divines who had maintained that Adam did not possess this *justitia* or righteousness at his creation, but received it afterwards, they, in order to avoid this, changed the expression into *in qua constitutus fuerat*, as it now stands in the decree. Although the Reformers generally, and especially Luther, had strenuously contended that this original righteousness was a quality of man's proper nature, and necessary to its

perfection and completeness, and not a supernatural gift, specially and, as it were, adventitiously and in mere sovereignty conferred by God, yet nothing was formally decided upon this point by the Council of Trent. The opposite view, however, was universally held by Popish theologians; and it was at length made a binding article of faith by the bulls of Pius V. and Gregory XIII. against Baius in 1567 and 1579, confirmed by a bull of Urban VIII. in 1641. In these bulls, which, though opposed by some at the time of their promulgation, have been accepted by the church, and are therefore binding upon all Romanists, the following doctrines taught by Baius were condemned as heretical, and, of course, the opposite doctrines were asserted and established: — "Humanae nature sublimatio, et exaltatio in consortium divinae debita fuit integritati primae conditionis, ac proinde naturalis dicenda est, non supernaturalis. Integritas primae conditionis non fuit indebita naturae humanae exaltatio, sed ejus naturalis conditio." And, in the bull Unigenitus, the following doctrine of Quesnel was condemned: — "Gratia Adami est sequela creationis et erat debita naturae sanae et integrae."

This question, accordingly, has always been regarded as one of the points controverted between Protestants and Papists. It may seem at first view a mere logomachy, and to involve considerations which are of no practical importance, or points which we have no materials for deciding. This, however, is a mistake, as might be shown at once from an examination of the nature of the case, and from the history of the discussions which have taken place regarding it. It is quite true that there are senses the words might bear in which the Protestants would admit that this original righteousness was not natural, but supernatural, and in which Papists would admit that it was not supernatural, but natural, as you will see explained in Turretine yet it is also true, as you will likewise see there, that there is a pretty well defined status quaestionis upon the subject. The question may, without entering into minute details, be said to be this: Whether this original righteousness, which Adam admittedly possessed, formed an integral necessary constituent of man's original moral constitution, so that his general position and capacities as a moral being would have been materially different from what they were if he had wanted it, and would not have possessed that completeness and perfection which are due and necessary to the place which God, in His

general idea or archetype of man, intended him to occupy, —the purpose which He created man to serve; and we think there are sufficient indications in Scripture to warrant us in deciding this question against the Church of Rome in the affirmative. ,The chief object of the Romanists in maintaining that this righteousness was not an original inherent quality of man's proper nature, due to it (debita), because necessary to its completeness or perfection, is, that they may thus lay a foundation for ascribing even to fallen man a natural power to do God's will, and that they may with greater plausibility deny that concupiscence in the regenerate is sin. The bearing of this notion upon their denial of the sinfulness of concupiscence, —the only doctrine taught by the Council of Trent, in their decree upon original sin, which Protestants in general condemn as positively erroneous, —we will afterwards have occasion to advert to; and the mode in which they apply the notion to show that man has still, though fallen, full power to do the will of God, is this: As Adam's original righteousness, or the perfect conformity of his entire moral constitution to God's law, did not form a constituent part of his proper nature as a creature of a certain class or description, but was a superadded supernatural gift, he might lose it, or it might be taken from him, while yet he retained all his proper natural powers, including a power to do the will of God, though now without righteousness, as a positive quality of his moral character. And this, indeed, is the view which they commonly give of the nature and effects of the fall. They commonly assert that Adam, by his sin, lost all that was supernaturally bestowed upon him, but retained everything that formed an original part of his own proper moral constitution; though this likewise, they generally admit, was somewhat injured or damaged by his transgression; and this, too, they contend, is still the actual condition of fallen man. He is stained, indeed, they admit, with the guilt of Adam's sin, and he wants original righteousness, which Adam forfeited for himself and for his posterity; but there is no positive corruption or depravity attaching to his moral nature; and having the natural moral powers with which Adam was originally endowed, though without his superadded supernatural graces, he can still do something towards fulfilling the divine law, and preparing himself for again becoming the recipient of supernatural divine grace through Christ. Bellarmine, accordingly, represents the doctrine of Romanists upon this subject as striking at once against the two opposite extremes of the

doctrines of the Pelagians and the Reformers; for that by means of it they are enabled to hold against the Pelagians, that "*per Adae peccatum totum hominem vere deteriore[m] esse factum,*" i.e., by the removal of the supernaturalia without needing to deny the Pelagian position, that man retains, though fallen, all his natural powers and capacities; and at the same time to maintain against the Reformers, "*nec liberum arbitrium, neque alia naturalia dona, sed soltim supernaturalia perdidisse,*" without needing to deny that he has lost original righteousness.

The application which Romanists thus make of their doctrine, that original righteousness was not a natural but a supernatural quality of man's original moral constitution, —an application which in itself is quite legitimate, and cannot be evaded, if the premises are granted, —to defend two anti-scriptural errors, —viz., first, that fallen man retains full power to do the whole will of God; and, secondly, that concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, —at once affords materials for establishing the falsehood of their doctrine, and illustrating the importance of the opposite truth as it was held by the Reformers. And it is a curious and interesting fact, and decidedly confirms these conclusions as to the falsehood of the Popish doctrine upon this point, and the practical importance of the opposite Protestant truth, that the most eminent theologians, and the best men who have at different periods risen up in the Church of Rome, and have taught so large a measure of scriptural and evangelical truth as to incur the public censure of the ecclesiastical authorities, —viz., Baius, Jansenius, and Quesnel, — have all, more or less explicitly, declared in favour of the Protestant doctrine upon this subject.

There have been some Protestant writers who, though not deviating very far from the paths of sound doctrine on the subject of original sin in general, have adopted or approximated to the Popish views upon this point, though conveying their sentiments in different phraseology, and applying them to a different purpose. A good illustration of this is furnished by one of the most recent works of importance published in this country on the subject of original sin— the Congregational Lecture for 1845, by the late Dr Payne of Exeter. His work on the doctrine of original sin is one of very considerable ability and value, and contains some important and useful discussion, though presenting views upon

some points which appear to me erroneous and dangerous. Dr Payne may be said to belong to the third of the classes under which I ranked the writers who have discussed the subject of imputation in connection with the universal prevalence of moral depravity, —consisting of those who have held to a large extent the substance of what has been generally taught by Calvinistic divines upon this subject, while at the same time they exhibited a great desire to modify or soften some of the orthodox positions, and a very unnecessary and excessive fastidiousness about the employment of the ordinary orthodox phraseology. This is, I think, the general character of Dr Payne's work on original sin, though the point to which I am now to refer, along with one or two other views which he propounds, may be regarded as a somewhat more important error than would be fairly comprehended under the above description.

His leading peculiar position is, that the gifts which were conferred by God upon Adam, and deposited with him as the federal head of his posterity, including especially the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, were chartered benefits, and chartered benefits exclusively, —i.e., benefits which God bestowed upon him gratuitously in mere sovereignty, to which Adam had no claim in fairness or equity, because they were not necessary to the integrity or completeness of his constitution, viewed simply as the creature man; the enjoyment of which by him, or his posterity, God might consequently suspend upon any condition He thought proper, and which He might at once take away from them for any reason that would warrant their being taken from him, just as, to use an illustration he frequently employs, a nobleman guilty of treason forfeits, by the law of our country, his titles and estates, not only for himself but his descendants. This principle he fully develops, and labours to apply, both to the implication generally of mankind in the consequences of Adam's sin, and to the introduction and prevalence of depravity of moral nature; and in this way he is led to modify some of the views which have been generally held by orthodox divines, and to censure and repudiate some of the phraseology they have been accustomed to employ; though he has not succeeded, so far as I can perceive, by any of his proposed modifications, in introducing any real or decided improvement.

For instance, upon the ground of this principle about chartered benefits,

he contends that the covenant made with Adam, in which he occupied the position of federal representative of his posterity, was not a covenant of works, as Calvinistic divines have been accustomed to represent it, but a covenant of grace. That there is a sense in which it might be called a covenant of grace, no one would dispute, for it was a gracious arrangement, manifesting the goodness and benevolence of God. There is a sense in which all God's dealings with His creatures may be classed under the two heads of gracious and penal, for no creature can in strict justice merit anything at God's hands; but under the general head of gracious, in this classification, we can and we may distinguish between those acts which are purely gratuitous, —which have no cause, or ground, or motive whatever, except the mere benevolent good pleasure of God, — and those which, though still gracious as manifesting the benevolence of God, and not due on the ground of justice irrespective of promise or compact, have yet some ground or foundation in equity, or in the fitnesses and congruities of things. We think it can be shown that God's dealings with Adam, after He had decreed to create him, —i.e., His dealings with him in regulating his moral constitution and qualities, and in arranging as to the results of the trial to which he was subjected, upon himself and his posterity, —were gracious only in the latter of these two senses; and that, therefore, the covenant made with him may without impropriety be denied to be a covenant of grace, as it certainly was not a covenant of grace in the same sense with the new and better covenant; while, from the general nature of its fundamental provision, it may without impropriety be called a covenant of works.

But we cannot dwell upon this, for we have introduced the subject of Dr Payne's work solely for the purpose of pointing out how strikingly manifest it is, from the explanations formerly given, that this doctrine of his about chartered benefits is identical in substance with the Popish doctrine, that original righteousness is not an integral constituent quality of man's original moral constitution, and necessary to its completeness or perfection, but a superadded supernatural gift. And the resemblance might be shown to hold not only in substance, but in some curious points of detail. We have seen, for instance, that many Romish writers have held, that the supernatural gift of original righteousness was not conferred on Adam at his creation, and that the Council of Trent

intentionally framed its decree in such a way as to leave this an open question; while Dr Payne, in like manner, contends that those chartered benefits, which alone Adam by his sin forfeited for himself and his posterity, were only conferred upon him when, at a period subsequent to his creation, he was invested with the character of federal head of the human race. The fact that this doctrine about chartered benefits is in substance identical with a doctrine which has been always zealously maintained by the; Church of Rome, in opposition to the great body of the Protestants, and to the soundest theologians and the best men who have sprung up from time to time in her own communion, forms a legitimate presumption against it; and Dr Payne has not, we think, produced anything sufficient to overcome the force of the presumptions and the proofs by which, as taught by the Church of Rome, it has been opposed by Protestant divines. The old Popish writers applied, as we have seen, their doctrine upon this point, chiefly to the purpose of showing that man, even in his fallen state, had full power to do the whole will of God; while Dr Payne applies his principle, in substance the same, chiefly to indicate the justice and reasonableness of the constitution, in virtue of which men are treated as if they had committed Adam's first sin, and are involved in the consequences of his transgression. As the Reformers and their Popish opponents equally admitted the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, there was no call then formally to defend that doctrine against the objections of those who denied it altogether; but there are two facts connected with this matter, which may be fairly regarded as confirming the substantial identity of the Popish doctrine of supernatural righteousness, and Dr Payne's doctrine of chartered benefits, —viz., first, that more modern Popish writers, who had to defend the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin against heretical Protestants who denied it, have applied their doctrine of supernatural righteousness for this purpose, very much in the same way in which Dr Payne has applied his doctrine of chartered benefits, as may be seen, for instance, in the "Prselectiones Theologicae" of Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome; and, secondly, that Dr Payne's work contains some indications, —though this topic is not fully and formally discussed, —that he would claim for fallen men, under the head of what is necessary in order to their being responsible, and would ascribe to them, in fact, a larger and fuller measure of power or ability to do what God

requires of them, and thereby to escape from misery, than would be consistent with the views which Calvinists in general have entertained upon this subject. This is a notion pretty plainly shadowed forth in one of the features of his favourite illustration, —the case of a nobleman convicted of treason, —viz., that the actual traitor alone forfeits his life, and that his descendants, while they lose the titles and estates which, but for his act of treason, would have come to them, retain all the ordinary natural rights of citizens, and have no bar put in their way to prevent them from rising again, or de novo, without any remission of the sentence, or any special interposition from any quarter on their behalf to the same position which their ancestor had occupied. Dr Payne, indeed, does not bring out any such view as this in regard to the natural condition of man, —a view which would contradict not only the doctrine of Calvinists, but the express declarations of the Council of Trent. Some of his positions, however, seem to favour it; and we are not quite sure that he was so decidedly opposed to it, as some of his general doctrines would seem to imply.

With respect to Dr Payne's application of the notion, that all that Adam in his federal or representative capacity forfeited, and forfeited for his posterity as well as himself, was only chartered benefits, to the purpose of vindicating the justice and reasonableness of the constitution whereby all men were involved in the consequences of Adam's first sin, we have only to observe that, independently altogether of the question as to the truth of this notion, its irrelevancy and insufficiency for this purpose are plainly implied in some positions we have already laid down, —as to the difference, in relation to this difficulty, between the doctrine which restricts the consequences of Adam's sin, in its bearing on his posterity, to temporal evils and unfavourable moral circumstances, with perhaps some slight deterioration of moral constitution, and that which extends these consequences to an entire depravity of moral nature, issuing, certainly and invariably, in actual transgressions; and the impossibility, in this latter case, of deriving any real assistance, in dealing with the difficulty, from God's mere right as Creator to bestow upon His creatures, according to His good pleasure, different degrees of happiness and of privilege. If Adam, as our federal head, lost for himself and us, by his sin, only chartered benefits, —gratuitously bestowed after his creation, and

forming no integral part of his proper constitution as the creature man, necessary to its completeness and perfection, —then it is plain that the only aspect in which God can be contemplated as acting in the matter, is that simply of a Creator bestowing upon His creatures different degrees of happiness and privilege; and this, as we formerly showed, is a view of His position and actings in the matter, which is utterly inadequate to throw any light upon the difficulty, unless it be assumed that men, after and notwithstanding the loss of these chartered benefits, retained all the ordinary rights and privileges of citizenship, i.e., retained the power of escaping by their own strength, or by some universal grace furnished to them all, from at least permanent misery, —in other words, unless it be denied that men are now, in point of fact, in that condition of moral depravity and actual sinfulness, which Scripture, consciousness, and observation, all concur in proving to attach to them.

Here, we may remark by the way, there is brought out a confirmation of our previous position, —viz., that Dr Payne's doctrine of chartered benefits only being lost in Adam, tends to involve him (though he makes no such application of it) in the application which the Papists make of their doctrine, that original righteousness is supernatural, —viz., that men, though fallen, have still full power to do what God requires of them. There is no view of God's actings in this whole matter which at all accords with the actual, proved realities of the case, except that which represents Him in the light of a just Judge punishing sin, —a view which implies that men's want of original righteousness and the corruption of their whole nature have a penal character, are punishments righteously inflicted on account of sin, not indeed by the positive communication of depravity, but through the just withdrawal of divine grace, and of the influences of the Holy Spirit. And the only explanation which Scripture affords of this mysterious constitution of things is, that men have the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them or charged against them, so as to be legally exposed to the penalties which he incurred; and that this imputation to them of the guilt or reatus of his first sin is based upon his being their federal head or legal representative in the covenant which God made with him. All this, we think, is clearly enough indicated in Scripture; but beyond this Scripture does not go; — and here, therefore, our reasonings and speculations should terminate, or if they are carried at all beyond this

point, they should still be strictly confined to the one single object of answering, so far as may be necessary, the objections of opponents; and lest, even in answering objections, we should be tempted to indulge in unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, we should take care not to extend our reasonings beyond the limits which the logical necessities of the case require us to traverse; i.e., we should restrict them to the one single object of proving— for this is all that, in the circumstances, is logically incumbent upon us— that it cannot be proved that this constitution of things necessarily involves any injustice.

Among the general suggestions that have been thrown out for the purpose of answering objections within the limits now specified, there is one which we have been always disposed to regard as reasonable and plausible, —as an idea which might be legitimately entertained, because, at least, not opposed to the statements of Scripture or the analogy of faith, and as fitted— though certainly not furnishing a solution of the great difficulty— to afford some relief and satisfaction to the mind in contemplating this mysterious subject. It is this: that God, in His wisdom and sovereignty, — following out, as it were, the fall of the angels who kept not their first estate, —resolved to create a rational and responsible being of a different class or description, differently constituted and differently circumstanced from the angels, and to subject this being to moral probation, having resolved to make the trial or probation of the first being of this particular class or description, as a specimen of the whole, the trial or probation of all this class of creatures descending from him; so that the result of the trial in his case should be applied to, and should determine the condition and destiny of, the race, just as if each individual of this class of beings had been actually subjected to trial or probation in his own person, with the same result as was exhibited in the first specimen of it. We think it might be shown that the application of this general idea, taken merely as a hypothesis, would furnish some materials that are fitted to stop the mouths of objectors, and to show that, while the burden of proving that this constitution necessarily involves injustice lies on them, they are not able to accomplish this. But we will not enlarge in the way of attempting to make this application of the idea, lest we should seem to be attaching to it an undue value and importance, or appear to be in any measure suspending the truth of the doctrines we

have been inculcating upon its soundness and validity; and we hasten to observe, that the only reason why we have mentioned it, is because we think that there is a beautiful harmony between it and the Protestant doctrine, that man's original righteousness was natural and not supernatural; that what Adam lost for himself and his posterity was not chartered benefits merely, but integral constituent elements of his moral constitution; and that these two views afford mutual corroboration.

We can scarcely conceive, in any case, of God directly and immediately creating a moral and responsible being, who did not possess inherently, as a proper integral part of his moral constitution, entire rectitude or conformity to God's law; and the difficulty of conceiving of this is increased, when the being supposed is regarded as a specimen or representative of a class of beings who are to be the subjects of a great moral experiment, while yet the experiment is to be completed or decided in the case of this one specimen as representing them all. We feel, upon such an assumption, as if there was something like a claim in equity, that this, being— mutable indeed, and left to the freedom of his own will, else there could not be a full and perfect moral probation of him— should possess righteousness and holiness as qualities of his moral constitution; or, to use language formerly quoted, as employed by Baius, and condemned by the Church of Rome, that this was " *debita integritati primae conditionis;*" and also, that he should have every advantage, in point of circumstances as well as constitution, for doing all that God required of him, —for succeeding in the probation to which he was to be subjected. It is true, indeed, that God might have superadded to his proper natural constitution supernatural gifts or graces, which would have placed Adam in equally favourable circumstances for succeeding in the trial, as those which, in point of fact, he enjoyed by nature; but then he would not, in that case, have been a being inherently of the same class or description with his posterity, and of course his trial, whatever might have been the result of it, would not have fully illustrated the same principles and accomplished the same purposes.

IV. Corruption of Nature

We can now only advert very briefly to the next great feature, or constituent element, of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, — viz., the corruption of his whole nature, or that which is ordinarily, and most properly, called original sin. The Romanists generally contend that the sin which Adam entailed upon his posterity consisted chiefly, if not exclusively, in the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them, and in the want of original righteousness, and say little or nothing about the corruption of his whole nature, or his moral depravity. They are not bound to deny this doctrine, for the Council of Trent has not condemned it; but neither are they bound to assert it, because the Council has abstained intentionally, as we formerly showed, from defining what are the ingredients or constituent elements of the peccatum which it declares that Adam transmitted to the whole human race. The Jansenists, accordingly, held themselves at liberty to maintain, with Augustine, an entire and positive corruption or depravity, — i.e., actual bias or tendency to sin as attaching to man's moral nature; while Romanists more generally have denied this, or admitted it only in a very vague and indefinite sense, — very much like the less evangelical Arminians, — and have regarded original sin as being a mere negation or privation, — the want of that original righteousness, which was merely a supernatural gift bestowed upon Adam, and forfeited not only for himself, but for his posterity, by his first sin. All the Reformers maintained, and most Protestant churches have ever since professed, that it is an actual feature in the character of fallen man, that he has a powerful predominating bias, tendency, or inclination to sin, — to depart from God, and to violate His laws. This is in many respects the most important feature or element of the estate of sin into which man 'fell, especially as it is the proximate cause or source of all his actual transgressions of the divine commandments. He not only does not bring with him into the world anything in his moral nature that involves or produces fear or love of God, — a desire to honour or serve Him; but he is, in virtue of the actual constitution of his moral nature, as it exists, wholly indisposed and averse to everything that is really accordant with God's will, and with the requirements of the law which He has imposed, and could not but impose, upon His intelligent and moral creatures. This is the view given us in the sacred Scriptures of the actual moral condition of human nature, and it is abundantly confirmed by experience. Though brought

out fully by the Reformers, in opposition to the Pelagian views which generally prevailed at that time in the Church of Rome, it was neither affirmed nor denied by the Council of Trent, —i.e., directly, for it was denied (as we shall afterwards see) by implication; and in the Church of Rome, as in every other church, this doctrine has ever proved a test of men's character, —those who were best acquainted with the word of God and their own hearts, and who had the deepest impressions of divine things, receiving and approving of it; and those who were deficient in these respects, and just in proportion to their deficiency, inclined to deny it altogether, or to explain it away, and practically to reduce the great and fearful reality which it asserts to insignificance or nonentity.

I am not called upon to attempt to establish the truth of this great doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature, certainly and invariably producing actual transgressions of God's law; and I have had occasion, under the former heads, to advert fully to the relation which, in the history of the discussions of this subject, this entire corruption of nature has held, and should hold, to the other features or elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell. On these grounds I do not mean to enter further into the consideration of it, but would only express my sense of the paramount importance of becoming familiar with the evidence from Scripture, consciousness, experience, and observation, on which this great doctrine rests, —of forming clear and accurate conceptions of all that the doctrine involves or implies, — and of fully and habitually realizing it; since this is not only the most important truth, both theoretically and practically, in a full view of what man's natural condition is, —and therefore indispensable to an acquaintance with the nature and application of the remedy that has been provided, —but since, more particularly, a full establishment in the assured belief of this corruption of man's whole nature, and the universality of actual transgression resulting from it as a great reality, is most directly and powerfully fitted to preserve from error, and to guide into all truth with respect to the other elements of the sinfulness of men's natural condition, and to lead certainly and immediately to the adoption of those practical steps on which the salvation of men individually is suspended.

This subject strikingly illustrates the necessity and importance of forming

and fixing in our minds precise and definite conceptions upon theological subjects, so far as the word of God affords us materials for doing so. The main part of the decree of the Council of Trent upon the subject of original sin is sound and scriptural, so far as it goes; but being, for reasons which we have explained, very vague and general in its statements, it did nothing to advance the cause of sound doctrine. It is not, indeed, directly and in itself chargeable with Pelagianism; but as it found a Pelagian spirit and tendency generally prevalent in the Church of Rome, so it has left it there, and allowed it to operate with undiminished force, exerting a most injurious influence upon men's whole conceptions of the gospel method of salvation, and, of course, upon their spiritual welfare. And what a contrast does the decree of the Council of Trent present to the clear, precise, and definite statements of our Shorter Catechism, in regard to the nature and constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, —statements so well fitted to convey full and exact conceptions to the understanding, in regard to what man by nature really is, and thereby to impress the heart and to influence the conduct!

We have still to point out, in the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, what is not only defective as being vague and indefinite, but positively erroneous; and to show how it is, that, by erroneous doctrines upon other subjects, —especially on baptismal justification and baptismal regeneration, —she has neutralized or rendered of none effect, practically at least, even what is sound and scriptural in her professed doctrine upon original sin.

V. Concupiscence

What is positively erroneous in the decree of the Council of Trent concerning original sin, is contained in the fifth and last section of their decree, and may be said to consist of two parts, —first, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, not only is the guilt of original sin remitted, but everything in men which comes truly and properly under the head of sin is taken away; and, secondly, that concupiscence in baptized and regenerate persons is not truly and

properly sin.

The first of these positions, with certain explanations, is usually admitted by Protestants to be true, except in so far as it comprehends the second. We shall therefore advert to the second one first; and in returning to the other, and illustrating the explanations and qualifications with which alone its truth can be admitted, we will have an opportunity of explaining how the Church of Rome neutralizes or undoes all that is sound and good in its professed doctrine upon the general subject of original sin. By concupiscence, or evil desire in its technical sense, is meant substantially what is known more popularly under the name of indwelling sin. It designates what the apostle calls the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, or the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in renewed men; but with this important limitation, that as used in this particular controversy, it includes only the first risings or movements of the desires which tend or are directed towards what is evil, antecedently to their being deliberately consented to, and to the actual sin to which they tend or point being resolved upon or performed. It is often called the fuel (fomes) of sin, as being that from which, when it is cherished and not subdued, actual transgressions proceed. The Apostle James undoubtedly distinguishes this concupiscence or ἐπιθυμία, translated "lust" in our version, from the ἁμαρτία or sin which it produces when it has conceived; and this proves that there is something comprehended under the name of sin which concupiscence is not. But the statement does not necessarily imply more than this, and it determines nothing as to whether or not the ἐπιθυμία, though of course not the same with the (sin) ἁμαρτία which it produces, be itself sinful. The Council of Trent denied that concupiscence in this sense, as comprehending the first risings or movements of desires tending to what is evil, but not deliberately consented to, is truly and properly sinful; and the opposite doctrine upon this subject generally maintained by Protestant churches, is thus expressed in our Confession (chap. vi., sec. 5). "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin,"— a statement which is just formally and in terminis, and was evidently intended to be, a contradiction to the decree of the Council of Trent, and indeed can be fully and exactly understood only when

viewed in connection with that decree and the controversy to which it has given rise. It will be proper to quote the words of the decree upon this point: " Manere autem in baptizatis concupiscentiam vel fomitem, haec sancta synodus fatetur et sentit. . . . Hanc concupiscentiam, quam aliquando Apostolus peccatum appellat, sancta synodus declarat ecclesiam catholicam nunquam intellexisse peccatum appellari, quod vere et proprie in renatis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est et ad peccatum inclinat." And then it proceeds to anathematize any one who holds a different opinion. Father Paul tells us of an interesting circumstance connected with the discussions that took place in the council regarding this part of the decree. The proposed deliverance was assented to by all except a Carmelite friar of the name of Antoine Marinier, who objected to the council condemning as heretical, under an anathema, a position which unquestionably had, in terminis, the sanction of the Apostle Paul, and had also, as he alleged, the authority of Augustine. His opposition, however, received no support; but, on the contrary, it only recalled to the recollection of the council two very equivocal sermons which Marinier had preached before them, in which he had spoken in a very suspicious way about the duty of confiding only in God's mercies, and not trusting in our own good works; and confirmed the suspicions which these sermons had produced, that he was not far removed from the doctrine of the Protestants!

The doctrine of Romanists upon this subject is intimately connected with the views they hold regarding man's moral constitution before the fall. Man, they think, in his own proper nature, or in *puris naturalibus*, as the schoolmen expressed it, though free from all positive tendency to sin, was not exempted from a struggle or want of harmony between the higher and the lower departments of his nature, —a struggle or discordance which was prevented from producing or leading to anything actually sinful only by the supernatural gift of original righteousness, —a gift which, though it did not preclude a struggle, or something like it, prevented any actual sinful result, until God was pleased to permit the fall. I do not say that it was their doctrine, in regard to the constitution of man's moral nature as unfallen, that led them to deny the sinfulness of concupiscence, or of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in the regenerate; for I believe that the reverse of this was the true history of the case, and that it was

their doctrine of the non-sinfulness of concupiscence in the regenerate that led to the invention of their notion about man being created without original righteousness, except as a supernatural quality added to the *pura naturalia*. There is but little information given us in Scripture bearing upon anything that preceded the fall of man; and both Protestants and Romanists have been much in the habit, and not unreasonably, of deducing their respective opinions as to what man was before the fall, chiefly from the views they have derived, respectively, from Scripture as to what man is as fallen, and what he is as renewed. But though the Popish view of the innocence of concupiscence in the regenerate, led to their notion of man's natural want of original righteousness, and to the consequent innocent struggle between the higher and the lower powers of his nature, rather than the reverse; yet the two doctrines manifestly harmonize with, and illustrate, each other: for it is evident, on the one hand, that if in man before his fall, viewed as in *puris naturalibus*, there was a struggle, or even a want of perfect harmony, between the higher and lower departments of his nature, this would countenance the notion that concupiscence in the regenerate, the cause of the struggle which undoubtedly exists in them, might not be sinful; and that, on the other hand, if concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, this would countenance the notion that there might be such a struggle, or want of harmony, as is alleged, in man before the fall.

Two of the most striking and dangerous tendencies or general characteristics of the theology of the Church of Rome are, —first, exaggerating the efficacy and influence of external ordinances; and, secondly, providing for men meriting the favour of God and the rewards of heaven; and both these tendencies are exhibited in this single doctrine of the innocence or non-sinfulness of concupiscence. It magnifies the efficacy of baptism, which has so entirely removed from men everything which really possesses the nature of sin; and it puts men upon a most favourable vantage ground for meriting increase of grace and eternal life. Viewed in these aspects, this question, thought it may appear at first sight a mere subtlety, becomes invested with no small practical importance. It will be observed that the Council of Trent, in their decree, distinctly admit that the apostle sometimes calls this concupiscence sin; and in their note upon the passage, they refer to the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of

the Epistle to the Romans, which contain those inspired declarations from which mainly Protestants have deduced the doctrine of the sinfulness of that tendency to sin which remains in the regenerate, and of the first motions of evil desire, though not deliberately consented to or followed out. On the ground of the apostle's statements in these chapters, in which he certainly speaks of concupiscence in the regenerate as sin, the Romanists admit that there is a certain sense in which it may be called sin; but they allege that the only sense in which it can be called sin, is an improper or metaphorical one, or, as the council states it, that the apostle calls it sin, not because it is truly and properly sin, but because it proceeds from sin and inclines to sin, —or, as the Romish divines usually express it, because it is both the punishment of sin and the cause of sin. Protestants, of course, concur with them in regarding it as the punishment of sin, because the Scriptures represent the whole corruption of man's moral nature as a penal infliction imposed upon them through the withdrawal of divine grace, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of being involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them; and in regarding it also as the cause of sin, as it is manifestly the immediate antecedent or proximate cause of the actual sins, in thought, word, and deed, which the regenerate commit, —i.e., of sin in the more limited sense in which the word is used by the Apostle James, when he says that lust, or evil desire, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin. But Protestants also believe that lust or concupiscence in the regenerate, as including a remaining tendency towards what is sinful, and the first or earliest motions of this tendency in the heart, though not deliberately consented to and followed out, is itself truly and properly sinful. And the main proof of this position, which the Council of Trent condemned and anathematized, is to be found in those portions of the Epistle to the Romans in which the council admits that the apostle calls concupiscence and its first motions sin; and in which Protestants think they can show, in addition to the mere employment of the word ἁμαρτία, that both the particular statements made by the apostle, and the general course and tenor of his argument, prove that he uses it in its proper sense as implying ἄνομία, —i.e., a want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God, and as involving guilt or reatus on the part of those to whom it attaches.

It would be out of place here to enter into a critical examination of the meaning or meanings of ἁμαρτία in these chapters, in order to establish this position. But one thing is very manifest, that it should require evidence of no ordinary strength and clearness to warrant men in maintaining that that is not truly and properly sin, which the apostle so frequently calls by that name, without giving any intimation that he understood it in an improper or metaphorical sense; and that if there be any subject with respect to which men ought to be more particularly scrupulous in departing, without full warrant, from the literal ordinary meaning of scriptural statements, it is when the deviation would represent that as innocent which God's word calls sinful, —a tendency which men's darkened understandings and sinful hearts are but too apt to encourage.

Now, the chief proofs which the Romanists commonly adduce in support of their doctrine upon this subject, and of the alleged improper or metaphorical use of the word sin by the apostle in treating of it, are some general statements of Scripture with regard to the effects of baptism and regeneration, and with regard to the general character and position in God's sight of the regenerate; and this brings us back again to the wider and more general position which is laid down in the fifth section of the decree on original sin, and in which the more limited and specific one we have now been considering is comprehended. It is this, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is taken away, and that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is removed. The Reformers complained that the Council of Trent did them injury in ascribing to them a direct and unqualified denial of this position, in the general terms in which it is put, and declared that, with certain explanations, they admitted it to be true, except in so far as it involved or comprehended a denial of the true and proper sinfulness of that lust or concupiscence, that remaining corruption of moral nature, which still attached to the regenerate.

It is important to observe that Calvin and other Protestants, in discussing this position as laid down by the Council of Trent, do not usually enlarge upon the identification here made of baptism and regeneration, or raise any controversy about this, but just assume that baptism is regeneration,

or rather that baptism may be here taken in the same sense as regeneration, as descriptive of that important era in a man's history, when God pardons his sins and admits him into the enjoyment of His favour. The Church of Rome holds that all this takes place invariably at and in baptism, believing in the doctrines both of baptismal justification and baptismal regeneration. Luther held some obscure notion of a similar kind, so far as regeneration is concerned; for he never thoroughly succeeded in throwing off the taint of Popish corruptions upon some points connected with the sacraments. The other Reformers certainly did not admit the Popish doctrines of baptismal justification and regeneration; but when the question as to the connection between baptism and regeneration was not under discussion at the time, they sometimes speak of baptism as if it were virtually identical with regeneration, just because the one is, in its general object and import, a sign or seal of the other, —because the baptism of an adult (and of course it is chiefly from adult baptism that we ought to form our general impressions as to what baptism is, and means), when the profession made in it is honest, or corresponds with the reality of the case, is a profession or declaration of his having been regenerated or born again, and having been admitted to the possession of all the benefits or privileges which are connected with regeneration. The Scriptures, in their more direct and formal statements about baptism, have respect chiefly, if not exclusively, to adult baptism, and assume the honesty or accuracy of the profession made in it; and the application of this consideration points out the futility of the arguments commonly adduced in support of baptismal regeneration, as usually taught by Papists and Prelatists. Upon the same ground, it is no uncommon thing for theologians, when they are not discussing the distinct and specific question of the connection that subsists generally or universally between baptism and regeneration, to use these words as virtually describing one and the same thing.

This is the true explanation of the fact, which appears at first sight to be startling, that Calvin and other theologians, in discussing this position of the Council of Trent, do not usually raise any difficulty as to what is here said about baptism, but virtually regulate their admissions and denials regarding it, and the grounds on which they support them, just as if what is here said of baptism were said of regeneration, or the occasion when

that grace of God is actually bestowed through which men's state and character are changed, and they escape from the consequence of being involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin. Calvin, accordingly, in discussing this part of the decree of the council in his *Antidote*, disclaiming the doctrine which it imputes to Protestants, and explaining how far they agreed and how far they differed with it, embodies his views in the following statement: —“*Nos totum peccati reatum vere tolli in Baptismo, asserimus: ita ut quae manent peccati reliquiae, non imputentur. Quo res clarius pateat, in memoriam revocent lectores, duplicem esse Baptismi gratiam: nam et peccatorum remissio illic, et regeneratio nobis offertur. Remissionem plenam fieri docemus: regenerationem inchoari duntaxat, suosque tota vita facere progressus. Proinde manet vere peccatum in nobis, neque per Baptismum statim uno die extinguitur: sed quia deletur reatus, imputatione nullum est.*”

It is held, then, by Protestants, that in baptism, —i.e., according to the explanation above given, at that great era when men receive the grace of God in truth, be it when it may, for that is not the question here, —their whole guilt, or reatus, or liability to punishment— the guilt of Adam's first sin, in which they were involved, and the guilt of all their own past sins— is taken away, and that the reigning power or corruption in their natures is subdued, so that sin, in the sense of depravity, has no longer dominion over them. But, on the other hand, they contend, in opposition to the Church of Rome, that even after men have been baptized, justified, and regenerated, the corruption or depravity of their nature is not wholly taken away; and there still attaches to them as long as they live much that is truly and properly sinful, much that might, viewed with reference to its own intrinsic demerits, justly expose them to God's displeasure, though it is not now imputed to them for guilt and condemnation.

The grounds on which the Council of Trent, professing to interpret Scripture infallibly, maintains, in opposition to this, that in baptism or regeneration everything which is truly and properly sinful is removed or taken away, as they are embodied in the decree itself, are these, —that God hates nothing in the regenerate; that there is no condemnation to those who are truly buried with Christ by baptism unto death, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; that they have put off the old man,

and have put on the new man, who is created after the image of God; and that they are called pure, holy, righteous, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. It is manifest, however, that none of these statements of Scripture about the general character and position of the regenerate, bear precisely and immediately upon the point in dispute; and that just from their generality they do not necessarily preclude the possibility of its being true, if other portions of Scripture seem to warrant the belief, that there is still something even about these men so described, which is in its own nature sinful, and might justly expose them to God's displeasure. That there is not now anything charged against them as involving guilt, reatus, or as de facto exposing them to condemnation and danger; that, as denominated from what now forms their guiding principle and determines their general character, they are no longer ungodly and depraved, but holy and righteous; that they are the objects of God's special love and complacency, and will assuredly be admitted by Him at last to the enjoyment of His own presence, —all this is certain, for it is clearly and explicitly taught in Scripture. But Scripture just as clearly and explicitly teaches, that even those persons, of whom all this is predicated, have still, so long as they remain upon earth, something sinful about them; that they are not only sinning in fact, by actual transgressions of God's law and by shortcomings in the discharge of duty, but also that the corruption or depravity of their nature has not been wholly taken away, but still manifests its presence and operation; and that, in estimating what there is about them that is truly sinful, we must take in this remaining corruption, and all its motions, as well as their actual transgressions of God's commandments. If this be indeed taught in Scripture, then we are bound to receive and admit it; and even if there were far greater difficulty than there is in reconciling it with other statements made there with regard to the character and position of these men, this would afford no sufficient reason for our refusing to admit it as a portion of what God in His word teaches us concerning them, and of what therefore it is incumbent upon us to believe.

While, then, the Church of Rome holds the great scriptural principle, that Adam, by his fall, forfeited the favour of God, and holiness of nature not only for himself but for his posterity, and transmitted sin and death to the whole human race, she has not only erred by defect, in wrapping up

this great truth in vague and general terms, and giving no clear and definite explanation of the nature and constituent elements of the sinfulness of the condition into which man fell; but she has also incurred the guilt of teaching one decided and important error, —in asserting that, in baptism or regeneration, everything that is properly sinful is removed or taken away; and that concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, though repeatedly called so by an inspired apostle. We would now only observe (for it is scarcely worth while to notice the declaration of the council, in the end of their decree about original sin, that it was not their intention to comprehend in it the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, the mother of God), that the Church of Rome has further provided, by other doctrines which she inculcates, for neutralizing practically all the scriptural truth which she teaches concerning the fall of man and its consequences. By teaching the invariable connection between the due administration of the ordinance of baptism, and the entire removal of guilt and depravity of nature, she has practically removed from men's minds, at least in countries where a profession of Christianity is established, —and where, in consequence, most persons are baptized in infancy, —all sense and impression of their true condition, responsibility, and danger as fallen creatures, who have become subject to the curse of a broken law. It is true, indeed, that men all come into the world involved in sin; but then, in professedly Christian countries, they are almost all baptized in infancy; and this, according to the Church of Rome, certainly frees them at once, and as a matter of course, from all guilt and depravity. No baptized person, according to the Popish doctrine, has any further process of regeneration to undergo, any renovation to be effected upon his moral nature. All that was necessary in this respect has been accomplished in his baptism, wherein, as the semi-Popish Catechism of the Church of England hath it, "he was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Men may still, indeed, incur guilt by actual transgressions of God's law, but the Church of Rome has provided for their comfort the sacrament of penance, another external ordinance by which this guilt is taken away; and it is comforting also to be assured, that, in their endeavours to preserve what is called their baptismal purity from the stain of actual transgressions, they have no corruption or depravity of nature to struggle with. The practical effect of this teaching is to lead men to make no account

whatever of their being involved in original sin, as including both guilt and depravity, so far as concerns any state of mind which they are at any time called upon to cherish, or any duty which they can be called upon to discharge; for what difference will it make practically upon the views, feelings, and impressions of the great mass of mankind, whether they are told that they have no original sin, or that, though they have, it was all certainly and conclusively washed away when they were baptized in their infancy? The practical effect upon the minds of Papists must be substantially the same as if they had been educated in Pelagian or Socinian principles, or in the entire disbelief of original sin; i.e., they will have the impression, even if they should be led to turn their thoughts to religious subjects when they come to years of understanding, and before they have been led into the commission of grosser sins, that they have just to start upon the work of effecting all that is now needful for their own salvation, by preserving a decent conformity to outward requirements, whether ordinances or moral duties, while they have no depravity of nature, which must first of all have its power broken, —still be continually struggled against. Scriptural views of the effects of the fall, and of the actual condition of man as fallen, firmly held and fully applied, are fitted to exert a most wholesome influence upon men's whole conceptions of the way of salvation, and their whole impressions of divine things, and, indeed, are indispensable as a means to this end; but the Church of Rome holds the truth upon this important subject, so far as she holds it, in unrighteousness, admitting it in words, but denying it in reality, — admitting it into her system only for the purpose of making men dependent for its removal upon the priest, by the administration of an outward rite, that they may thus be constrained into submission to his authority, but for any other practical purposes rejecting or denying it. It is a striking illustration of the injurious and dangerous tendency of the notion that guilt and depravity are taken away in baptism, that in Romish theology, —and this is true, from the same cause, to a large extent, of the theology of the Church of England, —the important scriptural doctrine of regeneration, or of a real renovation of men's moral nature by the operation of the Holy Ghost, through the belief of the truth, is seldom if ever mentioned, but is quietly assumed to be wholly unnecessary; because men have been baptized in their infancy, and have thereby been certainly put in possession of everything that is necessary, except their

own outward obedience to God's commandments, for their deliverance from all danger, and their admission into heaven.

VI. Sinfulness of Works before Regeneration

I have had occasion to mention that, at the time of the Reformation, the disputes between the Reformers and the Romanists under the head of original sin, turned, not so much upon the proper nature or definition of the thing itself, or the exposition of its constituent elements, but rather upon its practical bearing on the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit, — topics with which it certainly has, upon any view, a very intimate connection. Luther and his immediate followers were chiefly concerned about bringing out fully the true doctrine of Scripture as to the way in which a sinner is saved from guilt, depravity, and ruin, and clearing this doctrine from the corruptions with which it had been obscured and perverted in the teaching that prevailed generally in the Church of Rome. The great obstacles they had to encounter in this work, were to be found in the notions that generally obtained with respect to human ability and human merit. The substance of what was then commonly believed upon these points, speaking generally, and not entering at present into anything like detail, was this: First, that men, notwithstanding their fallen condition, have still remaining some natural power by which they can prepare and dispose themselves for receiving divine grace, and even, in a certain sense, do something to merit that grace of God, by which alone their deliverance can be effected; and, secondly, that after the grace of God has been bestowed upon them, and has produced its primary and fundamental effects, they are then in a condition in which they have it in their power to merit from God, in a higher and stricter sense, increase of grace and eternal life. These notions had been inculcated by many of the schoolmen, and prevailed generally, almost universally, in the Church of Rome at the period of the Reformation. It is certain that they were almost universally entertained by the instructors of the people at the time when Luther began his public labours as a Reformer; and it is manifest that they must have very materially influenced men's whole conceptions as to what man by nature is, as to what he can do for his own deliverance, and as to the way in which that deliverance is actually effected.

Now, the great work for which God raised up Luther, and which He qualified and enabled him to accomplish, was just to overturn these notions of human ability and human merit, with the foundation on which they rested, and the whole superstructure that was based upon them. These notions implied, or were deduced from, certain views as to the actual condition of human nature, as possessed by men when they come into the world; while the great practical result of them was to divide the accomplishment of men's salvation between the grace of God and the efforts and achievements of men themselves. It was chiefly in this way that the subject of original sin came to occupy a place in the controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; while these considerations, combined with the fact formerly adverted to, — viz., that the Church of Rome was so tied up by the authority of Augustine, and by the decisions of the early church in the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, that she could not, without belying all her principles, deviate very far from scriptural views upon original sin, at least in formal profession, — also explain the result already referred to, viz., that the discussions which then took place connected with original sin, turned mainly upon the bearing of the actual, existing moral condition of man as he comes into the world, upon free-will, grace, and merit. The Reformers, instead of labouring to prove that all Adam's posterity were involved in the guilt and penal consequences of his first transgression, and that he transmitted sin and death to all his descendants, — positions which, in some sense, and as expressed thus generally, the Romanists usually did not dispute, — were mainly concerned about certain practical conclusions which they thought deducible from them, and which, when once established, virtually overturned the whole foundations of the views that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome, as to the way of a sinner's salvation. These practical conclusions were mainly two, — viz., first, that men, until they have become the subjects of God's special grace through Christ in regeneration, are altogether sinful, or have nothing whatever in them or about them but what is sinful; and, secondly, that even after they have become the subjects of God's justifying and renewing grace, there is still something sinful, and in itself deserving of punishment, about all that they are and all that they do, about every feature of their character, and every department of their conduct. These are strong and sweeping

positions. It is evidently a matter of great importance to ascertain whether they are true or not;— for, if true, they are manifestly fitted to exert a most important influence, both theoretically and practically, —i.e., both in regulating men's conceptions of the way in which a sinner's salvation is and must be effected, and in regulating the personal feelings and impressions of those whose minds are at all concerned about their spiritual welfare. On this account it may be proper to devote some observations to the explanation and illustration of these most important positions, which were maintained by all the Reformers, and have been generally adopted by the Protestant churches. Luther, indeed, in explaining and defending them, made use occasionally of some rash and exaggerated expressions, which afforded a plausible handle for cavilling to Popish controversialists. But the positions, in substance, as we have stated them, were generally adopted by the Reformers, and had a place assigned to them in most of the Reformed Confessions. The Council of Trent condemned them both, well knowing that the maintenance of them proved an insuperable obstacle to any very material corruption of the gospel of the grace of God, and that, when intelligently and cordially received, they had a most powerful tendency to preserve men in a state of thought and feeling, in regard to the way of a sinner's salvation, very different from that which the Church of Rome inculcated and encouraged.

The first position is, that until men individually become the subjects of God's special grace, —i.e., until God's grace is actually communicated to them in their justification and regeneration, — there is nothing in them or about them but what is sinful, and deserving of God's displeasure. Now, this is virtually the same thing as saying that man's actual moral nature as he comes into the world is wholly and not partially depraved; that he does not possess any tendency or inclination to what is truly good, but only to what is evil or sinful; that out of the mere exercise of his natural powers, the mere operation of the natural principles of his moral constitution, viewed apart from the special grace conferred upon him, nothing really good does or can come, nothing that either is in itself, or is fitted to produce, what is really in accordance with the requirements of God's law, —or, what is in substance the same thing, that all the actions of unregenerate men are wholly sinful. The Church of Rome admits that a

man cannot be justified before God by his own works, done by the powers of nature, and without the grace of Christ, and that he cannot, without the preventing (*praeveniens*) inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, believe, hope, love, and repent as is necessary in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him; but then the Council of Trent, while maintaining these doctrines, denounced an anathema against those who held "that all works which are done before justification" (justification, it must be remembered, comprehends, in Romish theology, regeneration, and indeed the whole of what is usually classed by Protestant divines under the general head of the application of the blessings of redemption) "in whatever way they may be done, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure of God, and that the more anxiously any man strives to dispose prepare himself for grace, he only sins the more grievously."

This canon affords a good illustration of an observation formerly made in the general review of the proceedings of the council. The whole substance of the Protestant doctrine which the council intended to anathematize, is set forth in the first part of the canon; and the latter part of what is included in the same anathema, about a man only sinning the more grievously the more he strives to prepare himself for grace, is merely a somewhat strong and incautious statement of Luther's, —containing, indeed, what is true in substance, but forming no part of the main doctrine, and needing, perhaps, to be somewhat explained and modified. Luther, of course, in making this statement, was describing the case of a man who was laboriously going about to establish his own righteousness, who, having been somewhat impressed with the importance of salvation, was anxiously seeking to procure God's favour and the grace of justification by deeds of law; and the substance of what he meant to teach upon this subject— though he may have sometimes expressed it strongly and incautiously— was this, that a man who was acting out so thoroughly erroneous views of the way of a sinner's salvation, was even, by the very success which might attend his efforts, only exposing his eternal welfare to the more imminent danger, inasmuch as any success he might have in this process had a powerful tendency to lead him to stop short of what was indispensable to his salvation, —a statement which is fully warranted both by Scripture and experience. But as the statement, when nakedly put

without explanation, had a paradoxical and somewhat repulsive aspect, the council did not think it beneath them to introduce it into their anathema, in order to excite a prejudice against the main doctrine which they intended to condemn. This doctrine itself, —viz., that all works done before justification, or by unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve God's displeasure, —with the practical conclusion which is involved in it, —viz., that nothing done by men before they are justified and regenerated by God's grace, can possibly merit or deserve in any sense, however limited, the favour of God, or even exert any favourable influence in the way, either of calling forth any gracious exercise of God's power, or of preparing men for the reception of it, —was maintained by all the Reformers, and was established by them on satisfactory scriptural evidence. Calvin has a chapter to prove, and he does prove, that "*ex corrupta hominis natura nihil nisi damnabile prodire,*" — meaning by *damnabile*, what deserves condemnation, —and, of course, intending to teach, that so far from there being anything about men, resulting merely from their natural principles, and antecedently to their regeneration by the gracious power of God, which can merit justification, or even prepare them for the reception of it, there is, on the contrary, nothing about them, and nothing that they either do or can do, but what is of such a character and tendency as to afford sufficient ground for subjecting them to the sentence which the law of God denounces against transgression. The same doctrine is taught explicitly in the thirteenth article of the Church of England: —Art. XIII. Of Works before Justification: "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." The same doctrine is thus set forth, in connection with the principal grounds on which it rests, with admirable fulness, propriety, and precision in our own Confession:— "Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others" (such, for instance, as giving money for the relief of the poor or the spread of the gospel); "yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word;

nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God."

Protestants have always maintained that their doctrine upon this subject is clearly contained in, and necessarily deducible from, the general representations which Scripture gives us of the moral character and condition of men as they come into the world, and is established also by scriptural declarations bearing very directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute. The Papists, in order to maintain their position that all works done before justification are not sins, are obliged to assert that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial, and that man did not wholly, but only in part, lose the image of God by the fall. Everything in Scripture which proves the complete or total corruption of man's moral nature, —which shows that he is, as our Confession says, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," —equally proves, that until God's gracious power is put forth to renew him, all his actions are only and wholly sinful. If the corruption is total and complete, as the Scripture represents it, then there is nothing in man, until he be quickened and renewed, which either is good, or can of itself produce or elicit anything good. Our Saviour has said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and in saying so He has laid down a great principle, which, viewed in connection with what can be shown to be the ordinary meaning of "the flesh" in Scripture, just amounts in substance to this, that corrupt human nature, as it is and by itself, can produce nothing but what is corrupt; and He asserted the same general principle with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when He said, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

The statement of the apostle is very strong and explicit: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." There can be no reasonable doubt about the meaning of the word "flesh,"— no reasonable doubt that it means not only the body with its appetites, but the whole man, with all his faculties and tendencies, in his natural or unrenewed condition; and if so, the apostle here explicitly asserts of himself, and, in himself, of every other partaker of human nature, that antecedently to,

and apart from, the regenerating grace of God changing his nature, there was no good thing in him, and that, of course, there could no good thing come out of him. -The same doctrine is also explicitly taught by the same apostle when he says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And again "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These statements are plainly intended to describe the natural state or condition of men, antecedently to the operations of divine grace upon their understandings and hearts, with respect to their power or capacity of knowing, loving, obeying, and pleasing God, and actually doing so; in short, with respect to their doing anything good, or discharging any duty which He requires, or effecting anything that may really avail for their deliverance and salvation; and the description plainly and explicitly given of men's condition is this, that men are actually destitute of any such power or capacity, —that they do, and can do, nothing to realize these results.

Men are very apt, when they read such statements in the word of God, to act upon some vague impression that they are not to be taken literally, but that they must be understood with some qualifications, —that they should in some way or other be explained away. But a vague impression of this sort is wholly unreasonable. When the words are once proved or admitted to be a part of God's recorded testimony, our only business is to ascertain what is really their meaning. If any limitation is to be put upon the natural proper meaning of the words, the grounds and reasons of the proposed limitation must be distinctly specified and defined, and must be clearly apprehended by the understanding. And the only source from which a valid or legitimate limitation of their import can be derived is the word of God itself; i.e., materials must be produced from the context, or from other portions of the sacred Scriptures, to prove that they are not to be taken in all the latitude of their natural proper meaning, and to mark out to what extent the limitation is to be carried. God says that in us, that is, in our flesh or natural character, —in the whole of man in his unrenewed state, —there dwelleth no good thing. If this statement is not to be taken in its proper literal meaning; in other words, if it is to be

maintained, —and this is virtually the position taken by the Romanists, and all others who either deny or in any measure explain away the total and complete depravity of human nature, —that in our flesh or natural character there does dwell some good thing, then it is plainly incumbent upon those who take this ground, to produce explicit and satisfactory proof from Scripture that there is some good thing in fallen and unrenewed men; ' and that, of course, this being established, the apostle's statement is to be taken with some limitation; or else they justly expose themselves to the woe denounced against men who call evil good.

Romanists, and others who adopt similar views upon this subject, usually content themselves with the general statement, that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial; endeavouring to defend this general position by bringing out what they allege it is necessary for men to have, in order to their being responsible, without in general attempting to define how far the corruption goes and where it stops, or to mark out what there is of good that still characterizes fallen and unrenewed men. They do not usually dispute absolutely, or as a general position, that man by his fall forfeited and lost the image of God; but they commonly assert that some traces or features of this image still remained, —a position which Protestants in a certain sense admit; and some of them, as Bellarmine, have attempted to give plausibility and definiteness to this notion, or rather have retracted or explained away the concession that man has lost the image of God, by inventing a distinction, which has no foundation in Scripture, between the image of God and the likeness of God; and asserting that man has lost the latter, the likeness, but not the former, the image. Moehler admits that this position is fairly involved in the doctrine of the Council of Trent, —viz., that " fallen man still bears the image of God and he professes to give great credit to Calvin for teaching a more rational and Catholic doctrine with respect to the natural condition of man than Luther, by admitting that the image of God in man was not wholly obliterated. He represents Luther as the more erroneous and extravagant, but, at the same time, the more consistent, in his views upon this subject, and describes Calvin as only involving himself in confusion and inconsistency by the partially sounder views which he entertained in regard to the remains of the divine image in fallen men. In order to lay a plausible ground for these allegations,

Moehler perverts the views both of Luther and Calvin, and their respective followers, upon this subject, bending them in opposite directions, and thus increasing the apparent discrepancy between them. He represents Luther as denying the existence in fallen man of any religious or moral capacities or faculties, as if he had become literally like a stock or a stone, or an irrational animal, —an imputation which has no fair and solid foundation, though it may have some apparent countenance in one or two rash and incautious expressions; and he represents Calvin as admitting the existence of remains of the divine image in fallen man in such a sense as to be inconsistent with his total depravity.

But the truth is, that Calvin manifested no inconsistency either with Luther, or with himself, in treating of this subject. Calvin did not admit that traces and remains of the divine image were to be found in fallen man in any sense which, either in his own apprehension or in the nature and truth of the case, was in the least inconsistent with maintaining the entire depravity of human nature, or the absence of all that was really good in unrenewed men, and the utter sinfulness of all their actions. The only difference between Luther and Calvin upon this subject lies in what we have repeatedly had occasion to advert to, —viz., that Luther not unfrequently indulged in strong and paradoxical language, without paying due regard to the exact import of his expressions; while Calvin's wonderful perspicacity, and soundness, and comprehensiveness of judgment, communicated in general to his statements an exactness and precision to which Luther never attained. The remains of the divine image which Calvin admitted were still to be found in fallen man, consisted not in any actual remaining tendency to what was truly good, nor in the possible realization by his own strength, and through the mere operation of his natural principles, of any knowledge, righteousness, or holiness, which was really in accordance with what God required of him; but chiefly in the general structure of his mental faculties, —in those natural capacities of acquiring a knowledge of truth and God, and loving and serving Him, which constitute Him, in contradistinction to the lower animals, a rational and, in a certain sense, a religious being, and make him a proper subject, a suitable recipient, of those gracious operations of the divine Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth, by which he

may be renewed, or made over again, after God's image. In this sense Calvin admitted, and so have Protestant divines in general, that fallen man retains features of the divine image— which plainly enough indicate the high place originally assigned to him in the creation, —in his relation to God, his intrinsic fitness or subjective capacity, in virtue of his mental and moral constitution, for acting suitably to that relation, and of course the possibility of his being again enabled to do so, without an entire reconstruction of the general framework of his mental constitution and faculties, though not without most important changes which God's gracious power alone can effect. In this sense, but in no other, man may be said to retain the traces or remains of the image of God; but there is nothing in all this in the least inconsistent with what Calvin and Protestants in general have regarded as clearly taught in Scripture with respect to the total depravity of human nature, —man's natural want of any actual available capacity in himself for what is truly good, —and the consequent sinfulness of all his actions, of all the actual outgoings of his natural principles, until he is renewed by God's grace in the spirit of his mind. That this was Calvin's mind upon the subject, is perfectly plain from repeated and explicit statements, —nay, even from those quoted by Moehler himself, in support of the account he gives of Calvin's doctrine: "Quin Adam, ubi excidit e gradu suo, hac defectione a Deo alienatus sit, minime dubium est. Quare etsi demus non prorsus exinanitam ac deletam in eo fuisse Dei imaginem, sic tamen corrupta fuit, ut quicquid superest, horrenda sit deformitas.....Ergo quum Dei imago sit integra naturae humanae praestantia, quae refulsit in Adam ante defectionem, postea sic vitiata et prope deleta, ut nihil ex ruina nisi confusum, mutilum, labeque infectum supersit."

Romanists are fond of dwelling, in support of their doctrine upon this subject, upon the religious sense manifested by all nations, in all varieties of outward circumstances, as indicated by their religious rites and ceremonies; and upon the examples of virtue or virtuous actions given by some of the celebrated men of heathen antiquity. But it can derive no efficient support from these quarters; for the question really comes to this, Can it be proved, and can it be proved by evidence sufficient to warrant us in contradicting or modifying the explicit declarations of Scripture assuring us, that in men's natural or unrenewed character there

dwelleth no good thing, that there is anything really good in the actions here referred to, whether of a moral or of a religious kind? And in order to settle this question, we must take the scriptural standard of what is good, and apply it to them, remembering at the same time that the onus probandi lies upon those who affirm their goodness, since it cannot be reasonably disputed that the word of God seems plainly *prima facie* to deny it, in those general statements which have been quoted or referred to. When the question is considered in this light, and discussed on these conditions, there is no difficulty in showing that Romanists are unable to establish the doctrine upon this subject to which the Council of Trent has committed them. If good works, in accordance with the scriptural standard, be, in conformity with what is implied in the statement formerly quoted from our Confession, those only which proceed from a heart purified by faith, which are done in a right manner, according to the word, and to a right end— the glory of God, then it is manifestly impossible to prove that any actions, whether of a moral or a religious kind, that were truly good, have ever been performed by any but men of whom there was every competent reason to believe that they had been born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.

The doctrine, then, taught by the Reformers, and anathematized by the Council of Trent, —that works done before justification, and of course all the actions of unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure and condemnation of God, —is clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, and ought to be laid down as a fixed principle in all our investigations into the way and manner in which men are delivered from their natural condition of guilt and depravity, affording as it does a sufficient proof that there can be no such thing as what Popish theologians usually call merit of congruity, or *meritum de congruo*, —i.e., a superior measure of antecedent moral worth and excellence, rendering some men more congruous or suitable recipients of divine grace than others; and that the origin of all that is truly good in men, and really bears with a favourable influence upon their salvation, must be traced to the special grace or favour of God in Christ, and to the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit.

Dr Chalmers has discussed very fully, upon a variety of occasions, the

right mode of stating and enforcing, —especially with a view to the conviction of irreligious men, —the true moral character and condition of those who have not yet received the grace of God; and has brought forward upon this subject some views of great practical value and importance. He has more particularly laboured to show the propriety and desirableness, with a view to producing a practical impression on the understandings and consciences of irreligious men, of fully admitting the important differences that may be observed in them in regard to integrity, benevolence, generosity, and similar qualities, and in regard to the discharge of social and domestic duties; and urged strenuously the importance of chiefly enforcing upon them, with a view to their conviction, the ungodliness with which they are all, and all equally, chargeable; while he has presented some very striking portraits of the extent to which qualities and conduct, —amiable and useful, well fitted to call forth respect and esteem, —may exist without anything resulting from a right sense of men's relation to God, and of the duty they owe to Him. In his very important and interesting exposition of these topics, he was not called upon to advert to those views of the subject which I have had occasion to explain; and he has, in consequence, been led to make some statements which might seem at first sight scarcely reconcilable with the position I have endeavoured to illustrate. There is, however, no real discrepancy, —any apparent discrepancy arising solely from the different aspects in which the subject has been contemplated, and the different purposes to which it has been applied. I entirely concur in all the positions Dr Chalmers has laid down upon the subject, though I do not approve of all his phraseology, and especially doubt the propriety of calling anything in the character of unrenewed men good, absolutely or without explanation, when the apostle has so expressly asserted that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing; or of applying this epithet, or any synonymous one, to any actions which do not correspond with the description of good works that has been quoted from our Confession of Faith.

VII. Sinfulness of Works after Regeneration

The second practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the

doctrine of original sin, was, —that even after men have been justified and regenerated, there is still something sinful about all of them so long as they continue upon earth, staining their whole character and actions with what is in its own nature displeasing to God and deserving of punishment, and is therefore necessarily exclusive of merit and supererogation; and this position we propose now briefly to illustrate.

It is of course not denied that there is something, —nay, much, — that is really good, or really accordant with the requirements of God's law, in men who have been born again. Their hearts have been purified by faith; their actions are, to a considerable extent, really regulated by the right standard, —the word of God, —and directed to a right end, —the promotion of His glory. They are dwelt in by the Spirit of God, who works in them; and the results of His operation, —so far as they are His, —must be good. They have been created again in Christ Jesus unto good works, and they walk in them. All this is true; but it is also true, that even they are daily breaking God's commandments in thought, word, and deed; and that their actions, even the best of them, are stained with imperfection and sin. Luther, on this point, as well as on that formerly discussed, had made some rash and incautious statements, and it has ever since been the general practice of Popish writers to misrepresent Protestants by charging them with maintaining that there are no good works performed even by regenerate men, but that all their actions are mortal sins. This is an inaccurate and unfair representation of the Protestant doctrine, although some of Luther's statements may have given it some apparent countenance. Protestants do not dispute that renewed men, out of the good treasure of their hearts, bring forth good things; that they perform actions which are called good in the word of God, and of course are good, even when tried by the scriptural standard. What they contend for is, that even renewed men have also something about them that is evil; and that all their actions, even the best of them, though good in the main, have got about them something sinful and defective, and come so far short of what the law of God requires, that, when viewed simply in themselves, and tried by that high and holy standard, they must be pronounced to be sinful, and, so far as intrinsic merit is concerned, to deserve, not reward, but punishment.

The Council of Trent anathematizes "any who say that a righteous man, in every good work, sins at least venially, or, what is more intolerable, mortally, and therefore deserves eternal punishment; and that he is not condemned only because God does not impute these works to his condemnation." Now, Protestants do not admit, but, on the contrary, utterly deny, the Popish distinction between mortal and venial sins, so far as concerns their proper nature and intrinsic demerit; and it is, of course, unwarrantable and unfair to ascribe to them, directly or by implication, the use or employment of such a distinction. They believe that every sin, —i.e., any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God, — is in its own nature mortal, and deserving of God's wrath and curse; and might, when viewed by itself, and apart from God's revealed purposes and arrangements, and His previous actual dealings and engagements with men, be, without any injustice, made the ground of a sentence of condemnation. If, then, any of them should assert that the sin which they ascribe to all the good works, even of righteous or regenerate men, is not venial but mortal sin, they must mean by this nothing more than that it is truly sin, and not a mere defect or infirmity which need not be much regarded, as it does not imply a real transgression of, or want of conformity to, the requirements of God's law; and there is a sense in which Protestants do not regard the good works of regenerate persons, though polluted with sin, as mortal sins, —viz., if respect be had to their actual effects, and not to their intrinsic nature and demerit. Regenerate persons have been justified and admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour, —they have been adopted into His family, and they are regarded and treated by Him as His children. They are in Christ Jesus, and there is now no condemnation for them. Their sins are not now imputed to them or charged against them, to their condemnation, and do not, in point of fact, subject them to death and the curse of God. But if there be anything about them, in their character, principles, motives, or actions, which is really sinful, then they must deserve condemnation; and if they are not, in point of fact, subjected to it, then this must be, in spite of the anathema of the Council of Trent, because it is not imputed to them, or put down to their account, —charged against them with a view to their being condemned.

Another injustice commonly practised by Romish writers, — though not,

it must be admitted, by the Council of Trent, —in explaining the state of the question upon this subject, is to represent Protestants as maintaining the general position, that the good works of righteous or regenerate men are mortal sins, and at the same time to insinuate that Protestants give this as the true and proper description of them. Now, Protestants do not deny that all regenerate men perform good works, and they admit that good works are good works, and should be so described. Of course they cannot be both good works and sins in the same respect; but it is quite possible that they may be, and therefore may be justly called, good, as being to a large extent, and with respect to their leading distinguishing characteristics, good, accordant with God's commandments; and yet may in some way so come short of the requirements of the divine law as to be chargeable with sin, so that they may truly be said to be sins. When the question, indeed, is put generally and indefinitely, What they are? they should be described according to their leading and most palpable characters; and the answer to the question should just be, that they are good works. But if it be true also that there is something sinful about them, then the assertion that they are good works, though it be the true and proper answer to the question, What are they? does not contain the whole truth, —does not give a full and complete description of them; and of course this additional important element requires to be introduced.

Protestants, then, do not give it as the true and proper description of the good works of regenerate men, that they are sins, though this is the way in which the matter is usually represented by Bellarmine and other Popish controversialists. They say that they are good works; but finding, as they believe, abundant evidence in Scripture that they have all something sinful about them, they think they may also, without any impropriety, be called sins; not as if this was their leading primary character, —that by which they should be ordinarily and directly denominated, —but simply as being one true and real feature that ought to enter into a full description of them, inasmuch as, notwithstanding their substantial goodness or accordance with the requirements of God's law, they are also stained or polluted with what is sinful, and, therefore, in its own nature deserving of condemnation. The Council of Trent has not formally and precisely laid down, in a direct and positive form, the doctrine which it intended to teach in opposition to that which it

anathematized in the canon above quoted; but by anathematizing the position that a righteous man sins in every good work, —by maintaining that a regenerate man is able in this life to fulfil the whole law of God, and to merit or deserve by his good works increase of grace and eternal life, — they fully warrant us in ascribing to the Church of Rome, as one of its recognised and binding doctrines, the position, — that men in this life may be entirely free from sin, and may and do perform, actions which are not stained or polluted with anything sinful, or really deserving of condemnation attaching to them. Now, the opposite doctrine, —viz., that even regenerate men have all something sinful about them, and that even their good works are all stained or polluted with an admixture of sin attaching to them, —was maintained by all the Reformers, and was strongly urged by them as overturning from the foundation the notions that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome about the merit of good works.

The subject divides itself into two parts, —the first including the moral constitution of renewed men, as comprehending their tendencies, affections, and incipient desires; and the second their actual motives and completed actions. In regard to the first of these parts or divisions of the subject, the question in dispute is identical with that which we discussed when examining the decree of the Council of Trent on original sin, and showing, in opposition to its decision, that baptism or regeneration does not wholly remove original corruption or depravity, and that concupiscence in the regenerate, as it was then explained, is sin. This point is of essential importance in regard to the whole question; and, indeed, it may be said to determine it: for if concupiscence, which is allowed to remain in the regenerate, is sin, as the Council of Trent admits that the Apostle Paul calls it, it must stain with an admixture of sinful pollution all the actions which they perform, until they have entirely escaped from the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. And Bellarmine accordingly admits that it is needful to the successful maintenance of the Popish doctrine, that the good works of regenerate men are not certainly and universally polluted with what is sinful, to remove out of the way the alleged sinfulness of concupiscence, and to show that it is not a sin, but only an infirmity or defect.

As, however, we have already considered fully this subject of the sinfulness of concupiscence, we need not now dwell upon it at greater length, but may proceed to advert to the second branch of the subject, — viz., the actual motives and the completed actions of regenerate men; the actual motives differing from concupiscence, as including the first risings or motions of desires directed towards what is evil or unlawful, in this, that they are deliberately cherished in the mind, that they are fully consented to, and are necessarily connected with the outward actions of which they form the true proximate causes, and of which they determine the moral character. The direct Scripture proofs usually adduced by Romanists in support of the doctrine of their Church upon this point, are taken from those passages of Scripture which describe some men as perfectly blameless and pleasing to God, and their actions as good works, conformable to His law and acceptable in His sight, and those in which some of the saints appeal to, and plead, their own innocence and righteousness. There is, however, no statement in Scripture which clearly and definitely teaches, directly or by necessary consequence, that any man ever existed upon earth in a condition in which he had not something sinful about him, or ever performed an action which was free from an admixture of sinful pollution. Some of the scriptural statements to which Romanists refer in discussing this subject, might seem to warrant their conclusion, if there was no more information given us in Scripture regarding it than what is contained in them. But, —as we had occasion to remark before upon a similar topic, when considering the alleged effects of baptism or regeneration upon original corruption, and establishing the sinfulness of concupiscence, —they do not bear so directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute as to preclude the competence of producing, or even to make it unlikely that there may be actually produced, from other parts of Scripture, evidence that even the good works of regenerate men are stained with sinful pollution. At the most, these general statements about perfection, innocence, and good works, pleasing to God, etc., can have the effect only of throwing the onus probandi upon those who deny that the good works of regenerate men are wholly free from sin; and any further use or application of them, in the first instance, should be the more carefully guarded against, because the general tendency of men is to overrate their own excellence, and because the general tendency of the leading views presented in the word of God is

to counteract this natural tendency of men. Our duty is to ascertain the whole of what God's word teaches upon every subject on which it touches, and to receive every doctrine which it inculcates as resting upon divine authority. We can be said to know the word of God upon any topic only when we have accurately ascertained the meaning and import of all that He has stated or indicated in His word regarding it, and when we have combined the different portions of information given us there—admitting each of them in its due order and connection—into the general view which we lay down of the whole subject to which they relate.

Some instances there are, in which, when we collect together and combine into a general statement or doctrine the whole of the different portions of the information which the word of God furnishes upon some particular topic, we find it difficult to comprehend how the different truths or portions of truth which enter into the general doctrine can consist with each other or be brought into harmonious combination. But we must be careful of imagining that this of itself affords any sufficient reason for rejecting any one of them, —a notion which virtually assumes that our faculties, or powers of distinct comprehension, constitute the measure or standard of what is true or possible. If it can be shown from Scripture that the good works of regenerate men are still stained by some admixture of what is sinful, then this must be received as a portion of what Scripture teaches regarding them; it must enter into anything like a full statement of the Scripture doctrine upon the subject; and it must be allowed to explain or modify somewhat those general and indefinite statements about perfection and innocence, goodness and acceptableness, which, had no such doctrine been also taught in Scripture, might have seemed to point to a different conclusion. It is quite possible that the actions may be good and acceptable in their general character and leading features, so as to be rightly denominated, ordinarily and generally, by these terms, though it may be also true that they are not wholly free from sinful imperfection or pollution. They may have comparative or relative, though not unqualified or absolute, perfection and innocence; and this, indeed, is the only way in which the whole doctrine taught in God's word regarding them can be consistently and harmoniously embodied in a doctrinal statement. And it is remarkable that most of the arguments which Bellarmine founds upon

the scriptural passages he adduces in support of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, require as their medium of probation, as the intervening idea through which alone they can be made to bear upon the point in dispute, that unfair misrepresentation of the proper status quaestionis which I have already exposed.

For instance, having adduced those passages which undoubtedly speak of the good works of regenerate persons, as being good, excellent, and pleasing to God, he argues in this way: " Si opera omnia justorum essent peccata mortalia" (this is the position he ascribes to Protestants, and then the inference he draws is), "dicenda essent potius mala, quam bona. . . . Quomodo igitur Scriptura praedicat absolute opera bona, si non sunt bona, nisi secundum quid, sed absolute, et simpliciter mala? Omnino necesse est, ut vel Spiritus Sanctus in hac parte fallatur, vel Lutherus, et Calvinus erret. "Now, we can with perfect ease escape from both the horns of this dilemma; we are under no necessity of either maintaining that the Holy Spirit erred, or of admitting that Luther and Calvin erred, upon this subject. We admit that the works in question are, in their general character and leading features, good and pleasing to God, and of course may, and should be said, simply and generally, to be so: and this, we think, is all that can be shown to be necessarily implied in the scriptural passages which Bellarmine adduces; while we think, also, in perfect consistency with this, that there are sufficient materials furnished by the Holy Ghost in Scripture for proving that they are likewise mala, not absolute et simpliciter, according to the doctrine which Bellarmine unwarrantably ascribes to Luther and Calvin, but only secundum quid. In short, Luther and Calvin took in the whole doctrine of Scripture upon this subject, while Bellarmine and the Church of Rome have received only a portion of it; and have interpreted and applied that portion in such a way as to make it contradict what is also and equally taught in Scripture, and to be received with the same implicit submission.

The Church of Rome, then, can produce no "sufficient evidence from Scripture in support of the doctrine which it teaches. Let us now briefly advert to the scriptural grounds on which the Protestant doctrine rests, without, however, attempting anything like a full exposition of them. The statements made by the Apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of the Epistle

to the Romans are sufficient, not only to prove the proper sinfulness of concupiscence, — although, as we have observed, the proof of the proper sinfulness of concupiscence is sufficient of itself to prove that there is some sinful admixture about all the actions of regenerate men, — but also to prove more directly the sinful deficiency and imperfection of all the actions which he performed, —and more especially his statements, "That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do;" and, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." The force of this statement, so far as concerns the point now under consideration, lies very much in the word *κατεργάζεσθαι*, which means to work out thoroughly, or to carry a work out to completeness and perfection; and if the apostle, even when his will was to do good, did not find that he could even attain to completeness or perfection in his strivings after conformity to what God requires, this is the same thing as telling us that all his good works had still something sinful, or sinfully defective, attaching to them, and polluting them. The same conclusion is established by what we are taught in Scripture concerning the experience of David, and other inspired servants of God, who, —while they did on some occasions appeal to their own innocence or righteousness viewed comparatively, or as contrasted with the character of their enemies, and with the accusations which these enemies brought against them, —have also made it manifest, that they knew and felt that there was nothing about them, and no action they had ever performed or could perform, which could bear to be strictly investigated in the sight of God, or which did not stand in need of His unmerited mercy and compassion in order to its being accepted, and being not imputed to them, or charged against them, as an adequate ground of condemnation.

This doctrine is also established by what we are taught in Scripture, in many various ways and forms, as to the exceeding length and breadth of the requirements of God's law, and the actual conformity or obedience rendered to it even by renewed men; and this, of course, furnishes the leading direct and general proof of the position. A want of conformity to the divine law is sin, as well as a transgression of it; and the simple recollection that the divine law requires of men at all times to love God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and that of course

the absence or defect of this supreme love, as a feature of character, or as the principle and motive of an action, implies the existence of a sinful want of conformity to what God requires, or of a sinful neglect of a duty which is incumbent, should be sufficient of itself to exclude from our minds all idea that even renewed men ever have performed, or can perform, any actions which are unstained by sinful imperfection and pollution. The experience, indeed, of the best men in all ages, viewed in connection with the scriptural statements as to the duty which God requires of us, is decidedly opposed to this proud and presumptuous notion; and it can scarcely be conceived to be possible that any man, who had ever felt anything of the power of religion, or been impressed with scriptural views of what God requires, and especially of that supreme and paramount love to Himself which ought ever to reign in our heart, and be the real source and the characterizing principle of all our actions, should venture to select any action he had ever performed, and assert that, viewed in its source and motive, in its substance and circumstances, it was unpolluted with sin, and in full conformity with the requirements of God's law. Bishop Davenant, in discussing this subject, does not hesitate to say, " *Qui in bonis suis actionibus hanc peccati adhaesionem non sentit, ilium ego nunquam vel unam actionem bonam edidisse sentio.*"

The sum and substance of the answer which Popish divines give to the scriptural passages that assert or imply the sinfulness of all men, even the regenerate, and the sinful imperfection of all that they do, viewed in comparison with the standard of God's law, is this, —that what may be sinful about them is not mortal but venial sin, i.e., practically speaking, is no sin at all. Now, this indicates one of the reasons why Bellarmine was so anxious to represent Protestants as teaching the general position, that the good works of regenerate men are mortal sins, though the distinction between mortal and venial sins is rejected by them, —while it also illustrates the widely injurious application which Papists make of this anti-scriptural and dangerous distinction. Bellarmine says, that if the good works of righteous men are, as Protestants allege, stained and polluted with sin, this must arise from innate concupiscence, or the deficiency or shortcoming of love to God, or from the admixture with them of venial sins. Now, this statement is, upon the whole, correct, except in virtually ascribing to Protestants the distinction between mortal

and venial sins, as understood by Papists. At the same time, there is, as I have explained, a sense in which Protestants do not regard the sin which they impute to the good works of regenerate men as mortal; and they admit that, as the actions under consideration are, in the main, good, the sin which adheres to and pollutes them cannot be very heinous, as compared with other sins; though, if it be sin at all, it must, upon scriptural and Protestant principles, be in its own nature mortal, and deserving of the punishment which all sin merits. But, with this explanation and modification, Bellarmine's statement of the grounds and reasons of our ascription of sin to the good works of regenerate men, may be admitted to be substantially correct; and how does he dispose of them? By a simple and summary process in the application of the method of exhaustion. Concupiscence is not sin, but only an infirmity. The deficiency of our love to God, —or, as he chooses to explain it, or explain it away, our not loving Him so much as we will do when we reach heaven, —is a defect indeed, but not a fault and a sin, “defectus quidem est, sed culpa et peccatum non est;” and as to the venial sin that may be mixed up with these, why, “peccatum veniale non est contrarium caritati, nec proprie contra legem sed prater legem,” i.e., a venial sin is not contrary to charity or love, and is not properly against the law, but beside the law; or, in plain terms, is not a sin at all. This surely is to make the word of God of none effect by traditions, and to pervert the plainest and most important statements of Scripture; and to do this for the very purpose of eradicating Christian humility, inflating men with a most unwarranted and dangerous impression of their own worth and excellence, and cherishing a state of mind diametrically opposite to that which it is the manifest tendency and design of the whole gospel scheme of salvation to produce, and fraught with danger to men's souls. Nothing more need be said in opposition to a doctrine which requires to be defended by such arguments as these.

But it may be proper to advert to the illustration, thus incidentally afforded us, of the extensive and injurious application made by the Papists of their distinction between mortal and venial sins. Bellarmine manifests his deep sense of the importance of this distinction to the cause of Popery, by devoting the whole of the very first of his six books, “De Amissione gratiae et statu peccati,” to the establishment of it; and it is,

indeed, of much more importance in the Popish system than might at first sight appear. A great many scriptural statements require to be distorted or perverted, in order to procure for it something like countenance; and when it has been once proved or assumed, it is then employed, as we have seen, as a ready and convenient medium for distorting and perverting the meaning of many other portions of Scripture. Its direct, immediate, and most proper application, is to lead men to regard as very insignificant, and practically not sinful at all, many things which the word of God condemns as offensive to Him, and ruinous, if not repented of, to men's souls. The tendency of this is to deaden men's sense of moral responsibility, and to make them indifferent about their salvation, and careless about the means by which it is to be secured; or, what is virtually and practically the, same thing, it disposes them to believe that guilt, —which, upon scriptural principles, can be washed away only by the blood of Christ, and through the exercise of faith and repentance, —may be expiated by external ordinances, by personal or other human satisfactions, and by priestly absolution and intercession. And, in this way, it has a powerful tendency to seduce depraved men into Popery, to retain them there; while it enters largely into those corrupt influences by which the Popish system operates upon men's character and conduct, and accomplishes the design of its real author, by wrapping them up in security, and thus ruining their souls. By means of this distinction, a great deal of that in Scripture which is most directly fitted to arouse and alarm, is neutralized or enervated; a shield is provided to defend against the arrows of conviction, and a cloud is interposed to hide from men's view the true meaning of many portions of God's word, —the real import and right application of many statements which bear very directly upon the opening up of the true way of a sinner's salvation. If the doctrine of the Reformers, that an imperfection and pollution which is in its own nature sinful, and therefore deserving of punishment, attaches to all the good works even of regenerate men, be true, it manifestly overturns the common Popish notions about merit and supererogation. It proves that men cannot perform anything that is truly meritorious, since it shows that all their actions— in whatever way God for Christ's sake, and in virtue of the union to Him of those who perform them, may be pleased to regard and accept them— are, when viewed simply in themselves, and according to their own real and intrinsic relation to the divine law,

deserving of punishment and not of reward.

I have dwelt the longer upon these subjects, because they really occupied a very prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and because the reformed doctrine upon these points, which I have attempted to illustrate, was peculiarly offensive to the Romanists, as manifestly striking at the root of all those notions of human ability and human merit which the Romish Church has ever cherished, and on which a large portion of the system of Popery is based. If it be indeed true, as the word of God teaches us, that all the actions of unjustified and unregenerate men, —i.e., of men before they become the recipients and subjects of God's justifying and converting grace, —are only and wholly sinful, having nothing truly good about them; and if it be also true, that all the works of men, even after they are justified and regenerated, though really good in their general elements and leading features, are likewise stained and polluted with something that is sinful, —if all this be true, then it plainly and necessarily follows that there cannot be either *meritum de congruo*, with respect to what Papists call the first justification; or *meritum de condigno*, with respect to what they call the second justification; and that individual men, at every step of the process by which they are delivered from guilt and ruin, and prepared for the enjoyment of heaven, are regarded and treated by God, and of course should ever be regarded by themselves and others, as the objects of His unmerited compassion and kindness, —the unworthy recipients of His undeserved mercy and grace. And while here we have to do with these principles chiefly in their bearing upon the formation of an accurate conception of the gospel method of salvation, of the scriptural scheme of theology, we would not omit, in conclusion, simply to point out their obvious and important bearing upon matters more immediately personal and practical. When these great principles are clearly understood and distinctly conceived, they must put an end at once to the laborious attempts, in which some men waste much time, of going about to establish a righteousness of their own, to prepare themselves, or to make themselves suitable or worthy, to receive the grace of God in Christ, instead of at once laying hold of the freely offered mercy and grace of the gospel; while in regard to others who, in the scriptural sense, are working out their own salvation through the grace of Christ administered to all

who are united to Him by faith, they are well fitted to lead them to do so with "fear and trembling," by impressing them with a sense of the magnitude of the work, the arduousness of the struggle; and to constrain and enable them ever to cultivate profound humility, and a sense of their entire dependence upon the supplies of God's Spirit.

XX. The Doctrine of the Will

The first three canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent are directed, very unnecessarily, against the Pelagians, and are similar in substance to the canons of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, by which Pelagian and semi-Pelagian error was condemned. There is nothing in them to which any of the Reformers objected, and the only notice which Calvin takes of them in his "Antidote" is by responding—Amen. These anti-Pelagian canons, viewed in connection with the place which they occupy in the decrees of the Council of Trent, furnish an instance of what the history of theology has very often exhibited, —viz., of men being constrained by the force of the plain statements of Scripture in regard to the natural destitution and helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace as the source of all the holiness and all the happiness to which they ever attain, to make large admissions in favour of what all Calvinists, but not they exclusively, regard as the scriptural doctrine upon these subjects; admissions which, if followed out in a manly and upright way, would lead to thorough soundness of opinion regarding them, but which those who have been constrained to make them endeavour afterwards to explain away or to neutralize by the introduction of erroneous notions, which are really inconsistent with the admissions that had been wrung from them. This was very fully exhibited in most of the works written in the course of last century, and even in the present one, by divines of the Church of England, against the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, under the name of Calvinism, —as, for instance, in Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism. Many of these men, in deference to the plain meaning of scriptural language, made statements about the natural helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace, which in their fair and honest meaning involved all that Calvinists have ever contended for upon these subjects, while they explained them away by the maintenance of positions which, if really true, should have prevented the admissions they had made. The books that have been written by Episcopalians against Calvinism are usually more Pelagian, and more thoroughly opposed to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, than the decrees of the Council of Trent. In its

first three canons it admits that men cannot be justified by their own works without divine grace through Christ; that this grace of God through Christ is necessary, not only to enable men to do what is good more easily than they could have done without it, but to enable them to do it at all; and that without the preventing inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, a man cannot believe, hope, love, or repent, as it is necessary that he should do, in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him. And these doctrines, combined with what they had laid down in the previous session about original sin, as we have already explained it, seem sufficient, if fairly understood and applied, to overturn all notions of human ability and human merit. But we have already seen, in several instances, how they corrupt and pervert these general truths, which are expressed with a good deal of vagueness and generality, by laying down positions of a more definite and limited description, marked by an opposite tendency in their bearing upon the method of a sinner's salvation. And in a similar way we find that the three anti-Pelagian canons, with which they begin their deliverance upon justification, are immediately followed by two on the subject of free-will, in which the way is paved for introducing justification by works and human merit, and for ascribing, partly at least, to the powers and deserts of men themselves, and not wholly to the grace of God, the salvation of sinners.

This subject of free-will is, as it were, the connecting link between the doctrines of original sin and of divine grace— between men's natural condition as fallen, involved in guilt and depravity, and the way in which they are restored to favour, to holiness, and happiness. There is perhaps no subject which has occupied more of the time and attention of men of speculation. I shall not attempt anything like a general discussion of this extensive and intricate subject, but will merely endeavour to explain the views which were generally held upon this topic by the Reformers, and which have been embodied in the Confessions of the Protestant churches, as contrasted with those taught by the Church of Rome and by Arminians.

There is one general observation, in regard to the way in which the subject was discussed at the time of the Reformation, that ought to be attended to, —viz., that the Reformers did not discuss it as a question in

metaphysics, but as a question in theology; and that even with respect to what may be called its theological aspects, they did not give themselves much concern about any other view of it, than that in which it enters into the description which ought to be given from the word of God of fallen man— of man as we now find him; and as thus bearing upon the actual process by which he is restored to the favour and the image of God. And regarding the subject in this light, they were unanimous in asserting it as a doctrine of Scripture, that the will of man is in entire bondage with respect to all spiritual things, because of his depravity, —that fallen man, antecedently to the operation of divine grace, while perfectly free to will and to do evil, has no freedom of will by which he can do anything really good, or dispose or prepare himself for turning from sin and for receiving the grace of God. This was the doctrine of all the Reformers, —it is embodied in all the Reformed Confessions, —and is fully and explicitly set forth in the Confession of our own Church; and this, and this alone, is what the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions mean when, upon scriptural grounds, they deny to men, as they are, all freedom or liberty of will, —when they assert the entire servitude or bondage of the will of unrenewed men in reference to anything spiritually good. Other topics, both of a metaphysical and a theological kind, may have been introduced into the discussion of this question, and may have been appealed to as affording proofs or presumptions either on the one side or the other; but the true and proper question at issue was, whether man, fallen and unregenerate, had or had not any freedom or liberty of will in the sense and to the effect above explained. The Reformers asserted, and undertook to prove, the negative upon this question, and undertook to prove it from Scripture, as a portion of God's revealed truth, —not disdaining, indeed, but still not much concerned about, any corroboration which their doctrine might derive from psychological or metaphysical investigations into men's mental constitution and mental processes, and fully satisfied that a scriptural proof of this one position, which they thought themselves quite able to produce, afforded by itself an adequate basis, in an argumentative point of view, for those ulterior conclusions which they also derived from Scripture, in regard to the whole process of a sinner's salvation;— in short, for a full exposition of all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

This doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen man, with reference to anything spiritually good, they regarded as involved in, or deducible from, the scriptural doctrine of the entire and complete depravity of human nature; while they taught also that it had its own distinct and appropriate scriptural evidence. The Council of Trent plainly insinuated, though it did not venture explicitly to assert, that the loss of the divine image in fallen man, or the corruption or depravity of his nature, was not total, but only partial; and there is one application which the council made of this virtual denial of the entire depravity of human nature, in their decision about the moral character of the works of unregenerate men, denying that they were wholly and altogether sinful. But the main use and application which they intended to make, and which they have made, of it, was as a foundation for the position which they laid down in opposition to the Reformers, that fallen man has still some freedom of will even in reference to what is spiritually good, —some natural power to do God's will, —and can thus do something which really and causally contributes to, or exerts a favourable influence upon, his own salvation. The Church of Rome would not have been very unwilling to have asserted more strongly and explicitly the corruption of human nature, —since she had effectually provided for taking it wholly away in baptism, —had it not been that a denial of man's entire corruption was necessary in order to the maintenance of her idol of free-will, or the assertion of the doctrine that fallen man has still some natural power to do what is spiritually good. The Council of Trent, accordingly, has expressly asserted that fallen man retains some freedom or liberty of will; but, according to the policy which was pursued in the formation of its decisions upon original sin, it has left this whole subject in so dubious and unsatisfactory a condition, that it is not very easy to say precisely what is its doctrine upon this subject, except that it is opposed to that of the Reformers. The council contents itself with anathematizing those who say that the freewill of man was lost and extinguished after the fall of Adam; that free-will— *liberum arbitrium*— is, as Luther called it, a mere name, or a title without a reality, or was a figment introduced by Satan into the church; and with asserting that free-will in fallen man, " *minime extinctum esse, viribus licet attenuatum et inclinatum.*" Now, considering the discussions which had taken place, not only among the schoolmen, but between the Reformers and the Romanists, previously to the council,

on the subject of free-will, the different meanings that might be, and have been, attached to the expression, and the different kinds or degrees of bondage or necessity that might be opposed to it (and all this had been fully explained and illustrated by Calvin in his very important treatise, "De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii" published in 1543, in reply to Pighius, who attended the council), a decision so vague and general as this could scarcely be said to decide anything directly. The Reformers did not deny that fallen man still retained the will or the power of volition as a mental faculty, —that this continued, with all its essential properties, as a part of the general structure or framework of the mental constitution - with which man was created. They admitted that the exercise of the will as a mental faculty, or the exercise of the power of volition, implied, in the very nature of the case, liberty or freedom in a certain sense, —i.e., what was commonly called spontaneity or freedom from necessity, in the sense of coercion or compulsion. This is the substance of the truth which is intended to be taught in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down, as its first and fundamental position upon the subject of free-will, the following doctrine, —viz., that " God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." This is evidently intended as a great general truth, applicable to the will of man universally and in all circumstances, after as well as before the fall; and it asserts of man, thus generally considered, little if anything more than what is necessarily implied in his really possessing a power of volition, —a natural capacity of willing or choosing, and of doing this undetermined by any external constraint. The general structure or framework of man's mental constitution, including his power of volition, remains unaffected by the fall; and this power of volition continues to belong to him as a rational being, or to be exercised by him in connection with all that rationality implies. Man by the fall was not changed into a stock or a stone, or into an irrational animal; he retained that rational power of volition which was a part of the general framework of his mental constitution, and in virtue of which he had, and still has, a natural capacity of willing and choosing spontaneously, and of carrying out his volitions into action. Man retained this natural power or capacity, and he was not, in consequence of the fall, subjected in the exercise of it to any external force or compulsion— to any influence out of himself, and apart from the

exercise, of his own power of volition, and from his own actual choice, which determined infallibly whether he should do good or evil.

These, then, are the two points asserted in the statement of our Confession in regard to that natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, —viz., that there is nothing in the inherent structure of the natural power of volition itself, as it exists even in fallen man, and that there is no external force or compulsion exerted upon him, which certainly deprives him of a capacity of doing good as well as of doing evil. If it be true, as it certainly is, that fallen and unrenewed men do always in point of fact will or choose what is evil, and never what is good, the cause of this is not to be traced to any natural incapacity in their will or power of volition to will or choose good as well as evil, nor to any external force or compulsion brought to bear upon them from any quarter; for this would be inconsistent with that natural liberty with which God originally endued the will of man, and which it still retains and must retain. It must be traced to something else. The Reformers admitted all this, and in this sense would not have objected to the doctrine of the freedom of the will, though, as the phrase was then commonly used in a different sense as implying much more than this, —as implying a

doctrine which they believed to be unscriptural and dangerous, — they generally thought it preferable to abstain from the use of the expression altogether, or to deny the freedom of the will, and to assert its actual bondage or servitude because of depravity, or as a consequence of the fall. I may here remark by the way, though I do not mean to enter upon the discussion of the topic, that orthodox Protestant divines have usually held that this spontaneity, —this freedom from necessity in the sense of coercion or compulsion from any necessity, arising either from the natural structure and inherent capacity of the power of volition, or from the application of external force, —together with the power of giving effect to his volitions, is all that is necessary to make man responsible for his actions; and though this is a subject involved in extreme difficulties, I think it may be safely asserted that this at least has been proved, —viz., that no proof has been adduced that more than this is necessary as a foundation for responsibility, — no evidence has been brought forward that a rational being of whom this may be truly predicated, is not

responsible for the evil which he performs— for the sins which he commits.

There is, however, another aspect in which the decision of the Council of Trent, asserting that free-will, though weakened, is not extinguished in fallen man, is chargeable with being vague and unsatisfactory; and this brings us nearer to the main topic of controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome. Though Luther and Melancthon had originally made some very strong and rash statements upon this subject, in which they seemed to assert the bondage of the will, and the necessity of men's actions in every sense, and to deny to men liberty or freedom in any sense, they had, long before the Council of Trent assembled, modified their views upon this subject, and had expressed themselves with greater caution and exactness. Indeed, in the Confession of Augsburg, —the most formal and solemn exposition of the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, — they had expressly said, "De libero arbitrio docent, quod humana voluntas habeat aliquam libertatem ad efficiendam civilem justitiam, et diligendas res rationi subjectas. Sed non habet vim sine Spiritu Sancto efficiendae justitiae spiritualis." And, in accordance with this notion, it was common among the Reformers to ascribe to the will of man a certain power or freedom in actions of an external, civil, or merely moral character, which they did not ascribe to it in matters properly spiritual, — in actions directed immediately to God and the salvation of their souls, as considered in relation to the requirements of the divine law, —a fact which throws some light upon their general views on the subject of liberty and necessity. If the Council of Trent had intended to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers upon the subject of free-will precise and explicit, they would have adverted to this distinction, to which the Lutheran Reformers especially— whose statements were chiefly in their mind in the formation of the canons on this subject— attached much weight. At the same time, the distinction is not one of great importance in a theological point of view; and there is no necessity for determining it, —so far at least as concerns the precise kind or degree of power or freedom of will which man has in regard to things civil and moral,— in giving a summary of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject. Calvin did not regard this distinction as of any great importance in a theological point of view, though he held it to be true and real in

itself, —maintaining, as Luther did, that man has a power and freedom of will in regard to merely intellectual, moral, and civil things, which he has not in regard to things properly spiritual; and, indeed, he has given a very full and striking description of what natural men can do in these respects, as contrasted with their impotence, helplessness, and inability in all matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. The Scripture does not tell us anything about the causes or principles that ordinarily regulate or determine men's general exercise of their natural power of volition. This must be ascertained from an examination of man himself, of his mental constitution, and ordinary mental processes. It is a question of philosophy, and not of theology, —a question which the Scripture leaves us at liberty to determine by its own natural and appropriate evidence, unless men, upon alleged philosophical grounds, should deny what Scripture plainly teaches, — viz., that God has foreseen and fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass; or that He is ever exercising a most wise, holy, and powerful providence over all His creatures and all their actions, and thereby executing His decrees; or that, to use the language of our Confession, "fallen man (i.e., man as he is) has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." I really do not know that there is any particular theory or doctrine concerning the liberty or bondage of the human will, which philosophers may deduce upon philosophical grounds from an examination of men's mental constitution and processes, that can be proved to be, in itself or in its consequences, opposed to anything taught us in the word of God, and that is therefore upon scriptural and theological grounds to be rejected.

Although, however, the Council of Trent has thus abstained from giving any formal or explicit definition of what they mean by the freedom of will which they ascribe to fallen man, and which they said had been only weakened, and not destroyed, by the fall, —has given no deliverance as to its nature, grounds, or sphere of operations, —and in this way, perhaps, left room enough for the followers of Augustine, such as the Jansenists, remaining honestly in the communion of the Church of Rome (at least in the state of matters in which their doctrines were first promulgated, —for this state of the case has been greatly changed since by the decisions pronounced in the course of the Jansenist controversy), yet there are sufficiently plain proofs that the council intended to deny the great

doctrine of the Reformers, —that fallen man has no freedom of will, no actual available capacity for anything spiritually good, —and to assert that he retained the' power of doing something that was really acceptable to God, and that' contributed in some way, by its goodness and excellence, to his reception of divine grace, and his ultimate salvation. Accordingly, Bellarmine lays down this as his first and leading position, in stating the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject: "Homo ante omnem gratiam, liberum habet arbitrium, non solum ad opera naturalia, et moralia, sed etiam ad opera pietatis, et supernaturalia," —a position which is just precisely what the Council of Trent ought to have put forth explicitly, if they had intended to bring out their own sentiments fully and honestly, and to decide this point in a fair and manly way, by following out the principles laid down. This has been the doctrine generally taught by Romish writers; and the deviations from it which we find among them, have been towards views still more Pelagian. Baius and Quesnel taught the same doctrine as the Reformers upon this point; and the church's condemnation of the doctrine, as taught by them, was much more explicit than anything we find in the Council of Trent. Baius taught, " Liberum arbitrium sine gratiae Dei adiutorio non nisi ad peccandum valet;" and Quesnel, " Peccator non est liber nisi ad malum;" and by condemning these doctrines, the Church of Rome has become more clearly Pelagian than she could be proved to be from the decisions of the Council of Trent.

I. The Will before and after the Fall

In considering the grounds on which the Protestant doctrine on this subject rests, chiefly with the view of explaining somewhat more fully what the doctrine really is, it is necessary to advert to the opinion entertained by the Reformers as to the freedom or liberty of will man possessed before he fell from the condition in which he was created; because the truth is, —and the Reformers were fully alive to this consideration, —that the fall produced so great a change in men's character and condition, that there is scarcely any question in that department of theological science, — which is now often called Anthropology, or a view of what Scripture teaches as to what man is, — which can be fully and correctly stated and explained without a reference

to the difference that subsists between man fallen and man unfallen. Now, upon this point, it is certain that the Reformers in general held that man, before he fell, had a liberty or freedom of will which fallen man does not possess, —a freedom or liberty of will similar to that which Pelagians and Socinians usually ascribe to man as he is. And it is in full accordance with the theology of the Reformation, that our Confession of Faith, immediately after laying down the position, formerly quoted and explained, about the natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, and which it has retained amidst all changes, proceeds thus: "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it and, in like manner, in the Catechisms it is said, that " our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will," sinned and fell. I refer to this subject at present, chiefly for the purpose of pointing out that the fact of this doctrine having been held throws much light upon the general views maintained upon this whole subject by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards. They ascribed to man freedom or liberty of will, —full power to will and to do what was spiritually good before the fall, and denied it to him after he had fallen.

Now, this fact affords materials for some important conclusions as to the real nature of the necessity or bondage which they ascribed to the will of fallen man, and the grounds on which they rested their doctrine regarding it. The compilers of our standards believed, as the Reformers did, that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that, of course, He had fore-ordained the fall of Adam, which thus consequently became in a certain sense necessary— necessary, by what was called the necessity of events, or the necessity of immutability. Still, they also believed that man fell, because he was left to the freedom of his own will, and because, having free-will, he freely willed or chose to sin. It follows from their holding at once both these doctrines, that they did not regard God's fore-ordination of the event as inconsistent with man's liberty of will; and, of course, they did not, and could not, regard the bondage which they ascribed specially to the will of fallen man as in any way, or to any extent, proceeding from, or caused by, God's decrees with respect to their actions. They believed, further, that God's providence, executing His decrees, was concerned in the fall of Adam, in the same sense, and to the

same extent, to which it is concerned in the sinful actions which men perform now; but neither did they regard this as taking away his liberty, and neither of course did they consider the entire subjection of the will of fallen man to sin, or the actual sins which he commits, as the effect or result of that providence which God constantly exercises over all His creatures and all their actions. They believed, —and there is, indeed, no reason to doubt, —that the general laws which regulate men's mental processes, —which determine, for instance, the connection (invariable and necessary, or otherwise) between the conclusions of the judgment and the acts of volition, —operate now as they did before the fall, because the general framework of man's mental constitution remains unchanged, and because all the departments of his intellectual and moral constitution are equally vitiated, so far as spiritual things are concerned, according to their respective natures and functions, by the introduction of depravity. But the operation of these laws, whatever they may be, did not deprive man, unfallen, of his freedom or liberty of will, and of course it is not the cause of the bondage or servitude to which his will is now subjected. Man, according to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, before he fell had freedom or liberty of will, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, and notwithstanding any laws, whatever these may be, which God had impressed upon his mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes. He no longer has this freedom or liberty of will, but, on the contrary, his will is in bondage or subjection to sin; so that, in point of fact, he can only will or choose what is sinful, and not what is spiritually good. The inference is unavoidable, that, according to this scheme of doctrine, the necessity, or bondage to sin, which now attaches to the human will, is a property of man, not simply as a creature, but as a fallen creature, — not springing from his mere relation to God, as the fore-ordainer of all things, and the actual ruler and governor of the world, nor from the mere operation of laws which God has impressed upon the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution, but from a cause distinct from all these— from something superinduced upon his character and condition by the fall.

The decree of God, fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass— the providence which He is ever exercising over all His creatures and all their actions— the laws which He has impressed upon man's mental

constitution for the regulation of his mental processes, —may indeed produce or imply some sort of necessity or bondage as attaching to the human will— may be inconsistent with freedom or liberty of will in the sense in which it is often ascribed to men, and I have no doubt this can be shown to be the case; but if it be true, as our standards plainly teach, that, all these things being the same, man once had a freedom or liberty of will which he has not now, it follows that there does now attach to men a necessity or bondage which is not directly dependent upon these causes, as to its actual existence and operation, and which, therefore, may be proved, by its own direct appropriate evidence, to exist and to operate, without requiring the proof or the assumption of any of these doctrines as a necessary medium of probation, and though it could not be shown to follow from them in the way of inference or conclusion. My object in making these observations is not to give any opinion upon the arguments in support of necessity, as it is commonly understood, that may be deduced from fore-ordination, providence, and the laws that regulate men's mental processes, but merely to show that, according to the judgment of the Reformers, and of the compilers of our standards, there is a necessity or bondage attaching to the will of man as fallen, which is not involved in, or deducible from, these doctrines, and does not necessarily require a previous proof of them, or of any of them, in order to its being sufficiently established. The only necessity or bondage taught by the Reformers and by the standards of our church as a scriptural doctrine, is that which attaches to man as fallen, and is traceable to the depravity which the fall introduced, as its source or cause. And it is important, I think, that this doctrine should be viewed by itself, in its own place, in its native independence, and in connection with its own distinct and appropriate evidence. The Reformers and the compilers of our standards did not see any other kind or species of necessity or bondage to be taught in Scripture, and did not regard the assertion of any other as necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of evangelical truth. The question, whether liberty of will, in the common sense, is shut out, and necessity established, by a survey of the laws that regulate our mental processes, is a question in philosophy and not in theology, and it is one on which I cannot say that I have formed a very decided opinion. I am inclined, upon the whole, to think that liberty of will, as that phrase is commonly employed, can be disproved, and that necessity can be

established upon metaphysical or philosophical grounds; but I do not consider myself called upon to maintain either side of this question by anything contained in Scripture or the standards of our church; and I rejoice to think that, upon the grounds which I have endeavoured to explain, the doctrine of the utter bondage of the will of fallen man, in reference to anything spiritually good, because of depravity, is not dependent for its evidence upon the settlement of any merely philosophical question.

With respect to the bearing of the fore-ordination and providence of God upon the question of the liberty or bondage of the will, —or, what is virtually the same thing, with respect to the liberty or bondage of the will of man, viewed, not as fallen and depraved, but simply as a creature entirely dependent upon God, and directed and governed by Him according to His good pleasure, —the word of God and the standards of our church say nothing beyond this, — that man before his fall, or viewed simply as a creature, had, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, a freedom and power to will and to do good, which fallen man has not. The Reformers, while all strenuously maintaining the utter bondage of the will of fallen man as a scriptural truth, usually declined to speculate upon the bearing of God's fore-ordination and providence upon the freedom of the will of His creatures, simply as such, or, what is the same thing, of man before the fall, as a subject mysterious and incomprehensible in its own nature, —one on which scarcely any definite information was given us in Scripture, and one the settlement of which was not necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of gospel truth; and Calvin, in particular, who never made such strong statements as Luther and Melancthon did in their earlier works, about the connection between fore-ordination and necessity, has, with his usual caution and wisdom, set forth these views upon many occasions.

This practice of distinguishing between the freedom of man's will in his unfallen and in his fallen condition was not introduced by the Reformers. The distinction had been fully brought out and applied by Augustine. It had a place in the speculations of the schoolmen. Peter Lombard, in his four Books of Sentences, the text-book of the Scholastic Theology, distinguishes and explains the freedom of man's will in his four-fold

state, —viz., before the fall; after the fall, but before regeneration; after regeneration in this life; and, lastly, after the resurrection in heaven. The subject is explained in these same aspects in the Formula Concordiae of the Lutheran Church very much as it is in our own Confession of Faith. This view of the matter is also usually taken in the works of the great theologians of the seventeenth century. But in more modern times the tendency has rather been to consider the whole subject of the freedom of the will as one great general topic of investigation, and to examine it chiefly upon philosophical grounds, without much attention, comparatively, to its theological relations, and to the distinctions and divisions which the generally admitted doctrines of theology required to be introduced into it. In this way, we think that the respective provinces of the philosopher and the theologian have been somewhat confounded, to the injury, probably, of both parties; a good deal of confusion has been introduced into the whole subject, and an impression has been created, that the maintenance of some of the most important of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system is much more intimately connected with, and much more entirely dependent upon, the establishment of certain philosophical theories, than an accurate and comprehensive view of the whole subject would warrant. A very general impression prevails, first, that the doctrine of the liberty of the will, as implying what is commonly called a liberty of indifference, and the self-determining power of the will, is an essential part of the Arminian system of theology, —i.e., that, on the one hand, Arminianism requires it as a part of the position which it must occupy, —and that, on the other hand, the proof or admission of it establishes Arminianism; and, secondly, that an exactly similar relation subsists between the doctrine of philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology. There may be some foundation for this impression, in so far as Arminianism is concerned, though upon the consideration of this point I do not mean to enter. What I wish to notice is, that whether the impression be just or not, in so far as concerns liberty and Arminianism, I do not regard it as well founded, in so far as philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology are concerned, and that I reckon this an important advantage to Calvinism in an argumentative point of view.

The doctrine of philosophical necessity is a certain theory or opinion as to

the principles that regulate the exercise of the will of man as a faculty of his nature, and that determine the production of men's volitions, and their consequent actions. The theory is usually founded partly upon an examination of our mental processes themselves in the light of consciousness, —certainly the most direct and legitimate source of evidence upon the subject, — and partly upon certain deductions from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in their supposed bearing upon the volitions and actions of men. This latter department of topics, and the proofs they afford, may be contemplated either in the light of revelation or of natural religion, —which also suggests some information regarding them; and, accordingly, the doctrine of philosophical necessity, in the same sense in which it has been maintained by many Calvinistic divines, has been very ably defended upon both these grounds, by men who did not believe in the authority of revelation, —such as Hobbes and Collins. It is, however, only the first class of proofs that can really establish the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as usually understood, —i.e., as it is opposed to liberty of indifference and the self-determining power of the will; for although conclusive arguments may be deduced from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in favour of the necessity of volitions and actions, —i.e., in favour of the certainty of their being just what they are, and of the improbability in some sense of their being other than they are, —yet no conclusion can be validly deduced from this source as to the immediate or approximate cause of our volitions, or the precise provision made in our mental constitution, and in the laws that regulate our mental processes, for effecting the result, though foreseen and foreordained, and therefore in itself certain; unless, indeed, it be contended that it is impossible for God certainly to foresee and certainly to order the volitions and actions of men without having established those very laws for the regulation of their mental processes, and especially for the determination of their volitions, which the doctrine of philosophical necessity involves; and this is a position which, from the nature of the case, it is scarcely possible to establish. There can seldom be a very secure ground for deduction or inference, — when it is needful, with that view, to take up the position, that God could not have accomplished His purpose, or effected a particular result with certainty, except only in one way, and by some one specified provision. Even then, though it could be proved or rendered

probable on merely psychological or metaphysical grounds, that the doctrine of philosophical necessity is unfounded, and that, on the contrary, man has a liberty of indifference, and his will a self-determining power, we would not regard ourselves as constrained to abandon the Calvinistic doctrines concerning the predestination and providence of God, inasmuch as, leaving every other consideration out of view, these doctrines could merely prove that the certainty of the event or result is in some way provided for and secured, and would not afford any adequate grounds for the conclusion that God could not have accomplished this in the case of a class of rational and responsible beings, who were mentally constituted in accordance with the libertarian view of the laws that regulate their mental processes, and determine their volitions. If the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as opposed to a liberty of indifference and a self-determining power in the will, can be established by the direct evidence appropriately applicable to it as a psychological question, —as I am inclined to think it can, —then this affords a strong confirmation of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and providence: for, on the assumption of the truth of this philosophical position, inferences may be deduced from it in support of these theological doctrines which it does not seem practicable to evade, except by taking refuge in atheism; but, upon the ground which has been stated, it does not seem to me to follow, e converso, that if this philosophical position is disproved, the theological doctrines must in consequence be abandoned. And if this view be a sound one, it certainly tends to illustrate the firmness of the foundation on which the Calvinistic argument rests.

But it is not my intention to discuss this subject; and I must return to the topic which has suggested these observations, —viz., that the Reformers and the older Calvinistic divines ascribed to man before his fall a freedom or liberty of will which they denied to man as he is, and that the only necessity or bondage which they ascribed to man as he is, was an inability to will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, as a result or consequence simply of the entire depravity of his moral nature, —i.e., of his actual dispositions and tendencies. This was the only necessity they advocated as having anything like direct and explicit sanction from Scripture, or as indispensably necessary to the exposition and defence of their system of theology, —not a necessity deduced from anything in

God's purposes and providence, or from anything in men's mental constitution applicable to men, as men, or simply as creatures, but from a special feature in men's character as fallen and depraved. This necessity or bondage under which they held man fallen, as distinguished from man unfallen, to be, resolved itself into the entire absence in fallen man of holy and good dispositions or tendencies, and the prevalence in his moral nature of what is ungodly and depraved; and thus stood entirely distinct from, and independent of, those wider and more general considerations, whether philosophical or theological, applicable to man as man, having a certain mental constitution, or as a dependent creature and subject of God, on the ground of which the controversy about liberty and necessity has been of late commonly conducted.

I have said that, in modern times, this distinction between the case of man before and after his fall has been too much neglected by theologians, even by those who admitted the distinction, and would have defended it if they had been led to discuss it. It has been too much absorbed or thrown into the background, and kept out of view by the more general subject of liberty and necessity, in the form in which it has been commonly treated. This result, I think, has been injurious, and unfavourable to the interests of sound doctrine.

II. The Bondage of the Will

We proceed now more directly, though very briefly, to explain the great doctrine, taught by all the Reformers and condemned by the Council of Trent, with respect to man's want of free-will, or the utter bondage or servitude of the will of fallen man to sin because of depravity; and after the explanations already given of the relation of this doctrine to other topics, we shall not consider it needful to do more than advert to the grounds on which it has been advocated, and to those on which it has been opposed. Having had occasion to quote and comment upon the first two propositions in the ninth chapter of our Confession of Faith, which treats of free-will, —setting forth, first, the natural liberty with which God hath endowed the will of man, and which it retains, and must retain, in all circumstances; and, secondly, the full freedom and power which man

in his state of innocency had to do God's will, —we shall continue to follow its guidance, because it exhibits upon this, as upon most other topics, a more precise and accurate statement of the leading doctrines taught in Scripture and promulgated by the Reformers, than any other production with which we are acquainted. The doctrine in question is thus stated in our Confession: " Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

If man, in his natural state, cannot do anything spiritually good, the cause, the sole proximate cause of this is, that he does not will to do it, because by universal admission man has the power (of course within a certain range, since he is not omnipotent) to do what he wills to do. And if no man in his natural condition has ever in fact done, or willed to do, anything spiritually good, the inference is well warranted, that men are not naturally able to will what is good; for had such an ability existed, it would certainly have been more or less put forth in act by some men. Besides the connection thus plainly subsisting between the more general doctrine of the entire corruption of man's moral nature, and his inability to will what is spiritually good, there are some of the scriptural descriptions of man's natural character and condition which bear more directly and immediately upon this specific topic, —such as those which represent natural men as the servants or slaves of sin, as led captive by Satan at his will, —while it is certain that Satan exerts no external compulsion upon them; and especially those which describe them as dead in sin, and blind and darkened in their minds. "We cannot dwell upon these passages, and we need not repeat the cautions, necessary to be observed in treating of original sin, against either passively and carelessly forming only a very vague and indefinite conception of their import, or actively and zealously explaining them away, departing from what they naturally and obviously mean or imply, without a clear scriptural warrant enforcing the necessity of the deviation, and pointing out the extent to which it is to be carried.

If man, in his natural state, without divine grace, cannot turn from sin

unto God, or prepare himself for turning, this must arise wholly from his inability to will to do it; for there is no external obstacle to his turning to God, or doing anything spiritually good. If he does not turn from sin to God, it is because he does not will to turn; and if he cannot turn, it is because he has no ability to will to turn. He is just as able to turn to God, and to will to turn to God, as he is to do, or to will to do, any other thing that is spiritually good; for there is certainly no peculiar obstacle, external or internal, in the way of men turning from sin unto God, that does not equally stand in the way of their doing anything else which He requires, or which is pleasing and acceptable to Him. If, then, natural men cannot by their own strength turn to God, they have no ability of will to anything spiritually good. Now, we have very solemn and explicit declarations of our Saviour, that no man is able to come to Him (which is virtually identical, or inseparably connected, with turning from sin unto God), except it be given him of the Father— except the Father draw him; i.e., — as can be easily and fully proved from Scripture, —unless and until he become the subject of the omnipotent gracious agency of the Holy Spirit. And, besides, the general descriptions given us in Scripture of the change which is effected, —of the result which is produced when any man does come to Christ or turn to God, —are manifestly fitted and intended to convey to us the idea that man, by the exercise of his own natural power of volition, did not, and could not, do anything to commence it, or set the process in operation. I refer, of course, more especially to those passages where this process is not only ascribed wholly to God's agency, but where it is more specifically described as an opening of the eyes of the blind— a creation— the creation of a new heart— a new birth— a resurrection from the dead. Unless these statements are to be wholly explained away, and perverted from their natural and obvious meaning, —and this can be done legitimately only when it is proved that Scripture itself warrants and requires it, —they must be regarded as teaching us that, in the originating of the process of turning to God, men's own natural power of volition can exert no real influence, no proper efficiency; and if so, that, upon the grounds already explained, he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation. Whatever proves, in general, that man in his fallen condition has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, proves equally, in particular, that he cannot will to turn to God; while anything which proves that men by their own strength are unable to will

to come to Christ or to turn to God, not only directly establishes the great practical conclusion which gives to the general doctrine of man's inability to will what is good its chief importance, but, by the process of thought already explained, establishes that general doctrine itself: and by the application of these obvious considerations, the doctrine of man's inability in his natural state to will anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, may be shown to be supported by an extensive range of scriptural statements, as well as by the analogy of faith, —by its indissoluble connection with other important scriptural doctrines.

III. Bondage of the Will— Objections

With respect to the objections to this doctrine of fallen man's inability to will anything spiritually good or to turn to God, or the grounds and reasons on which it is opposed by Romanists and others, the first and most important consideration to be attended to is this — that it is not alleged that there is any specific statement in Scripture which directly opposes or contradicts it; i.e., it is not alleged that any statement can be produced from the word of God which directly, or by anything like plain implication, tells us that fallen man has any ability of will to anything spiritually good, or is able by his own strength to turn to God, or to prepare himself thereunto. The objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the Reformers, and of our standards, upon this subject, are not inferences or deductions from specific statements of Scripture, alleged to bear immediately upon the point in dispute, but only inferences or deductions from certain general principles which Scripture is alleged to sanction. And there is an important difference, in point of certainty, between these two classes of inferences or deductions. The objections to the doctrine of fallen man's inability may be said, to be all ultimately resolvable into this one general position, that in Scripture commands and exhortations are addressed to men, requiring them to abstain from sin and to turn to God; that they are responsible for rendering obedience to these commands, and incur guilt by disobeying them; and that these commands would not have been issued, that this responsibility would not attach to them, and that this guilt could not be incurred, unless they were able to will and to do the things commanded.

Now, it is obvious that this whole argument resolves, as to its sole real basis and foundation, not into anything which is actually stated in Scripture, directly or by implication, but into certain notions with respect to the reasons why God issued these commands or exhortations, —the grounds on which alone moral responsibility can rest; subjects, both of which are in their very nature profound and mysterious, which do not lie very fully within the range or cognisance of our faculties, and with respect to which men are certainly not entitled to pronounce dogmatically through the mere application of their own powers of reasoning, and unless guided plainly and distinctly by the Scriptures themselves.

The argument or objection, though in reality one, may be said to resolve itself into these two positions: First, God would not, or rather could not, have addressed such commands or exhortations to men unless they were able to obey them; and the reason commonly assigned is, that it could at least serve no good purpose to issue commands to men to which they were unable to render obedience; and, secondly, an ability to do, and of course to will to do, what is commanded, is necessary in order that men may incur responsibility and guilt by not doing it. Now, it is admitted that God commands fallen men— men as they are— to do what is spiritually good, and to turn unto Himself, and that they are responsible, or incur guilt, by not doing what is thus commanded; and this being universally admitted as clear and certain from Scripture, the question is, How are the inferences or conclusions of the objectors to be met? This subject has been most abundantly discussed in every age, and leads into the examination of some questions which never have been solved, and never will be solved in man's present condition. I can make only a few remarks upon it, rather in the way of indicating where the answers to the objections lie, than of expounding or developing them. Let it be remembered, then, what is the true state or condition of the argument. There has been produced from Scripture what seems to be very strong and conclusive evidence that fallen man has wholly lost, and does not now possess, any ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, —evidence which cannot be directly answered or disposed of, and which is not contradicted by anything like direct evidence from Scripture in support of the opposite position; and the proper question is, Is there anything in the general reasonings of the

objectors above stated, that is so clearly and certainly both true and relevant, as to warrant us, on that ground alone, —for there is no other, — summarily to reject this evidence, or to resolve at all hazards to explain it away?

With respect to the first and less important of the two positions into which it has been shown that the argument of the objectors resolves itself, —viz., that God could not, or would not, have issued such commands and exhortations, unless men had been able to obey them, —it is, obviously enough, unwarranted and presumptuous in its general character and complexion, as it assumes that men are capable of judging of the reasons, nay, of all the reasons, that could or should regulate the divine procedure. This general and radical defect is quite sufficient to deprive the argument founded upon it of all such certain and concluding power or cogency, as to make it adequate to overturn or neutralize the strength of the direct scriptural evidence on which the doctrine of man's inability rests. We are entitled to set aside this objection as unsatisfactory and insufficient, simply upon the ground that, for aught the objectors know or can establish, God might have had good and sufficient reasons for addressing such commands and exhortations to men, even though they were unable to obey them. The objector virtually asserts that God could have no good reasons for addressing such commands to men, unless they were able to obey them. We meet this with the counter assertion, that He might have sufficient reasons for addressing such commands to men, though they were unable to comply with them; and as, from the condition of the argument, as above explained, the onus probandi lies upon the objectors, our mere counter assertion is a conclusive bar to their progress and success, unless they can produce a positive proof in support of their position, or a positive disproof of ours.

But though we are entitled to stop here, and to hold the objection sufficiently disposed of in this way, we do not need to confine ourselves within the strict rules of logical requirement, and can adduce materials which bear much more directly upon the disposal of the objection; and especially we can show that there are indications given us in Scripture of reasons that explain to some extent why these commands and exhortations were addressed to men, though they were unable to obey

them. This subject is fully discussed and illustrated in Luther's great work, "De Servo Arbitrio" in reply to Erasmus, which is, perhaps, upon the whole, the finest specimen he has left of his talents as a theologian, and which is thoroughly Calvinistic in its doctrinal views. It is discussed by Calvin himself in the fifth chapter of the second book of his Institutes, and in his treatise on Free-will; and there is a brief but very able summary of the views generally held by Calvinists on this topic in Turretine.

The commands and exhortations addressed to men by God in Scripture, in reference to things spiritual, may be divided into two classes: First, those which are directly comprehended under the original moral law, and obligatory upon men, simply as rational and responsible creatures, and which are summed up in the duty of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; and, secondly, those which have reference more immediately to the remedial scheme of grace revealed to men for their salvation, such as repentance or conversion— turning from sin unto God— faith in Christ Jesus, and thereafter progressive holiness. These two classes of obligations might, for brevity's sake, be considered as comprehended in, or indicated by, the two great duties of love to God and faith in Christ. That these things are imposed upon men by being expressly commanded by God in His word, —that men are responsible for doing them, and incur guilt by not doing them, —is unquestionable; while yet we allege that men in their natural condition are unable to do them, because unable to will to do them. We are not, however, at present considering them in connection with the general subjects of responsibility and its grounds, —to that we shall afterwards advert more fully, —but only in connection with the more limited objection that there could be no ground for imposing such commands unless men were able to obey them. After the explanations which have already been given, we have now simply to consider whether we can discover or imagine any reasonable grounds why these commands might be imposed upon fallen men, notwithstanding their inability to comply with them.

In regard to the first class, —those directly comprehended in the original moral law, and summed up in supreme love to God, — there is no difficulty in seeing the reasons why God might address such commands

to fallen and depraved men. The moral law is a transcript of God's moral perfections, and must ever continue unchangeable. It must always be binding, in all its extent, upon all rational and responsible creatures, from the very condition of their existence, from their necessary relation to God. It constitutes the only accurate representation of the duty universally and at all times incumbent upon rational beings— the duty which God must of necessity impose upon and require of them. Man was able to obey this law, to discharge this whole duty, in the condition in which he was created. If he is now in a different condition, — one in which he is no longer able to discharge this duty, —this does not remove or invalidate his obligation to perform it; it does not affect the reasonableness and propriety of God, on the ground of His own perfections, and of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, proclaiming and imposing this obligation — requiring of men to do what is still as much as ever incumbent upon them. On these grounds, there is no difficulty in seeing that there are reasons— and this is the only point we have at present to do with— why God might, or rather would, continue to require of men to love Him with, all their heart, even although they were no longer able to comply with this requirement. It was right and expedient that men should still have the moral law, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, enforced upon them, as a means of knowledge and a means of conviction, even though it was no longer directly available as an actual standard which they were in fact able to comply with. Notwithstanding our inability to render obedience to it, it is still available and useful as a means of knowledge, —as affording us materials of knowing God's character, and the relation in which we stand to Him, and the duty which He requires and must require of us. It is available and useful also, —nay, necessary, —as a means of conviction— conviction of our sin and of our inability. If men are sinners, it is important that they should be aware of this. The only process which is directly fitted in its own nature to effect this, is stating and enforcing duty, —calling upon men to do what is incumbent upon them, —and then pointing out where and how far they come short. If men are really unable to discharge the duties incumbent upon them, it is important that they should be aware of this feature in their condition; and the only means of securing this, in accordance with the principles of their constitution as rational beings, is by requiring of them to do what is obligatory upon them.

It is quite unreasonable, then, to assume, or lay down as a principle, that the only consideration which justifies or explains the imposition of a command is, that men may obey it, as implying that they can obey it, since it is plain enough that there are reasons which may warrant or require the imposition of a command, even when men cannot obey it; and that good may result from the imposition of it, even in these circumstances. The objection which we are considering, assumes that when God addresses a command to men, He thereby, by the mere fact of issuing the command, tells them that they are able to obey it; but we have said enough, we think, to show not only that a statement to this effect is not necessarily implied in the issuing of the command, but that it is quite possible, at least, that the very object of issuing the command may be to teach and to impress a position precisely the reverse of this, —viz., that they are not able to obey it. There is nothing unreasonable or improbable in this, and therefore the assumption of the certain truth of the opposite position affords no sufficient ground for setting aside the strong scriptural evidence we can adduce to prove that this is indeed the actual state of the case, —and that one object which God has in view in requiring of fallen men the performance of the whole duty which is incumbent upon them, is just to convince them that they cannot discharge it in their own strength, or without the assistance of His special grace, without the supernatural agency of His own Spirit.

With respect to the other class of spiritual duties required of men in Scripture, those which have more immediate reference to the remedial scheme of grace, —viz., repentance and faith, —there are some points in which they differ from those directly comprehended under the original moral law; but these points of difference are not such as materially to affect our present argument. It is true, indeed, that God was not bound in the same sense, and on the same grounds, to impose, or to continue the imposition of these duties; and that men were not originally, and by the mere condition of their existence, subject to an obligation to obey them. They originate, as to their existence and obligation, in the gracious scheme which God has devised and executed for the salvation of lost man; and in the provision which He, in His sovereignty and wisdom, has made for bestowing upon men individually an interest in the benefits of that salvation. But this difference does not affect the point now under

consideration. The same general views which we have stated in regard to the former class of duties, apply also to this— to the effect of showing that God might possibly, and even probably, have good and sufficient reasons for imposing upon men commands which they were not able to obey; and that the imposition of the command, so far from implying necessarily that men have power to obey it, might just be intended to teach them the reverse of this. That men are not able to repent and believe by their own strength, without the special grace of God, is generally admitted, both by Papists and Arminians, who are accustomed to press this objection. If this be so, then it is important that men should be aware of it; that they may realize their own helplessness and dependence, and may thus be led to seek that grace of God of which they stand in need; and, in accordance with a favourite saying of Augustine's quoted with approbation by Calvin, "Jubet Deus quae non possumus, ut noverimus quid ab ipso petere debeamus." It is in entire accordance with the great principles which obviously regulate God's moral administration, His communication of spiritual blessings, that He should have regard to the production of this result in the commands which He imposes. And, with respect to this class of duties, there is another consideration which tends towards an explanation of the imposition of the command, in accordance with men's assumed inability to obey it, —viz., that we have good ground in Scripture to believe that it is a part of God's wise and gracious provision to make the imposition of the command, and the felt inability to comply with it, the occasion, and in some sense the means, of His communicating to men strength to enable them to comply with it; so that He may be said to issue the command to repent and believe, not because men are already and previously able to obey, but in order that, having convinced them of their inability, He may then, in the wisest and most beneficial manner, impart to them the grace and strength, that are necessary to enable them to obey. This principle has been often illustrated, and very pertinently, by a reference to some of our Saviour's miracles, —as, for example, when He commanded a lame man, to walk, which he was at the time wholly unable to do, but when, at the same time, in connection with the command, and in a sense through its instrumentality, He communicated a power or strength that made him able to comply with it.

On these grounds it is easy enough to dispose of the objection against the

doctrine of man's inability in his natural condition, and without divine grace, to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, founded upon the fact that God commands and requires these things. These considerations, however, though quite sufficient to dispose of this objection, do not go to the root of the difficulty connected with this subject; for the great difficulty lies not in the mere fact that such commands and exhortations are addressed to men while they are unable to obey them (and this is all that we have yet examined), but in the fact that they are responsible for obeying, and incur guilt by disobeying, notwithstanding their inability to render, because of their inability to will to render, obedience. This is the great difficulty, and we must now proceed to consider it; but as the objection is often put in the form of an allegation, that God would not, and could not, impose such commands unless men were able to comply with them, —it being assumed that the mere fact of the issue of the command implies that men are able to render obedience to it, —we have thought proper to advert, in the first place, to the objection in this form, and to suggest briefly the very obvious considerations by which it can be conclusively shown to be destitute of all real weight and cogency.

The great objection commonly adduced against everything like necessity or bondage, when ascribed to man or to his will, is, that this is inconsistent with man being responsible for his actions, and incurring guilt by his sins and shortcomings. That man is responsible for his actions, —that he incurs guilt, and justly subjects himself to punishment, by his transgressions of God's law, —is universally admitted, on the testimony at once of Scripture and consciousness. Of course, no doctrine is to be received as true, which is inconsistent with this great truth. It has been often alleged of certain doctrines, both theological and philosophical, that, if true, they would subvert men's responsibility for their actions; and on no subject, perhaps, has there been a larger amount of intricate and perplexing discussion than has been brought forward in the attempt to settle generally and abstractly what are the elements that constitute, and are necessary to, the responsibility of rational beings, and to apply the principles so settled, or supposed to be settled, to a variety of positions predicated of men, viewed either by themselves or in their relation to God, which have been affirmed or denied, respectively, to be

consistent with their being responsible for their actions.

We have no great fear of men being ever led in great numbers to deny their responsibility, or practically to shake off a sense of their being responsible for their actions, because, or through means, of any speculative opinions which they may have been led to adopt. The Author of man's constitution has made such effectual provision for men feeling that they are responsible, that there is not much danger that this conviction will ever be very extensively eradicated by mere speculations. When men have been led to deny their responsibility, and seem to have escaped from any practical sense of it, this has been usually traceable, not to speculation, but to the brutalizing influence of gross immorality—though sometimes speculation has been brought in to defend, or palliate, what it did not produce. On this ground we have no great sympathy with the extreme anxiety manifested by some to shut out, or explain away, all doctrines with regard to which it may be alleged with some plausibility that they are inconsistent with responsibility.

Of course, each case in which this allegation is made must be tried and decided upon its own proper merits; but a proneness to have recourse to objections against doctrines propounded, derived from this source, is, we think, more likely, upon the whole, to lead to the rejection than to the reception of what is true, and can be satisfactorily established by its own appropriate evidence. And when a controversy arises between men of intelligence and good character, as to whether certain opinions maintained by the one party, and denied by the other, are or are not consistent with human responsibility, we think there is a pretty strong presumption, in the mere fact that the point is controverted between such men, that the opinions in question are not inconsistent with responsibility. It may, indeed, be alleged, that the men who hold these opinions, and maintain their innocency, are better than their principles,—that they do not really believe them and follow them out to their practical consequences; but this is a very forced and improbable allegation, —and if the opinions in question have prevailed long and widely, it is altogether unwarrantable.

Upon the ground of these general and obvious considerations, we are inclined to think that Calvinists need not give themselves very much

concern about the allegations which have been so often and so confidently made, that their doctrines are inconsistent with men's responsibility, and should be chiefly occupied with the investigation and the exposition of the direct and proper evidence by which their doctrines may be proved to be true. Still, objections that have a plausible appearance cannot be altogether disregarded; and it is necessary that men who would hold their views intelligently, should have some definite conception of the mode, whether it be more general or more special, in which objections should be disposed of. We shall therefore make a few observations on the great difficulty of the alleged incompatibility of the doctrine of the inability of fallen man to will anything spiritually good, with responsibility and guilt, without attempting to give anything like a full discussion of it; and especially without pretending to investigate the general subject of the constituents, grounds, and necessary conditions of moral responsibility, — a subject which belongs rather to the province of the philosopher than the theologian.

It seems very like an irresistible dictate of common sense, not only that there are influences that might be brought to bear upon men, which would deprive them altogether, and in every sense, of their character of free agents, and that, consequently, there may be necessities which would be inconsistent with responsibility and guilt; but also, moreover, that men cannot be justly held guilty, and of course liable to punishment, for not doing what they are unable, in any sense or respect, to will or to do. And, accordingly, the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability have usually admitted that there is, and must be, some sense or respect in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what is required of him. They have then tried to show how or in what sense it is that man may be said to be able to do what is required of him; while it may also be true, in a different sense, though not inconsistent with this, that he is unable to do it; and then they have further undertaken to show, that the ability which they can concede to man, consistently with the inability which they also ascribe to him, is a sufficient ground for responsibility and guilt; or, at least, —and this is certainly all that is argumentatively incumbent upon them, —that it cannot be proved that it is not. This, I think, may be said to be a correct and compendious description of the general outline of the course of argument usually employed by the

defenders of the doctrine of man's inability, in answer to the objection which we are now considering about its alleged incompatibility with responsibility. This mode of dealing with the objection is, in its general scope and character, a perfectly fair and legitimate one; and if the different positions of which it may be said to consist can be established, it is sufficient fully to dispose of it. For the whole case stands thus.

The sacred Scriptures teach, very plainly and explicitly, that fallen men in their natural condition, and before they become the subjects of God's regenerating grace, are unable to will or to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation; while they teach, also, that they incur guilt, and expose themselves to punishment, by not willing and doing what God requires of them. And as common sense seems to dictate that men cannot incur guilt, unless they are in some sense or respect able to will and to do what is demanded of them, the very obvious difficulty on which the objection is founded at once arises. In these circumstances, —this being the state of the case, —these being the actual realities with which we have to deal, —the very first question that would, naturally suggest itself to a man of real candour, anxious only about the discovery of truth, —about really ascertaining what it was his duty to believe upon the subject (I speak, of course, of men admitting the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures), —would be this: Is there any way in which these two doctrines can be reconciled; or in which, at least, it can be shown that they cannot be proved to be irreconcilable, or necessarily exclusive of each other? Is there any sense in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what God requires of him, which can be shown to be consistent with what Scripture seems so plainly to teach as to his inability, or which at least cannot be proved to be inconsistent with it, and which, moreover, may also be shown to be sufficient as a basis or foundation for his responsibility and guilt, —or, at least, cannot be shown to be insufficient for this conclusion? These are the questions which would naturally and at once suggest themselves to any fair and candid man in the actual circumstances of the case. And if so, then it is plain that an attempt to answer them, and to answer them in the affirmative, is entitled to a fair and impartial examination. Any attempt that may be made to answer these questions, must in fairness be carefully considered, conclusively disposed of, and proved to be unsatisfactory, before we can be warranted

in rejecting the doctrine of man's inability, —which the Scripture seems so plainly to teach, — and even before any violent effort can be warrantably made, — and a very violent one is certainly required, —to explain away the natural and obvious meaning of the declarations which it makes upon this subject. I have no doubt that these questions have been answered satisfactorily, so far as can be shown to be necessary, by the defenders of the, doctrine of man's inability to will anything spiritually good; and I think it could be shown that any errors into which they may have fallen in the discussion of this subject, or any want of success in the mode in which any of them may have conducted their argument, have usually arisen from their attempting more in the way of explanation and proof, than the conditions of the argument, as they have now been stated, required them to undertake.

From the explanations which we have given upon this subject, it is evident that the examination of the objection is narrowed very much to this question: Is there any sense, and if so, what, in which men may be said to be able to do what is spiritually good, and with respect to which it cannot be proved, either, first, that it is inconsistent with the inability which the Scripture so plainly ascribes to him; or, secondly, that it is insufficient as a basis or foundation for responsibility and guilt? or, — what would be equally satisfactory in point of argument, —can anything answering this description be predicated of man, which, in so far as the matter of responsibility and guilt is concerned, is equivalent to an assertion of his responsibility. Now, it has been very common for the defenders of the Scripture doctrine upon this subject, to base their arguments, in reply to the objection about responsibility, upon the distinction between natural and moral inability, —alleging that man, though morally unable to do what God requires, has a natural ability to do it, and is on this ground responsible for not doing it. Natural inability is described as that which directly results from, or is immediately produced by, some physical law, or some superior controlling power, or some external violence, —any of which, it is of course admitted, deprives men of their responsibility, and exempts them from guilt; and, where none of these causes operate, men are said to possess natural ability. Moral inability is usually described as that which arises solely from want of will to do the thing required, from the opposition of will or want of

inclination as the cause or source of the thing required not being done, — there not being in the way any external or natural obstacle of the kind just described. In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, men may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do a thing, if their actual or de facto inability to do it arises solely from their want of will to do it, —so that it might be said of them, that they could do it, or were able to do it, if they willed or chose to do it. And to apply this to the subject before us: In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, it is contended that man may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, because there is no physical law, no superior controlling power, no external violence, operating irrespectively of his own volition, that prevents him from doing it, or is the cause of his inability to do it, if he has any; while he may also, at the same time, be said to be morally unable to do God's will; because, while there is an inability de facto, —i.e., according to the views of those who are conducting this argument in answer to the objection, —the cause of this lies wholly in his will— i.e., in his want of will— to do it, —in his not choosing to do it. In this way there is set forth a sense in which man may be said to be able to do what is required of him, as well as a sense in which he is unable to do it, —he is naturally able, but morally unable; and if these two things cannot be shown to be inconsistent with each other, and if natural ability, or the absence of natural inability, cannot be shown to be insufficient as a ground for responsibility, then the objection is wholly removed.

Now, I have no doubt that this distinction between natural and moral inability is a real and actual, and not merely a verbal or arbitrary one, and that it has an important bearing upon the subject of man's responsibility, and on the discussions which have taken place regarding it; but I am not quite satisfied that, taken by itself it goes to the root of the matter, so as to explain the whole difficulty. The distinction is undoubtedly a real one, for there is a manifest difference between the condition of a man who is subjected to external force or coercion, —whereby his volitions are prevented from taking effect, or he is compelled to do what he is decidedly averse to, —and that of a man who is left free to do whatever he wills or chooses to do. The distinction, thus real in itself or in its own

nature, is realized in the actual condition of man. It is admitted by those who most strenuously maintain man's inability, that there is no physical law operating like those regulating the material world, which imposes upon men any necessity of sinning, or produces any inability to do God's will, or to turn from sin, and that there is no superior controlling power or external violence brought to bear directly either upon men's power of volition, or upon the connection between their volitions and their actions. What man ordinarily does he does voluntarily or spontaneously, in the uncontrolled exercise of his power of volition. No constraint or compulsion is exercised upon him. He does evil, because he chooses or wills to do evil; and the only direct and proximate cause of his doing evil in his natural condition— only evil, and that continually— is, that he wills or chooses to do so. Now, it may be fairly contended that a rational and intelligent being, who, without any compulsion or coercion external to himself, spontaneously chooses or wills evil, and who does evil solely because he chooses or wills to do it, is responsible for the evil which he does, or, at least, cannot be easily shown to be irresponsible, whatever else may be predicated or proved concerning him.

This seems to be the sum and substance of all that is involved in, or that can be fairly brought out of, the common distinction between natural and moral ability or inability, as usually held by those who maintain the moral inability of man to do God's will and to turn from sin. This is the way in which they apply it, and this is the only and the whole application which they can make of it, with reference to this matter of responsibility. Now, this distinction, and the application thus made of it, are of great value and importance, when the subject is treated merely upon metaphysical principles, when the question is discussed as between liberty of will and what is usually called philosophical necessity; and, accordingly, the most valuable and important object accomplished in Edwards' great work on the freedom of the will, is, that he has proved that nothing more than natural ability— a power of doing as men will or choose— can be shown to be necessary to their responsibility, —that a moral as distinguished from a natural inability, attaching to them, does not exempt them from fault, inasmuch as this admits of its being said of them, that they could do what is required of them if they would. Valuable and important, however, as is the distinction thus applied in this department, I have some

difficulties about receiving it as a complete solution of the objection under consideration, which has been adduced against the theological doctrine of man's inability as taught by the Reformers, and set forth in the standards of our church.

The difficulty is this, that the distinction, when applied to man's outward conduct or actions as distinguished from the inward motive or disposition, seems to apply only to man's inability to do God's will, and to leave untouched his inability to will to do it. It is important to show that man, in doing evil, as he does unceasingly until he is renewed by God's grace, acts spontaneously, without compulsion— does only what he wills or chooses to do; but if the doctrine which the Reformers and the compilers of our standards deduced from Scripture, —viz., that man in his natural state is not able to will anything spiritually good, —be true, the whole difficulty in the matter does not seem to be reached by the establishment of this position. The inability is here distinctly predicated of the will, and this must be attended to and provided for in any principle that may be laid down in answer to the objection about its inconsistency with responsibility. If the general substance of the answer to this objection be, as we have seen it must be, that there is some sense or respect in which man may be said to have ability with reference to the matter under discussion, as well as a sense in which inability attaches to him in this respect, then it is manifestly not sufficient to say that he has ability, because he can do whatever he wills or chooses to do. For this statement really asserts nothing about an ability to will; and as, in the doctrine objected to, this inability is predicated of the will, and not of the capacity for the outward action, good or evil, so also must the corresponding ability— the assertion of which in some sense, or of something equivalent to it, is to form the answer to the objection— be also predicated of the will. The distinction between natural and moral inability, as sometimes explained and applied, does not seem to afford sufficient ground or basis for ascribing, in any sense or any respect, ability to the will, or anything equivalent to this, but only for ascribing to man an ability to do as he wills or chooses; and, therefore, upon the grounds which we have explained, it seems to be inadequate to meet the whole difficulty. If the inability be predicated of the will, as was done by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards, and if it be

conceded, as we think it must be, that the obvious objection about the inconsistency of this inability with responsibility can be removed only by showing that, in some sense or respect, ability may be predicated of the will, as well as inability, then it follows that the common distinction, as sometimes explained and applied, is insufficient, because it does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves somewhat of the mystery untouched.

There is another ground for doubt as to the sufficiency of the common answer to this objection when urged as a complete solution of the difficulty, —viz., that this mode of answering the objection seems to imply that the want of will is the only or ultimate obstacle or preventative. Now, although perhaps this statement could not be shown to be erroneous, if we were discussing the subject only on metaphysical grounds, and had to defend merely the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as commonly understood, yet it is at least very doubtful whether such a statement can be made to meet or explain the theological doctrine as taught by the Reformers and in the standards of our church.

According to the theological doctrine, the want of will to do good is not, strictly speaking, —as is sometimes implied in the application of the distinction between natural and moral ability, to answer the objection about responsibility, —the only cause why men do not do what God requires of them. For though this want of will is the sole proximate cause of the non-performance of spiritual duties, to the exclusion of all external controlling influences, operating irrespectively of, or apart from, man's power of volition, yet, upon scriptural and theological principles, the inability to will is itself resolved into the want of original righteousness, and the entire corruption of man's moral nature. If this theological doctrine, of man's inability to will what is spiritually good, is taught in Scripture at all, it is represented there as involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of original sin or native moral depravity; and the state of matters which this doctrine describes is traced to the will or power of volition as a faculty of man's nature, being characterized and being determined in all its exercises by the bent or tendency of man's actual moral character, of his dispositions and inclinations. According to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, "cc man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good;"

and he had this freedom and power just because he had been created after the image of God, in righteousness and holiness— because this was the character and tendency of His moral constitution. And according to the same scheme of doctrine, to adopt again the words of our Confession, " man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation," and has lost this ability of will just because he has lost the image of God, and fallen under the reigning power of depravity, or has become, as our Confession says, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." If this be so, then it is not true that the sole or ultimate cause why men in their fallen state do not perform what is spiritually good, is that they do not choose or will to do it, since even this want of will itself, or the inability to will, is traceable to something deeper and ulterior as its source or cause.

On these grounds I am much inclined to think that the common distinction between natural and moral ability, however true in itself, and however important in some of its bearings, does not, as sometimes applied, afford a complete explanation of the difficulty connected with the theological doctrine, that man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to spiritual good; and, upon the whole, I am disposed to adopt upon this topic the following statement of Turretine, whose discussion on this subject of free-will, constituting his tenth Locus in the end of the first volume, is deserving of careful perusal: — '*Nec melius elabuntur, qui pertendunt impotentiam istam moralem esse, non naturalem, atque ita rem non absolute et simpliciter homini esse impossibilem, sed illam hominem posse si velit. Nam sive naturalis, sive moralis dicatur impotentia ista (de quo postea); certum est esse homini ineluctabilem, et frustra dici hominem hoc vel illud posse si velit, cum constet eum non posse velle; non quod destituatur potentia naturali volendi, quia sic differt abrutis; sed quod caveat dispositione ad bene volendum, de qua in hac quaestione unice agitur.*'

Since, then, it would seem that this distinction of natural and moral inability cannot be so applied as to afford a full explanation of the difficulty charged against the theological doctrine of man's inability by nature and without divine grace to will anything spiritually good, the

question still remains, Whether there be any other view or consideration which affords a more complete ground for predicating of man, in some sense, an ability of willing what is good, or of predicating of him something which is virtually equivalent to this, so far as the matter of responsibility is concerned, and may thus afford a fuller answer to the objection founded on the alleged inconsistency between inability and guilt? Before proceeding to consider this question, I must repeat that a survey of the discussions which have taken place regarding it suggests two very obvious reflections, —viz., first, that nothing can now be said upon this subject which has not been said in substance a thousand times before; and, secondly, that the subject is involved in difficulties which never have been fully explained, and never will be fully explained, at least until men get either a new revelation or enlarged faculties.

The subject is one in dealing with which we are entitled, as well as necessitated, to draw largely upon general considerations, which ought to have great weight and influence in satisfying the mind, —even though they do not bear directly and immediately upon the particular difficulties or objections adduced, and may be, as it were, common-places— valuable and important common-places — applicable to other subjects than this. We refer to such considerations as the unreasonableness of rejecting either of two doctrines, both of which seem to be sufficiently established by their direct and appropriate evidence, —evidence which cannot be directly assailed with success or even plausibility, —to reject either of two such doctrines merely because they appear to us to be inconsistent with each other, or because we are unable to point out in what way their consistency with each other can be demonstrated, — a position which we are not warranted to assume until we have first proved that our capacity of perceiving the harmony of doctrines with each other is the standard or measure of their intrinsic truth or falsehood. Akin to this, and embodying the very same principle, is the unwarrantableness of rejecting a matter of fact, when sufficiently established by its appropriate evidence, even though it may be in some of its aspects and bearings inexplicable, and though it may appear to be inconsistent with other facts, also established and admitted. The inability of man to will anything spiritually good, and his responsibility for not willing and doing it, may be regarded as at once doctrines and facts. They are doctrines clearly taught in Scripture; they

are facts in the actual condition of man, established indeed by scriptural statements, but neither of them dependent wholly and exclusively for their evidence upon the authority of Scripture. The right and reasonable course in such a case is to receive and admit both these doctrines, or the facts which they declare, if they appear, after the most careful scrutiny of the evidence, to be sufficiently established, — even though they may continue to appear to us to be irreconcilable with each other.

We need not dwell upon these general considerations, as we have had occasion to advert to them before, —especially when we were considering the doctrine or fact of the entire corruption of human nature in connection with the doctrine or fact of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity as the ground or cause of it. What was then said upon these general topics, and especially with respect to the extent to which it was either needful on the one hand, or practicable on the other, to explain difficulties or to solve objections, is the more pertinent to our present subject, because, as we have had occasion fully to explain, the inability to will anything spiritually good, which we have shown to be an actual feature in the condition of fallen man, and which we are now called upon to defend, as far as may be necessary and practicable, against the objections of opponents, is, and is represented by all who maintain it as being, a part or a necessary consequence of the state of sinfulness into which man fell, as implied in, or traceable to, the corruption or depravity which has overspread his moral nature. It was "by his fall into a state of sin," as our Confession of Faith says, that man lost all ability of will to anything spiritually good, and that of course he has not now any such ability of will until his will be renewed by divine grace. This being the true import and ground of the doctrine, as we maintain it, —this being the true state of the case, as we represent it, —we may expect to find that difficulties and objections, the same in substance, will be adduced against this doctrine of an inability of will as against the more general doctrine of an entire depravity of moral nature, in which it is involved, and from which it results; and that they may and should be dealt with in both cases in substantially the same way: we may expect to find that the extent to which it is at once needful and practicable to explain the difficulties and to solve the objections, is in both cases the same. More particularly, we may expect to find here, as we found there,

that there are difficulties and mysteries connected with the full exposition of the subject, which it is impossible to explain— which run up into questions that he beyond the cognisance of the human faculties— that run up indeed into the one grand difficulty of the existence and prevalence of moral evil under the government of God. We may expect to find that the discussions connected with these objections turn very much upon questions as to the particular place which the really insoluble difficulty is to occupy, and the precise form and aspect in which it is to be represented; and that little or nothing more can be done in the way of dealing with objections than throwing the difficulty further back, — resolving it into some more general principle, and thus bringing it perhaps more into the general line of the analogy of views which we cannot but admit— of considerations which we are somewhat prepared to embrace.

Keeping these general considerations in view, and allowing them their due weight, we would return to the more particular examination of the objection about the incompatibility of inability with responsibility. Now, upon the grounds which have been already indicated, we are satisfied that the principle which contributes more fully than any other to furnish an answer to the objection, —an explanation of the difficulty, —is just the scriptural doctrine which leads us to regard man in his whole history, fallen and unfallen, or the whole human race collectively in their relation to God, as virtually one and indivisible, so far as regards their legal standing and responsibilities, —to contemplate the whole history of the human race as virtually the history of one and the same man, or, what is substantially and practically the same thing, to regard the inability of will to anything spiritually good— which can be proved to attach to man de facto— as a penal infliction, —a punishment justly imposed upon account of previous guilt—the guilt, of course, of Adam's first sin imputed to his posterity. We had formerly occasion to explain, in considering the subject of original sin, that there is no great difficulty in understanding that, by Adam's personal, voluntary act of sin, his own moral nature might become thoroughly ungodly and corrupt, in the way of natural consequence or of penal infliction, or of both; and that, of course, in this way, and through this medium, he might lose or forfeit all the ability of will he once possessed to anything spiritually good, and become subject

to an inability of will that could be removed only by supernatural divine grace. And if the guilt of his first sin was imputed to his posterity, then this might, nay should, carry with it in their case all its proper penal consequences, including depravity of will, and the inability which results from it; and there is thus furnished, pro tanto, an explanation or rationale, in the sense and with the limitations already stated, of the inability of will to anything spiritually good attaching to men in their natural condition. The doctrine of our Confession is, that man, —not men, observe, but man, as represented by Adam under the first covenant, —lost this ability of will by his fall into a state of sin; and if the history of the human race in its different stages or periods, considered in relation to God, is thus viewed in its legal aspects and obligations as virtually the history of one man, placed in different circumstances, then the special and peculiar difficulty supposed to be involved in the doctrine of man's actual inability, in his existing condition, to do what God requires of him, is so far removed, —that is, it is resolved into the one great difficulty of the fall of man or of the human race; and that, again, is resolvable, so far as the ground of difficulties and objections is concerned, into the introduction and continued prevalence of moral evil, —a difficulty which attaches equally in substance, though it may assume a variety of forms and aspects, to every system which admits the existence and moral government of God.

We formerly had occasion to explain, that the doctrine commonly held by Calvinists with respect to the fall of man, and the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, may be reasonably enough regarded as involving this idea, that the trial of Adam was virtually and legally the trial of the human race; that God, in His sovereignty and wisdom, resolved to subject to trial or moral probation, and did try, a creature constituted in a certain manner, endowed with certain qualities and capacities, possessed of full power to stand the trial successfully, and placed in the most favourable circumstances for exercising this power aright; and that God further resolved to regard this trial of one specimen of such a creature as virtually and legally the trial of all the creatures of the same class, so that God might at once treat them, or resolve on treating them, so far as regards their legal obligations, as if they had all failed in the trial, and had thereby justly subjected themselves to the

penal consequences of transgression. If the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity be true, it would seem as if it must involve some such idea as this; and then this idea applied to our actual condition does tend to throw some light upon it, —to break the force of some of the objections commonly adduced against it, especially those based upon its alleged injustice in subjecting men to penal inflictions on account of a sin which they did not commit. It affords materials which obviously enough admit of being applied in the way of showing that it cannot be proved that there would be any ground for alleging that God would do them any real injustice in treating them, so far as its penal consequences are concerned, as if they had committed Adam's sin, —that is, as if they had been tried themselves, and had failed in the trial; and that they could not, if so treated, make out any substantial ground for complaint.

We must further observe, as bearing upon this subject, that orthodox divines have generally taught, as a principle sanctioned by Scripture, that sin may be in some sense the punishment of sin. Orthodox divines have usually held this principle, and have, moreover, commonly admitted that it enters as one element into the full exposition of what they believe to be the doctrine of Scripture concerning the fall; and, accordingly, this principle is explained, proved, and defended from objections, in Turretine.

I have thus given a brief summary of what is implied in, or results from, our general doctrine with respect to the fall of man or of the human race, and its bearing upon his character and condition; because it is upon this doctrine as a whole, that the fullest answer to the objection about responsibility, in so far as it can be shown to be necessary to answer it, is based: and nothing can be more reasonable than this, that when we are called upon to explain or defend anything which we have asserted of fallen man, we must be permitted to introduce and apply the whole of the doctrine which we regard Scripture as teaching upon the subject; and to insist that our whole doctrine shall be fairly looked at and examined in its different parts and in its various relations.

Now, to apply these views to the matter in hand, let us consider how they bear upon the alleged inconsistency of inability with responsibility and

guilt. There is manifestly no inconsistency between saying that man before his fall had freedom and power to do that which is good, and that he has no such freedom and power now, having wholly lost it by his fall into a state of sin. And, with respect to the difficulty about responsibility, the substance of our position in answer to the objection, —a position based on, and deduced from, those general views of which we have just given a brief summary, —is this: That man is responsible for not willing and doing good, notwithstanding his actual inability to will and to do good, because he is answerable for that inability itself, having, as legally responsible for Adam's sin, inherited the inability, as part of the forfeiture penally due to that first transgression. If the history of the human race is to be regarded, in so far as concerns its legal relation to God, as being

Turretin., Locus ix., Quesest. xv.

virtually the history of one man in different circumstances, —in other words, if the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed is one of the constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, —then this position, which we have just enunciated, is both true and relevant. Its truth, —that is, *ex hypothesi*, upon the assumption of the truth of our fundamental doctrines in regard to the fall of man, —I need not further illustrate; and its relevancy to the matter in hand, as an answer to the objection we are considering, lies in this, that though it does not furnish us with a ground for saying, literally and precisely, of man as he now is, that there is a sense in which we can assert that he has ability of will to what is spiritually good, it at least affords us a ground for saying what is equivalent to this, —what is substantially the same thing, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned, —namely, that he, that is, man, or the human race, as represented in Adam, had ability to will and to do what is good, and lost it by his sin; and that, therefore, he is responsible for the want of it, —as much responsible, so far as regards legal obligations, for all that results from inability, as if he still had the ability in which he was originally created, and which he has righteously forfeited. It is in full accordance with the dictates of right reason and the ordinary sentiments and feelings of mankind, that an ability once possessed, and thereafter righteously forfeited or justly taken away, leaves a man in the very same condition, so far as responsibility and guilt

are concerned, as a present or existing ability. And this generally admitted principle, viewed in connection with our fundamental doctrines upon the subject, is legitimately available for showing that the objection cannot be established.

I am not satisfied that there is any sense in which it can be literally and precisely said with truth, that man now has an ability of will to what is spiritually good, —except the statement be referred merely to the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution and faculties as a rational being, having the power of volition, which remained unaffected by the fall; and this, we have shown, does not furnish any complete explanation of the difficulty now under consideration. I am not persuaded that any solution meets the difficulty of asserting that man is responsible for his sins and shortcomings, notwithstanding his inability to will and to do what is good, except by showing that he is responsible for his inability. It is true, indeed, that this inability is involved in, or produced by, the corruption or depravity of nature which attaches to fallen man, and should therefore be admitted as a fact, a real feature of man's actual condition, if supported by satisfactory evidence, even though it could not be explained. But I know of no principle or process by which it can be so fully and completely shown that man is responsible for it, as by regarding it as a penal infliction— a part of the punishment justly imposed on account of previous guilt. This principle does go some length towards explaining the difficulty; for it shows satisfactorily that there is no peculiar difficulty attaching to this subject of inability, as distinguished from that general corruption or depravity characterizing all men, of which it is a component part, or a necessary consequence. There is no reason, then, why we should hesitate about receiving the Scripture doctrine, that man in his fallen state has no ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, and that he is unable, by his own strength, to convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto, on account of its supposed inconsistency with his being responsible for not doing what the divine law requires; for not only have we sufficient direct evidence to establish its truth, — such evidence as would warrant us in at once putting aside all objections that have been adduced against it as mere difficulties, even though no explanation could be given of them, —but, moreover, when we take into view the whole doctrine which Scripture

teaches in connection with this subject, we get materials which go some length, at least, in explaining how it is that man is responsible for this inability, and is therefore, a fortiori, responsible, notwithstanding it; while, at the same time, we must admit that this profound and mysterious subject is still left involved in such darkness and difficulty, as to impress upon us the duty of carefully abstaining from presumptuous reasonings and speculations of our own, and of humbly and implicitly receiving whatever God may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

I would further notice how fully this discussion confirms and illustrates the truth of observations which I had formerly occasion to make: first, about the importance of rightly understanding the whole scriptural doctrine concerning man's fall and its consequences, and of having clear and distinct ideas, so far as Scripture affords us materials, of the constituents of the sinfulness of the state into which he fell; secondly, about the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, tending to throw some light upon this profound and mysterious subject, instead of involving it, as seems to be often supposed, in greater darkness and difficulty; and, thirdly, about the necessity of our having constant regard, in all our investigations into these topics, at once to the virtual identity with respect to judicial standing and legal obligation, and the vast difference, with respect to actual character and condition, between man fallen and man unfallen. There is but one view of the general condition of the human race that at all corresponds, either with the specific statements of Scripture, or with the phenomena which the world in all ages and countries has presented to our contemplation, regarded in connection with the more general aspects of God's character and government, which the Scripture unfolds to us; and that is the view which represents the whole human race as lying under a sentence of condemnation because of sin, —the execution of that sentence being suspended, and many tokens of forbearance and kindness being in the meanwhile vouchsafed to the whole race; while, at the same time, a great and glorious provision has been introduced, and is in operation, fitted and intended to secure the eternal salvation of a portion of the inhabitants of this lost world, who will at last form an innumerable company. This is the view given us in Scripture of the state of the human

race: it is confirmed by a survey of the actual realities of man's condition; it throws some light upon phenomena or facts which would otherwise be wholly inexplicable; and, while neither Scripture nor reason affords adequate materials for explaining fully this awful and mysterious reality, we may at least confidently assert, that no additional darkness or difficulty is introduced into it by the doctrine which Scripture does teach concerning it, —namely, that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that by one offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

IV. The Will in Regeneration

The Council of Trent, —being a good deal tied up, according to the principles which they professed to follow as to the rule of faith, by the ancient decisions of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in opposition to the Pelagians, and by some differences of opinion among themselves, —could not well embody in their decisions so much of unsound doctrine as there is good reason to believe would have been agreeable to the great majority of them, or bring out so fully and palpably as they would have wished, their opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. At the same time, it was absolutely necessary, for the maintenance of many of the tenets and practices which constituted the foundation and the main substance of Popery, that the doctrines of grace should be corrupted, —that the salvation of sinners should not be represented, as it was by the Reformers, as being wholly the gift and the work of God, but as being also, in some measure, effected by men themselves, through their own exertions and their own merits. We have already fully explained to what extent this policy was pursued in their decree upon original sin, and how far it was restrained and modified in its development by the difficulties of their situation. In the decree on original sin there is not a great deal that is positively erroneous, though much that is vague and defective. But when, in the sixth session, they proceeded to the great doctrine of justification, they then made the fullest and widest application of all that was erroneous and defective in their decree upon original sin, by explicitly denying that all the actions of unrenewed men are wholly sinful, —that sinful imperfection attaches to

all the actions even of renewed men, —and that man, by his fall, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. This denial, however, of the great Protestant doctrine of the utter bondage or servitude of the will of unrenewed men to sin, —of their inability to will anything spiritually good, —was not the only application they made of their erroneous and defective views about the corruption and depravity of human nature, in their bearing upon the natural powers of men with reference to their own salvation. They have further deduced from their doctrine, —that the free-will of fallen men, even in reference to spiritual good accompanying salvation, is only weakened or enfeebled, but not lost or extinguished, —the position that man's free-will co-operates with divine grace in the process of his regeneration, and this in a sense which the Reformers and orthodox Protestant churches have regarded as inconsistent with scriptural views of man's natural capacities and of the gospel method of salvation.

Their doctrine upon the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in the work of regeneration, is set forth also, like the Romish errors we have already been considering, in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session; being intended, like them, to pave the way for their grand and fundamental heresy on the subject of justification. It is this: "If any one shall say that the free-will of man, moved and excited by God, does not co-operate by assenting or yielding to God, exciting and calling him, in order that he may predispose and prepare himself to receive the grace of justification, or that he cannot refuse his assent, if he chooses, but that he acts altogether like some inanimate thing, and is merely passive, —let him be anathema." Now, here it is asserted, by plain implication, not only that there is free-will, or an ability of will to what is good, in operation before regeneration, but that man, in the exercise of this free-will to good, co-operates with the grace of God in the preliminary movements that precede and prepare for regeneration; and it was, of course, mainly as a foundation for this doctrine of the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in preparing for, and producing regeneration, that the freedom of the will of fallen man to good was asserted. In this way, the work of regeneration is manifestly assigned, partly to the operation of God's grace, and partly to the exercise of the free-will of man, —a power possessed by man in his natural

condition, though not made really and effectively operative for his regeneration, until, as the council says in another part of their decree, it be "excited and assisted" by divine grace. If fallen man hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, —which we have shown to be the doctrine of Scripture, —there can, of course, be no such co-operation as this— no such partition of work between God and man, either in preparing for, or in effecting, man's regeneration, because there is nothing in man, in his natural condition, on which such a co-operation can be based, or from which it can spring. There would, therefore, be no great occasion for dwelling further on this subject, were it not that it is intimately connected with a fuller exposition of the doctrine of the Reformers and of the Reformed confessions with respect to the passivity which they ascribed to man in the process of regeneration, —the renovation of the will which they held to be indispensable before men could will anything spiritually good, — and the freedom of will which they undoubtedly ascribed to men after they were regenerated; and to these topics we would now very briefly direct attention.

The Reformers generally maintained that man was passive in the work of regeneration; and they held this position to be necessarily implied in the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and of his inability to will anything spiritually good, and also to have its own appropriate and specific scriptural evidence in the representation given us in the word of God of the origin and nature of the great change which is effected upon men by the operation of the divine Spirit. But as the subject is rather an intricate one, and as the doctrine of the Reformers, which is also the doctrine of our standards upon this subject of passivity as opposed to co-operation, is liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented, it may be proper to give some explanation of the sense in which, and the limitations with which, they maintained it.

The Reformers did not, as the Council of Trent represents them, describe man as acting in this matter the part merely of an inanimate object, such as a stock or a stone, though some incautious expressions of Luther's may have afforded a plausible pretence for the accusation. Calvin, adverting to the unfair use that had been made by the Romanists of some of Luther's

expressions upon this subject, asserts that the whole substance of the doctrine that had been taught by Luther upon this subject, was held and defended by all the Reformers: "Quod summum est in hac quaestione, et cujus gratia reliqua omnia dicuntur, quemadmodum initio propositum fuit a Luthero et aliis, ita hodie defendimus, ac ne in illis quidem, quae dixi ad fidem non adeo necessaria esse, aliud interest, nisi quod forma loquendi sic fuit mitigata, ne quid offensionis haberet." Now, the Reformers, as I formerly showed, held that man retained, after his fall, that natural liberty with which, according to our Confession, God hath endowed the will of man, so that he never could become like a stock, or a stone, or an irrational animal, but retained his natural power of volition along with all that rationality implies. The passivity which the Reformers ascribed to man in the process of regeneration, implied chiefly these two things, —first, that God's grace must begin the work without any aid or co-operation, in the first instance, from man himself, there being nothing in man, in his natural state, since he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, from which such aid or co-operation can proceed; and, secondly, that God's grace must by itself effect some change on man, before man himself can do anything, or exercise any activity in the matter, by willing or doing anything spiritually good; and all this, surely, is very plainly implied in the scriptural doctrines of man's depravity and inability of will, and in the scriptural representations of the origin and nature of regeneration.

Again, the Reformers did not teach that man was altogether passive, or the mere inactive subject of the operation of divine grace, or of the agency of the Holy Ghost, in the whole of the process that might be comprehended under the name of regeneration, taken in its wider sense. Regeneration may be taken either in a more limited sense, —as including only the first implantation of spiritual life, by which a man, dead in sins and trespasses, is quickened or made alive, so that he is no longer dead; or it may be taken in a wider sense, as comprehending the whole of the process by which he is renewed, or made over again, in the whole man, after the image of God, —as including the production of saving faith and union to Christ, or very much what is described in our standards under the name of effectual calling. Now, it was only of regeneration, as understood in the first or more limited of these senses, that the

Reformers maintained that man in the process was wholly passive, and not active; for they did not dispute that, before the process in the second and more enlarged sense was completed, man was spiritually alive and spiritually active, and continued so ever after during the whole process of his sanctification. This is what is taught in the standards of our church, when it is said, in the Confession of Faith, that in the work of effectual calling man "is altogether passive, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it and in the Larger Catechism, that God in effectual calling renews and powerfully determines men's wills, "so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer His call."

Neither did the Reformers teach, as they are often represented by Papists, that God regenerates or converts men against their will; for their doctrine upon this point, —and it is in entire accordance with all they teach upon the whole subject, —is, that He makes them willing by renewing their wills, or by making their wills good in place of bad. These were the doctrines which were taught by the Reformers upon this point, and which were condemned, and intended to be condemned, by the Council of Trent, in the canon which we have quoted.

Some of the very strong and incautious expressions which were used by Luther in setting forth the passivity of man in the work of regeneration, — and which Calvin apologizes for in the context of the passage above quoted from him, —seem to have occasioned some reaction of sentiment in the Lutheran church upon this subject, and to have thus produced, though not till after Luther's death, what was called the Synergistic Controversy, or the dispute about the co-operation of man with God in this matter. Melancthon seems to have given some countenance to the error of the Synergists, as they were called, by using, on a variety of occasions, —though not, it would appear, till after Luther's death, — expressions which seemed, in all fairness, to imply that, when divine grace began to operate upon men, with a view to their regeneration or conversion; it found in them at the very first, and antecedently to any real change actually effected upon them, not merely rationality and the natural power of volition, which rendered them the fit subjects, the

suitable recipients, of a supernatural spiritual influence, but such a natural capacity of willing what was spiritually good, as rendered them capable at once of actively co-operating or concurring even with the first movements of the divine Spirit. This controversy continued to agitate the Lutheran church for many years, both before and after the death of Melancthon, -Strigelius being the chief defender of the doctrine of co-operation, and Flaccus Illyricus its principal opponent. It was at length settled, like many of their other controversial differences, by the "Formula Concordiae," finally adopted and promulgated in 1580, which, though it explicitly condemned what were understood to be the views of the defenders of the doctrine of co-operation, was subscribed by Strigelius himself. As the "Formula Concordiae" contains a very distinct condemnation of the doctrine of co-operation even in its mildest and most modified form, as asserted by some of the followers of Melancthon, —and as it contains, indeed, a full exposition of the whole subject, carefully prepared after the whole matter had been subjected to a long and searching controversy, —it is fitted to throw considerable light upon the difficulties, intricacies, and ambiguities of the question, and it may conduce to the explanation of the subject to quote an extract from it. It condemns this doctrine, "(cum docetur), licet homo non renatus, ratione liberi arbitrii, ante sui regenerationem infirmior quidem sit, quam ut conversionis sese initium facere, atque propriis viribus sese ad Deum convertere, et legi Dei toto corde parere valeat: tamen, si Spiritus Sanctus praedicatione verbi initium fecerit, suamque gratiam in verbo homini obtulerit, turn hominis voluntatem, propriis et naturalibus suis viribus quodammodo aliquid, licet id modiculum, infirmum et languidum admodum sit, conversionem adjuvare, atque cooperari, et se ipsam ad gratiam applicare" et "praeparare."

I may mention here by the way, that Bossuet, in the Eighth Book of his History of the Variations, has, by a bold stroke of his usual unscrupulous policy, attempted to convict even the Formula Concordiae of the heresy of semi-Pelagianism on the subject of co-operation, though, beyond all question, it contains nothing which makes so near an approach to Pelagianism as the decrees of the Council of Trent. Bossuet, indeed, shows satisfactorily that some of the Lutheran statements connected with this point are not very clear and consistent; but the only fair inference

deducible from any inconsistencies which he has been able to produce, is one which might equally be illustrated by an examination of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and of the symbolical books of churches that have been far sounder in their doctrinal views than the Church of Rome, — namely, that it is not possible for any man, or body of men, to be thoroughly and consistently anti-Pelagian, even on the subjects of the depravity and impotency of human nature, and regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit, though they may intend to be so, and think that they are so, unless they admit what are commonly reckoned the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism.

The great practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the doctrine they maintained as to the passivity of man in the work of regeneration, —and, indeed, the substance of what they held to be implied in this doctrine, —was the necessity of a renovation of man's will by the sole power of God, as antecedently indispensable to his exerting any real activity in willing or doing anything spiritually good. If man has not by nature any ability of will for spiritual good, he must receive it wholly from grace; if he has no power of will in himself, he must receive it from God; if it does not exist in him, it must be put into him by God's power. That all this is necessary, is plainly implied in the scriptural descriptions of man's natural condition; that all this is done in the process of regeneration, is plainly implied in those scriptural descriptions which represent it as a quickening or vivifying of those who were dead in sins and trespasses, —as giving men new hearts, —as taking away their stony hearts, and giving them hearts of flesh. The Reformers, accordingly, were accustomed to describe the process as involving a renovation of men's wills, —a changing them from evil to good; not, of course, the creating and bestowing of a new and different power of volition, but giving it different capacities, and bringing it under wholly different influences. It is this renovation of the will that stands out as that in the whole process of regeneration, —taking the word in its most extensive sense, that of effectual calling, —which most imperatively demands the immediate and exclusive agency of divine power, — the special operation of the Holy Ghost, —for its accomplishment.

What are usually regarded, on scriptural grounds, as constituting the

leading steps in the work of effectual calling, are the conviction of sin, the illumination of the understanding, and the embracing of Christ. These may all seem to be natural and easy processes, which might be supposed, perhaps, to result, without any supernatural divine agency, from the influence of the views opened up to us in Scripture, or at least without anything more than the gracious power of God exciting and assisting us, as the Council of Trent says, —exciting us to attend to what is said in Scripture, and assisting our own efforts to understand and realize it, —exciting us to exercise our natural power of attention, and assisting us in the exercise of our natural power of acquiring knowledge, and of our natural capacity of receiving impressions from what we know. Were nothing more necessary, the exciting and assisting powder of divine grace might appear to be plausibly represented as sufficient. But the grand obstacle which man's natural character and condition present to his reception of the truth and his embracing Christ, is the entire aversion of his will to anything spiritually good, his utter inability to will anything that is pleasing to God, his entire bondage or servitude to sin. Hence the necessity, not only of the conviction of sin and the illumination of the understanding, but also of the renovation of the will, in order to men's embracing Christ. The aversion or enmity of his natural mind to God and divine things must be taken away, —a new and different disposition, taste, or tendency from anything that exists in unrenewed men, or that can be elicited from the ordinary operation of their natural principles, must be communicated to them; and this can proceed only from the immediate operation of divine grace, —the special agency of the Holy Spirit. The process needful for removing this aversion, and communicating a different and opposite tendency, must be something very different from merely exciting, stirring up what is lazy or languid, and assisting what is weak or feeble; and yet this is all which the doctrine of the Council of Trent admits of. Orthodox Protestants have been accustomed to contrast the strong and energetic language of Scripture upon this subject with the feeble and mincing phraseology of the Romish council, and to ask whether exciting and assisting the will, which was in itself weak and feeble, was anything like creating a new heart; and whether God's working in us to will as well as to do, resembled our willing what was good by our own powers, with some assistance furnished to us by God. The contrast is quite sufficient to show that the Church of Rome

ascribes to man what man has not, and cannot effect, and takes from God what He claims to Himself, and what His almighty power alone can accomplish.

Much, indeed, is said even by the Council of Trent about the necessity of divine grace, and about the impossibility of men being converted or regenerated if left wholly to their own unaided resources and exertions; and so far the Church of Rome has not incurred the guilt of teaching open and palpable Pelagianism, as many bearing the name of Protestants have done; but, by ascribing more to man than man can effect, and by ascribing less to God in the process than He claims to Himself, she has sanctioned anti-scriptural error in a matter of vast importance, and error of a kind peculiarly fitted to exert an injurious influence. Men are strongly prone to magnify their own powers and capacities, to claim for themselves some influential share in anything that affects their character and their happiness. General declarations of the necessity of divine grace to aid or assist them in the process, will be but feeble barriers against the pride, and presumption, and self-confidence of the human heart. Men may admit the truth of these declarations; but if they are taught, also, as the Church of Rome teaches, that they have in themselves some natural powder or freedom of will, by which they can co-operate with God's grace from the very time when it is first exerted upon them, or, as Moehler expresses it, that "by the mutual interworking of the Holy Spirit and of the creature freely co-operating, justification really commences," they will be very apt to leave the grace of God out of view, and practically to rely upon themselves. Experience abundantly proves, that it is of the last importance that men's views upon all these subjects should be both correct and definite, and that any error or deviation from Scripture is not only wrong in itself, and directly injurious in its influence so far as it reaches, but tends, even beyond its own proper sphere, to introduce indefinite and confused impressions.

Nothing is more common than to hear men admit the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, who make it manifest that they attach no definite practical idea to the admission; and the cause is to be found not so much in this, that they do not in some sense believe what they admit, but that they also hold some defective and erroneous views upon

the subject, —some error mingled with the truth regarding it, —which introduces indefiniteness and confusion into all their impressions concerning it. Thus it is that the admission by Papists of the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, so long as they also hold that man has some natural power or freedom to will what is spiritually good, and that, in the exercise of this natural power of free-will, he actively co-operates with God in the production of the whole process, tends only to produce confusion of view, and indefiniteness of impression, in regard to the whole matter. The doctrine of Scripture, on the contrary, is fitted to produce distinct and definite impressions upon this subject, by denying to man any natural ability to will anything spiritually good, and by asserting the necessity of the renovation of the will by the sole operation of God's gracious power before any spiritual activity can be manifested—before any good volitions can be produced. Here is a clear and definite barrier interposed to men's natural tendency to magnify their own natural powers. If men admit this, their impressions of their own utter helplessness and entire dependence upon divine grace must be much more precise and definite than they can be upon any other theory; while the tendency of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, or of any similar doctrine, which leaves no one part of the process of regeneration to divine grace alone, but represents man as co-operating more or less in the exercise of his natural power of free-will in the whole of the process, is to lead men to rely upon themselves, and to claim to themselves some share in everything that contributes to promote their own happiness and welfare.

We are not, however, considering at present the general, subject of regeneration, conversion, or effectual calling, but only that of free-will in connection with it; and we must proceed to notice very briefly, in conclusion, the freedom ascribed by the Reformers to the will of men after they are regenerated. And here, again, we may take the statement of what was generally taught by the Reformers from our own Confession of Faith, which says, "When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by His grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good." Here, again, is freedom of will ascribed to man in his regenerate state, —that is, an ability to will good as well as to will evil, —

whereas, formerly, he had power or freedom only to will evil. In the regeneration of his nature, the reigning power of depravity is subdued, and all the effects which it produced are more or less fully taken away. One of the principal of these effects was the utter bondage or servitude of the will to sin, because of the ungodly and depraved tendency of the whole moral nature to what was displeasing and offensive to God. This ungodly and depraved tendency is now in conversion to a large extent removed, and an opposite tendency is implanted. Thus the will is set free, or emancipated, from the bondage under which it was held. It is no longer subjected to a necessity, arising from the general character and tendency of man's moral nature, to will only what is evil, but is able also freely to will what is good; and it does freely will what is good, though, from the remaining corruption and depravity of man's nature, it still wills also what is evil. It is not emancipated from the influence of God's decrees fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass; it is not placed beyond the control of His providence, whereby, in the execution of His decrees, He ever rules and governs all His creatures and all their actions. It is not set free from the operation of those general laws which God has impressed upon man's mental constitution for directing the exercise of his faculties and regulating his mental processes; but it is set free from the dominion of sin, exempted from the necessity of willing only what is evil, and made equally able freely to will what is good. It has recovered, to a large extent, the only liberty it ever lost, and is determined and characterized now, as it had been in all the previous stages of man's history, both before and after his fall, by man's general moral character and tendencies, —free to good, —when man had the image of God and original righteousness, but yet mutable, so that it could will evil; in bondage, —when man was the slave of sin, so that it could will only evil, and not good; emancipated, — when man was regenerated, so that it could freely will good as well as evil, though still bearing many traces of its former bondage and of its injurious effects; and, finally, to adopt again the language of our Confession of Faith, in closing the admirable chapter on this subject, to be made " perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the views held by the Reformers and by the compilers of the standards of our church, with regard to the

liberation of the will in regeneration from entire bondage, or servitude from sin, and the power or freedom which thereafter it enjoys and exercises to will good as well as evil, decidedly confirm the statements we formerly made as to the general import and relations of their whole doctrine on the freedom or liberty of the will of man, and the servitude or necessity that might be ascribed to it. But as we have taken the liberty of pointing out the defectiveness of the discussion of this subject by some very eminent orthodox theologians, as if it were entirely comprehended in the discussion of the question as to the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of philosophical necessity, it may be proper now to observe that there is nothing in our standards inconsistent with the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as it is commonly understood. From the explanations which have been given, it is plain enough, that while, on the one hand, neither the doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen and unrenewed man to sin because of depravity, nor any other doctrine of Calvinism, necessarily requires the adoption and maintenance of the doctrine of philosophical necessity; so, on the other hand, neither the general liberty which our Confession ascribes to the will of man absolutely and in all circumstances, nor the special liberty which it ascribes to the will of man unfallen and of man regenerated, excludes, or is inconsistent with, that doctrine. Men who believe the whole Calvinistic system of theology, as set forth in the standards of our church, are, I think, fully warranted, in consistency with their theological convictions, to treat what is commonly called philosophical necessity purely as a question in philosophy; and to admit or reject it according to the view they may have formed of the psychological and metaphysical grounds on which it has been advocated and opposed.

V. God's Providence, and Mans Sin

There is one other topic, —and only one, —of those that were subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and that are adverted to in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, to which I mean to advert, —namely, what is usually called the cause of sin, and especially the providence of God in its relation to the sinful actions of men. This is the most difficult and perplexing

subject that ever has been, or perhaps ever can be, investigated by the mind of man; and it has been the cause or the occasion of a great deal of very unwarranted and presumptuous speculation. Indeed, it may be said to be the one grand difficulty into which all the leading difficulties involved in our speculations upon religious subjects may be shown to resolve themselves. The difficulty is a very obvious one, —so obvious, that it must occur to every one who has ever reflected upon the subject. It is, indeed, virtually the question of the origin of moral evil, —the question why moral evil, with all its fearful and permanent consequences, was permitted under the government of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness; and why it is to continue without end to exert its ruinous influence upon the character and destiny of God's creatures, —an inquiry which, from the very nature of the case, lies plainly beyond the range of men's faculties, and about which we can know nothing certain or satisfactory, except what God Himself may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

The general question, indeed, of the origin and prevalence of moral evil has usually been admitted by men to be beyond the range of the human faculties; but there are other questions of a more limited description, connected with this subject, on which many have thought themselves more at liberty to indulge in speculation, though, in truth, the difficulties that attach to them are as great— and, indeed, the very same— as those which beset the general question. The question which was discussed between the Reformers and the Church of Rome upon this topic, was chiefly this: What is the nature of the agency which God exerts in regard to the sinful actions of His responsible creatures; and, more especially, whether the agency which the Reformers usually ascribed to Him in this matter afforded ground for the allegation that they made Him the author of sin. The general subject of the origin of moral evil was not, to any considerable extent, formally discussed between them. Neither can it be said that the subject of God's predestination, or of His fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, forms one of the proper subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; for although Romish writers in the sixteenth century, and ever since, have most commonly opposed the doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject, and denied God's fore-ordination of all events, yet the

Church of Rome can scarcely be said to be committed on either side of this question. The subject, indeed, was discussed in the Council of Trent; and it is a curious and interesting fact, that the two sides of this question (for it has only two sides, though many elaborate attempts have been made to establish intermediate positions, or positions that seem to be intermediate) were defended by opposite parties in the council, and that the respective grounds on which the opposite opinions are founded were fully brought forward.

From an unwillingness to go directly in the teeth of Augustine, and from the difference of opinion that subsisted among themselves, the council gave no decision either on the more general question of God's predestination of all events, or on the more specific question of election of men individually to everlasting life, though these subjects occupied a prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and though an opposite view to that taught by the Reformers has usually been supported by Romish writers. The council anathematized, indeed, in the seventeenth canon of this sixth session, the doctrine that the grace of justification is enjoyed only by those who are predestinated to life, and who finally attain to it; but in this error they had some countenance from Augustine, who generally included regeneration in justification, and who held that some men who were regenerated, though none who were predestinated to life, —for he made a distinction between these two things, which are most clearly and fully identified in Scripture, —might fall away, and finally perish. They taught, also, that believers could not, without a special revelation, attain to a certainty that they belonged to the number of the elect; but this does not necessarily imply any deliverance upon the subject of election itself. Accordingly, we find that it was not so much the decrees of God, as the execution of His decrees in providence, that formed the subject of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists in the sixteenth century. The Reformers, —from the views they held as to the entire corruption and depravity of man, and his inability of will, in his unregenerate state, to anything spiritually good, —were naturally led to speak of, and discuss, the way and manner in which the sinful actions of men were produced or brought into existence, —in other words, the cause of sin. This, therefore, —namely, the cause of sin, or the investigation of the source or sources to which the sinful actions of men

are to be ascribed, —became an important topic of discussion, as intimately connected with the depravity of human nature, and the natural bondage of the will to sin.

Most of the theological works of that period have a chapter upon this subject, " De causa peccati." Calvin, in the beginning of the second book of his Institutes, after discussing the fall, the depravity of man, and the bondage of his will, has a chapter to explain, "Quomodo operetur Deus in cordibus hominum," before he proceeds to answer the objections adduced against his doctrine, and in defence of free-will. The Romanists eagerly laid hold of the statements of the Reformers upon this subject, — upon the cause of sin, and the agency, direct or indirect, of God in regard to men's sinful actions, —and laboured to extract from them some plausible grounds for the allegation that their doctrine made God the author of sin. The Council of Trent, accordingly, in the canon which immediately succeeds the two on free-will already discussed, anathematizes the doctrine imputed by implication to the Reformers, "that God works (operari) evil actions as well as good ones, not only permissively (non permissive solum), but also properly and per se, so that the treachery of Judas was His proper work no less than the calling of Paul." It is a remarkable fact, that the ground, and the only ground, they had for ascribing this offensive statement about Judas and Paul to the Reformers was, that Melancthon made a statement to that effect in the earliest edition of his Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans while none of the other Reformers, and least of all Calvin, had ever made any statements of a similar kind. Indeed, Calvin, in his Antidote, Â§ expresses his disapprobation of the statement which Melancthon had made, that the treachery of Judas was the proper work of God as much as the calling of Paul. Independently, however, of such rash and offensive statements as some of those contained in the earlier writings of Melancthon, the Romanists charged the Reformers in general with so representing and describing the agency of God, in regard to the sinful actions of man, as to make Him the author of sin. And in Romish works, not only of that, but of every subsequent age, this has been one of the leading accusations brought against them.

As early as 1521, the Faculty of the Sorbonne charged Luther with

Manichaeism, as Augustine had been charged on the same ground by the Pelagians; and in our own day, Moehler, who belongs to the more candid class of Romish controversialists, —though that is no great praise, and though his candour, after all, is more apparent than real, —gravely assures us that Luther's views approximated to the Gnostice-Manichasan, while Zwingle's resembled the Pantheistic. Bellarmine has urged this charge against the Reformers, —that they make God the author of sin, — at great length, and with great earnestness, having devoted to it the whole of the second of his six books, *de Amissione gratiae et statu peccati*, the first being occupied with an elaborate attempt to establish the proper distinction between mortal and venial sin, —a position of much more importance, both theoretically and practically, in the Popish system than it might at first sight appear to be. The Lutherans, before Bellarmine's time, had abandoned most of the doctrines of their master that afforded any very plausible ground for this charge; and Bellarmine accordingly lets them off, and directs his assault against Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza. Melancthon, indeed, had gone from one extreme to another upon this subject, and, in the later editions of his *Loci Communes*, resolved the cause of sin into the will of man choosing sin spontaneously, which is certainly true so far as it goes, and important in its own place, but which very manifestly does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves the main difficulty wholly untouched. After the death of Melancthon, the Lutherans generally exhibited the most bitter virulence against Calvin and his followers, and usually made common cause with the Papists in representing them as making God the author of sin, as we see in the answers of Calvin and Beza to the furious assaults of Westphalus and Heshusius. It was in order to establish this charge that an eminent Lutheran divine wrote a book which he called "*Calvinus Turcicus*," or Calvin Turkising, —that is, teaching the doctrine of the Turks or Mahometans, —phrases often occurring in this connection in the theology of the latter part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth centuries. Bellarmine admits that Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza disclaimed the doctrine that God was the author of sin, and that they maintained that no such inference was deducible from anything they had ever taught; but he professes to show that their doctrines respecting the agency or providence of God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, afford satisfactory grounds for the following startling conclusions: first, that

they make God the author of sin; secondly, that they represent God as truly sinning; and, thirdly, that they represent God alone, and not man at all, as the sinner in the sinful actions of men; and then he formally and elaborately proves that God is not a sinner, or the author of sin, and that, consequently, the doctrine of these Reformers upon this subject is false.

The Reformers, of course, regarded these conclusions, which the Papists and Lutherans deduced from their doctrines, as blasphemies, which they abhorred as much as their opponents, and denied that they had ever afforded any good grounds for charging these blasphemies upon them. The substance of their defence against the charge may be embodied in the following propositions: first, that they ascribed to God's providence no other part or agency in respect to the sinful actions of men than the word of God ascribed to it, and that the word of God ascribed to it something more than a mere permission; secondly, that ascribing to God something more than a mere permission with regard to the sinful actions of men, did not necessarily imply that He was the author of sin, or at all involve Him in the guilt of the sinful actions which they performed; and, thirdly, that the difficulties attaching to the exposition of this subject, —difficulties which they did not profess to be able to solve, —afforded no sufficient grounds for refusing to receive what Scripture taught regarding it, or for refusing to embody the substance of scriptural teaching upon the point, in propositions or doctrines that ought to be professed and maintained as a portion of God's revealed truth. Now, it is plain from this statement, that everything depends upon the answer to the question, "What is the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject, —the subject being, not whether God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, though that is intimately connected with it, but what is the nature and extent of His agency in providence, with respect to the sinful actions which men perform; and then, thereafter, whether this which He does in the matter, —that is, which the Scripture appears to ascribe to Him, —can be proved to involve Him in the guilt of their sins, or to exempt them from guilt. Now, the investigation of these questions has given rise to an almost boundless extent of intricate discussion, —an almost endless number of minute and perplexing distinctions. I can only allude to the most obvious and important features of the question, without entering into any detail. It is important to notice, in the first place, that the Reformers all felt and

acknowledged the difficulty of embodying, in distinct and explicit propositions, the sum and substance of what seems plainly indicated in Scripture, as to the providence or agency of God in connection with the sinful actions of men. The Scriptures very plainly teach that God is not the author of sin, —that He incurs no guilt, and commits no sin, when His intelligent and responsible creatures violate the law which He has given them. And yet they also seem so plainly to ascribe to Him an agency or efficiency, both in regard to the introduction and continuance of that general system of things, of which the sinful actions of His creatures constitute so prominent a feature, — and likewise in regard to the particular sinful actions which they perform, —that a difficulty must at once be felt by every one who attempts to embody, in distinct propositions, the sum and substance of what the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject is. It has been very common to represent this as the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, —namely, that, while God is to be regarded as the author or cause of the good actions of His creatures, He only permits their wicked actions, but is not in any sense the author or the cause of them; permits them, —not, of course, in the sense of not prohibiting them, for every sin is forbidden by Him, and is an act of disobedience to His revealed will, — but in the sense of not preventing them from taking place. It is, of course, true that in this sense God permits— that is, does not prevent— the sinful actions which yet He prohibits, and as undoubtedly He could prevent them, if He so willed. Even this position of His permitting them presents to us difficulties with respect to the divine procedure, and the principles by which it is regulated, which we are utterly incompetent fully to solve.

But the main question, upon the point we are now considering, is this, Does the position, that God permits the sinful actions of His creatures, exhaust the whole of what the Scripture teaches us as to His agency in connection with them? The Church of Rome maintains that it does, for this is plainly implied in the canon formerly quoted ("permissive solum"); while the Reformers, in general, maintained that it did not, and held that the Scriptures ascribed to God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, something more than a mere permission, or what they were accustomed to call *nuda, otiosa, et inefficax permissio*; and it was, of course, upon this something more, that the charge of making God the author of sin was

chiefly based. The Reformers felt the difficulty of embodying this in distinct and definite propositions, and some of them have made rash and incautious statements in attempting it. But they decidedly maintained that a mere permission did not fully bring out the place which the Scripture ascribes to God's agency in relation to the sinful actions of men. They usually admitted, indeed, that permission, if it were understood not negatively, but positively, —not as indicating that God willed nothing and did nothing in the matter, but as implying that He, by a positive act of volition, resolved that He would not interpose to prevent men from doing the sin which they wished to commit, — might be employed ordinarily, in common popular use, as a compendious and correct enough description of what God did in regard to sinful actions, especially as there was no other ready and compendious way of expressing the scriptural doctrine upon the subject, but what was liable to misconstruction, and might be fitted to produce erroneous impressions. But they held the Scripture evidence for something more than permission, even in this positive sense, to be conclusive, even while they felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying in distinct and definite statements, what this was. And, accordingly, Calvin, after expressing his concurrence with the canon of the Council of Trent in rejecting the position that the treachery of Judas was as much the work of God as the calling of Paul, proceeds immediately to say: "*Sed permissive tantum agere Deum in malis, cui persuadeant, nisi qui totam Scripturse doctrinam ignorat?*" And after referring to some scriptural statements, and giving some quotations from Augustine, he adds: "*Nihil enim hie audimus quod non iisdem prope verbis, Scriptura docet. Nam et inclinandi et vertendi, obdurandi, et agendi verba illic exprimuntur.*" The Reformers, Calvin, in explaining their views upon this subject, were accustomed to say, that the wicked actions of men, —that is, deeds done by them in disobedience to God's prohibition, and justly exposing them to the punishment which God had denounced against all transgressors, —were yet not done "*Deo inscio,*" or "*ignorante,*" without God's knowledge; or "*Deo invito,*" against His will, or without His consent, —that is, without His having, in some sense, willed that they should take place; or "*Deo otiose spectante,*"— that is, while He looked on simply as an inactive spectator, who took no part, in any sense, in bringing them about. And if it was true negatively, that wicked actions were not performed "*Deo inscio, invito, vel otiose spectante*" (and to

question this, was plainly to deny that infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, are actually exercised at all times in the government of the world, in the, administration of providence), it followed that His agency in regard to them was something more than a mere permission, a mere resolution adopted and acted upon to abstain from interfering to prevent them.

But without enlarging on the explanation of subtleties in which men have often found no end in wandering mazes lost, I would proceed at once to state in what way this very difficult and perplexing subject is explained in our Confession of Faith, in entire - accordance with the doctrine of the Reformers, and in opposition to the "mere permission" of the Council of Trent. It is in this way: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." In this statement there is apparent at once the deep conviction of the necessity, in order to bringing out fully the whole substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject, to ascribe to God something more than a bare permission in regard to men's sinful actions, combined with the felt difficulty of stating, with anything like fulness, and at the same time explicitness, what this something more is; while another observation I have already made, in regard to the course pursued by the Reformers in discussing this subject, is also illustrated by the fact, that, in the next chapter of the Confession, the word "permitted" is used alone as descriptive of what God did in regard to the fall of Adam, from the felt difficulty, apparently, of using any other word without needing to introduce along with it explanations and qualifications, in order to guard against error and misconstruction.

But, perhaps, it may be asked, why maintain anything doctrinally beyond permission, when it seems so difficult practically to explain and develop it with precision and safety? Now, the answer to this question is just, that

which was given by Calvin, — namely, that no man can believe in a mere permission, unless he be entirely ignorant of the whole doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the providence or agency of God with respect to the sinful actions of His creatures; and that, therefore, any one who professes to give the sum and substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, must deny the doctrine of a mere permission, and assert that God, in His providence, does something more, in regard to men's sinful actions, than merely resolving to abstain from interfering to prevent what He has certainly prohibited. The evidence to this effect may be said to pervade the word of God. It is found not only in general statements as to the character and results of the providence which God is constantly exercising over all His creatures and all their actions, and more especially His agency and operations in connection with the motives and conduct of wicked men, but also in the views unfolded to us there with respect to the connection that subsists in fact between the sinful actions which men perform, and the actual accomplishment of some of God's purposes or designs of justice or of mercy; and perhaps still more directly in statements which explicitly ascribe to God a very direct connection with certain specific wicked actions, as well as to those who performed them. We may select an instance from this last department of scriptural evidence, and illustrate it by an observation or two, merely to indicate the nature of the proof.

It is said, (e The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." With respect to the same transaction, it is said in First Book of Chronicles, "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Now, this numbering of Israel was undoubtedly a sinful action of David's, done by him freely and spontaneously, without any compulsion, in the cherished indulgence of a sinful state of mind or motive. It stood, in this respect, on the same footing as any other sin which David himself, or any other man, ever committed; and it would be quite just to apply to it the Apostle James's description of the generation of sin, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust" (or evil desire), "and enticed. Then, when lust" (or evil desire) "hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." And yet this action of David, in which he was doing what God had forbidden, — transgressing God's law, and incurring guilt and the

divine displeasure, —is expressly ascribed in Scripture also to God, and to Satan, in terms which, in all fair construction, imply that Satan had some share, exerted some efficiency, in bringing it about, and that God also contributed in some sense, and to some extent, to bring it about, —intending to employ it as a means of executing His just and righteous purpose or design of punishing Israel for their sins. It seems scarcely possible for any man to receive as true the statement of Scripture upon this point, without being constrained to admit that there was, and must have been, a sense in which God willed that David should number the people, and accordingly did something, or exerted some efficiency, in order to bring about this result. If, then, we would fully bring out the substance of what Scripture teaches us upon this point, we must say that God, Satan, and David, were all in some way or other concerned or combined in the production of this sinful action. We are bound, indeed, to believe, —for so the word of God teaches, — that the sinfulness of the action proceeded only from the creature, that is, from Satan and David, — Satan incurring guilt by what he did in the matter in provoking David to number Israel, but not thereby diminishing in the least David's guilt in yielding to the temptation, —and that God was not the author or approver of what was sinful in the action; but we are also bound to believe, if we submit implicitly, as we ought to do, to the fair impression of what Scripture says, that in regard to the action itself, which was sinful as produced or performed by Satan and David, God did more than merely permit it, or abstain, even in a positive sense, from interfering to prevent it, and that in some sense, and in some manner, He did do something in the way of its being brought about. From the difficulty, indeed, of conceiving and explaining how God could have moved David to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah," while yet the sinfulness of the action was David's only, not God's, we might be tempted to make a violent effort to explain away the statement, were there nothing else in Scripture to lead us to ascribe to God anything more in regard to men's sinful actions than a mere permission. But the inference to which these passages so plainly point is in entire accord with what Scripture teaches in many places; and, indeed, with all it teaches us generally in regard to God's providence and men's sins.

There are not, indeed, many instances in Scripture in which, with respect

to specific acts of sin, we have an explicit ascription of some share in bringing them about to God, to Satan, and to man. But we have other instances of a precisely similar kind, as in the robberies committed upon Job's property, and in that which was at once the most important event that ever took place, and the greatest crime that ever was committed, — the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. In these cases, the agency of God, the agency of Satan, and the agency of wicked men, are distinctly recognised and asserted; and it is, therefore, our duty to acknowledge, as a general truth, that all these parties were concerned in them, and to beware of excluding the agency of any of them, or perverting its true character, because we cannot fully conceive or explain how these parties could, in conformity with the general representations given us in Scripture of their respective characters and principles of procedure, concur in that arrangement by which the actions were brought about. It is our part to receive each portion of the information which the Scripture gives us concerning the origin of men's sinful actions, and to allow each truth regarding it to exert its own distinct and appropriate influence upon our minds, undisturbed by other truths, kept also in their proper place, and applied according to their true import and real bearing; not allowing the scriptural truth concerning God's agency and Satan's agency, with respect to sinful actions, to diminish in the least our sense of man's responsibility and guilt, and not allowing the conviction which Scripture most fully warrants, —that God's agency is connected in some way with men's sins, —to lead us to doubt, or to fail in realizing, His immaculate holiness and irreconcilable hatred to all sin, —but employing it only to deepen our impressions of His "almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness."

We cannot dwell longer upon the scriptural proof in support of the doctrine of the Reformers and of our Confession of Faith, and in opposition to that of the Council of Trent, upon this subject. As to any further attempts to explain the kind and degree of God's agency in connection with men's sinful actions, and to unfold precisely what it is that He does in contributing, in some way and in some sense, to bring them about, the Reformers usually confined themselves to the expressions which Scripture itself employs, being aware that upon a subject so difficult and mysterious it became them to abstain from merely

human speculations, and to take care to assert nothing about God's hidden and unseen agency but what He Himself had clearly warranted. But while they did not, in general, profess directly to explain, except in scriptural language, the way and manner in which God acted in respect to men's sinful actions, they were sometimes tempted to engage in very intricate discussions upon this subject, in answering the allegation of their opponents, that, by ascribing to God anything more than a mere permission in regard to men's sins, they made Him the author of sin; discussions which too often resulted in some attempt to explain more fully and minutely than Scripture affords us materials for doing, what it was that God really did in connection with men's sinful actions, and what were the principles by which His procedure in this matter was regulated, and might be accounted for.

It would have been much better if the defenders of the truth upon this subject had, after bringing out the meaning and import of Scripture, confined themselves simply to the object of proving, — what was all that, in strict argument, they were under any obligation to establish, —namely, that their opponents had not produced any solid proof, that the doctrine apparently taught in Scripture, concerning God's agency in regard to sinful actions extending to something beyond mere permission, warranted the conclusion that He was thus made the author of sin. It is easy enough to prove, by general considerations drawn from the nature of the subject, —its mysterious and incomprehensible character, its elevation above the reach of our faculties, its intimate connection with right conceptions of the operations of the divine mind, —that this conclusion cannot be established. And with the proof of this, which is all that the conditions of the argument require them to prove, men ought to be satisfied; as this is all that is needful to enable them to fall back again upon the simple belief of what the word of God so plainly teaches as a reality, while it affords us scarcely any materials for explaining or developing it. The objections and cavils of the enemies of truth should be disposed of in some way; but the conduct of the apostle, when he contented himself with disposing of an objection which was in substance and principle the same as this, merely by saying, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" combines with the

unsatisfactory character of many of the statements of those who have attempted directly to answer such objections in much greater detail, in impressing upon us the necessity of guarding against being led by the objections of adversaries into the minute discussion of matters which he beyond the reach of our faculties, —with respect to which Scripture gives us little or no information, —and in the investigation of which, therefore, we can have no very firm ground to stand upon. Let us believe firmly, — because Scripture and reason concur in assuring us, — that every sinful action is a transgression of God's law, justly involving him that performs it in guilt and liability to punishment; and that its sinfulness proceeds wholly from the creature, and not from God, who cannot be the author or approver of sin; but let us also believe, —because Scripture and reason likewise concur in teaching us this, —that God's providence extends to and comprehends the sins of men, and is concerned in them by something more than a mere permission, and especially in directing and overruling them for accomplishing His own purposes of justice or of mercy; and let us become the less concerned about our inability to explain fully how it is that these doctrines can be shown to harmonize with each other, by remembering, —what is very manifest, —that the one grand difficulty into which all the difficulties attending our speculations upon religious subjects ultimately run up or resolve themselves, and which attaches to every system, except atheism, is just to explain how it is that God and man, in consistency with their respective attributes, capacities, and circumstances, do, in fact, concur, combine or co-operate in producing men's actions, and in determining men's fate.

XXI. Justification

We now proceed to the consideration of the important subject of Justification; and it will be proper to enter somewhat more fully into the investigation of this topic than those which we have hitherto examined. This was the great fundamental distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation, and was regarded by all the Reformers as of primary and paramount importance. The leading charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was, that she had corrupted and perverted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject in a way that was dangerous to the souls of men; and it was mainly by the exposition, enforcement, and application of the true doctrine of God's word in regard to it, that they assailed and overturned the leading doctrines and practices of the Papal system. There is no subject which possesses more of intrinsic importance than attaches to this one, and there is none with respect to which the Reformers were more thoroughly harmonious in their sentiments. All who believe that the truth on this subject had been greatly corrupted in the Church of Rome, and that the doctrine taught by the Reformers respecting it was scriptural and true, must necessarily regard the restoration of sound doctrine upon this point as the most important service which the Reformers were made instrumental by God in rendering to the church.

It is above all things important, that men, if they have broken the law of God, and become liable to the punishment which the law denounces against transgression, —and that this is, indeed, the state of men by nature is of course now assumed, —should know whether there be any way in which they may obtain the pardon and deliverance they need; and if so, what that way is. And it is the doctrine of justification as taught in Scripture which alone affords a satisfactory answer to the question. The subject thus bears most directly and immediately upon men's relation to God and their everlasting destiny, and is fraught with unspeakable practical importance to every human being. It is assumed now that the condition of men by nature is such in point of fact, —that some change or changes must be effected regarding them in order to their escaping

fearful evil and enjoying permanent happiness; and it is in this way that the doctrine of justification is connected with that of original sin, as the nature and constituent elements of the disease must determine the nature and qualities of the remedy that may be fitted to cure or remove it.

There is, indeed, as must be evident even upon the most cursory survey of what Scripture teaches concerning the recovery and salvation of lost men, a great subject or class of subjects, that is intermediate between the general state of mankind as fallen and lost, and the deliverance and restoration of men individually. And this is the work of Christ as mediator, and the general place or function assigned to the Holy Spirit in the salvation of sinners. The Scripture represents the whole human race as involved by the fall in a state of sin and misery. It represents God as looking with compassion and love upon the lost race of man, and as devising a method of effecting and securing their salvation. It describes this divine method of saving sinners as founded on, or rather as consisting substantially in, this— that God sent His Son into the world to assume human nature, and to suffer and die in order to procure or purchase for them salvation, and everything which salvation might involve or require. And hence, in turning our attention from men's actual condition of sin and misery to the remedy which has been provided, the first great subject which naturally presents itself to our contemplation and study is the person and the work of the Mediator, or the investigation of these three questions, —viz., first, "Who and what was this Saviour of sinners whom the Scriptures set before us? secondly, What is it that he has done in order to save men from ruin, and to restore them to happiness? and, thirdly, In what way is it that His work, or what he did and suffered, bears upon the accomplishment of the great object which it was designed to effect? Now, the first two of these subjects, —i.e., the person and the work of Christ, or His divinity and atonement, —did not form subjects of controversial discussion between the Reformers and the Romanists. The Church of Rome has always held the proper divinity and the vicarious atonement of Christ; and though these great doctrines have been so corrupted and perverted by her as to be in a great measure practically neutralized, and though it is very important to point out this, yet these subjects cannot be said to constitute a point of the proper controversy between the Church of Rome and the Protestants, and they

were not in point of fact discussed between the Romanists and the Reformers. In all the controversies between them, the divinity and the vicarious atonement of Christ were assumed as topics in which there was no material difference of opinion in formal profession, —doctrines which each party was entitled to take for granted in arguing with the other. The subject, indeed, of the divinity and atonement of our Saviour did not occupy much of the attention of any portion of the church, as subjects of controversial discussion, during the sixteenth century; for the works of Socinus, who first gave to anti-Trinitarian views, and to the denial of a vicarious atonement, a plausible and imposing aspect, did not excite much attention till about the end of this century, and the controversies which they occasioned took place chiefly in the succeeding one. I propose, therefore, following the chronological order, to postpone for the present any account of the discussions which have taken place concerning the divinity and atonement of Christ.

The sum and substance of the great charge which the Reformers adduced against the Church of Rome was, that while she proclaimed to men with a considerable measure of accuracy who Christ was, and what it was that he had done for the salvation of sinners, she yet perverted the gospel of the grace of God, and endangered the salvation of men's souls, by setting before them erroneous and unscriptural views of the grounds on which, and the process through which, the blessings that Christ had procured for mankind at large were actually bestowed upon men individually, and of the way and manner in which men individually became possessed of them, and attained ultimately to the full and permanent enjoyment of them. This was the subject that may be said to have been discussed between the Reformers and the Romanists under the head of justification, and I need say nothing more to show its paramount practical importance. There can be no difference of opinion as to the importance of the general subject which has been indicated: but there have been occasionally discussions in more modern times upon the question whether the errors of the Church of Rome upon this subject are so important and dangerous as they are often represented to be, and whether they were of sufficient magnitude to warrant the views entertained by the Reformers upon this subject, and the course of practical procedure which they based upon these views. When more lax

and unsound views of doctrine began to prevail in the Protestant churches, some of their divines lost their sense of the magnitude of the Romish errors upon the subject of justification, and began to make admissions, that the differences between them and the Romanists upon this point were not so vital as the Reformers had supposed them to be; and the Romanists, ever on the watch to take advantage of anything that seems fitted to promote the interests of their church, were not slow to avail themselves of these concessions.

There are two different and opposite lines of policy which Romish controversialists have pursued upon this subject, according as seemed to be most expedient for their interests at the time. Sometimes they have represented the doctrine of the Reformers upon the subject of justification as something hideous and monstrous, —as overturning the foundations of all morality. and fitted only to produce universal wickedness and profligacy; and at other times they have affected a willingness to listen to the grounds on which Protestants defend themselves from this charge, to admit that these grounds are not altogether destitute of weight, and that, consequently, there is not so great a difference between their doctrine in substance and that of the Church of Rome. They then enlarge upon the important influence which the alleged errors of the Church of Rome on the subject of justification had in producing the Reformation, —quote some of the passages which show the paramount importance which the first Reformers attached to this subject, —and proceed to draw the inference that the Reformation was founded upon misrepresentation and calumny, since it appears, and has been admitted even by learned Protestants, that the errors of the Church of Rome, even if they were to admit for the sake of argument that she had erred, are not nearly so important as the Reformers had represented them to be.

It is only to this second line of policy, which represents the difference on the subject of justification as comparatively insignificant, and makes use, for this purpose, of some concessions of Protestant writers, that we mean at present to advert. In following out this line of policy, Popish controversialists usually employ an artifice which I had formerly occasion to expose, —viz., taking the statements of the Reformers made in the

earlier period of their labours, and directed against the general strain of the public teaching, oral and written, that then generally obtained in the Church of Rome, and comparing them with the cunning and cautious decrees of the Council of Trent upon the subject of justification. We are willing to confine our charge against the Church of Rome, as such, at least so far as the sixteenth century is concerned, to what we can prove to be sanctioned by the Council of Trent; and, indeed, there was not in existence, at the commencement of the Reformation, anything that could be said to be a formal deliverance upon the subject of justification to which the Church of Rome could be proved to be officially committed. But we must expose the injustice done to the Reformers, when their statements, expressly and avowedly directed against the teaching then generally prevalent in the Church of Rome, are represented, as they often are, by modern Popish controversialists, —and Moehler, in his *Symbolism*, with all his pretensions to candour and fairness, lavs himself open to this charge, —as directed against the decrees of the Council of Trent, which were prepared with much care and caution after the subject had been fully discussed, and in the preparation of which no small skill and ingenuity were employed to evade the force of the arguments of the Reformers, and to conceal or gloss over what they had most successfully exposed. I had occasion formerly to quote or refer to an extract from Melancthon, written in 1536, when he was invited by Francis I. into France, in which he states the great improvement which had taken place, and the much nearer approach which had been exhibited to Protestant principles, in the statements then commonly made by Romanists upon justification and other subjects, as compared with those which prevailed when Luther began his work; and though the application which Melancthon made of this consideration was far from being creditable to his firmness or his sagacity, yet it was undoubtedly true, to a large extent, as a statement of a fact.

I may mention one striking and important instance in which the Council of Trent may be said to have modified and softened the erroneous doctrine which was previously prevalent in the Church of Rome upon this subject. It was the general doctrine of the schoolmen, —it was universally taught in the Church of Rome at the commencement of the Reformation, —it was explicitly maintained by most of the Popish controversialists

who, previously to the Council of Trent, came forward to oppose the Reformers, that men in their natural state, before they were justified and regenerated, could, and must, do certain good things by which they merited or deserved the grace of forgiveness and regeneration, —not indeed with the merit of condignity, —for that true and proper merit, in the strictest sense, was reserved for the good deeds of men already justified, —but with what was called the merit of congruity, —a distinction too subtle to be generally and popularly apprehended. Now, of this merit of congruity, —so prominent and important a feature of the Romish theology before and at the commencement of the Reformation, and so strenuously assailed by Luther, —the Council of Trent has taken no direct notice whatever. The substance, indeed, of the error may be said to be virtually retained in the decisions of the council upon the subject of what it calls dispositives or preparatives for justification: but the error cannot be said to be very clearly or directly sanctioned: and the council has made a general declaration, that “none of those things which precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification itself,” — a declaration, however, it should be observed, which has not prevented most subsequent Romish writers from reviving the old doctrine of *meritum de congruo* before justification. If it be fair on the one hand that the Church of Rome, as such, should be judged by the decisions of the Council of Trent, —at least until it be shown that some other decision has been given by which the church, as such, was bound, as by the bull *Unigenitus*, —it is equally fair that the Reformers, who wrote before the council, should be judged, as to the correctness of their representations, by the doctrine which generally obtained in the Church of Rome at the time when those representations were made. But while this consideration should be remembered, in order that we may do justice to the informers, and guard against the influence of an artifice which Popish controversialists in modern times often employ in order to excite a prejudice against them, yet it is admitted that the question as to what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject of justification must be determined chiefly by an examination of the decisions of the Council of Trent; and we hope to be able to show, that notwithstanding all the caution and skill employed in framing its decrees, they contain a large amount of anti-scriptural error, and that they misrepresent and pervert the method of salvation in a way which, when viewed in connection with

the natural tendencies of men, is fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon the salvation of men's souls. Turretine, in asserting the importance of the differences between Protestants and the Church of Rome on the subject of justification, and adverting also to the attempts which have been made by some Protestant writers to represent these differences as unimportant, has the following statement: "Licet vero nonnulli ex Pontificiis cordatioribus vi veritatis victi sanius caeteris de hoc articulo senserint et locuti sint. Nec desint etiam ex Nostris, qui studio minuendarum Controversiarum ducti, censcant circa illud non tantam esse dissidii materiam, et non paueas hic esse logomachias. Certum tamen est non verbales, sed reales multas, et magni momenti controversias nobis cum Pontificiis adhuc intercedere in hoc argumento, ut ex sequentibus fiet manifestum."

Perhaps the fullest and most elaborate attempt made by any Protestant writer of eminence to show that the difference between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justification is not of very great importance, is to be found in the "Theses Theological' of Le Blanc, often called the Theses Sedanenses, because their author was Professor of Theology in the French Protestant University of Sedan, at a period, however, shortly before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when the French Protestant Church in general had very considerably declined from the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Reformation, though it still contained some very able opponents of Popery, men qualified to contend with Bossuet, Arnauld, and Nicole. Le Blanc's Theses is a work of much ingenuity and erudition; and it contains much matter that is fitted to be useful in the history of theology, though it should be read with much caution, as it exhibits a strong tendency on the part of its author to explain away, and to make light of, differences in doctrinal matters, which are of no small importance in the scheme of divine truth. The course of argument adopted by Le Blanc, in order to prove that there is no very material difference between Protestants and Romanics on this point, is not of a very fair or satisfactory kind, and gives us much more the impression of a man who had laid it down as a sort of task to himself just to exert all his ingenuity, and to employ all his erudition, in explaining away the apparent differences among contending parties, than of one who was candidly and impartially seeking after the truth. It consists not so much

in comparing the declarations of the Reformed confessions with those of the Council of Trent, as in collecting together all the best or most Protestant passages he could find in any Popish authors, and all the worst or most Popish passages he could find in any Protestant authors; and then in showing that there was really no very great difference between them. The unfairness of this mode of argument is too obvious to need to be dwelt upon. It is easy to show that there have been Popish writers whose views upon religious subjects were sounder than those of their church, and Protestant writers whose views were less sound than those of the Reformers and their genuine followers. But the only important questions are: What is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject? in what respects does it differ from that taught by the Reformers, and embodied in the confessions of Protestant churches? in what way does the word of God decide upon these differences? what is their real value or importance? and how does it bear upon the general scheme of Christian truth, and upon the spiritual welfare of men?"

The more general considerations on which Le Blanc, and Grotius, and other men who have laboured to show that there is no very material difference between Protestants and the Church of Rome on the subject of justification, have mainly proceeded, are these, —that the Church of Rome ascribes the justification of sinners to the grace of God and to the merits of Christ, and denies merit to men themselves in the matter. Now, it is true that the Council of Trent has made general statements to this effect; but, notwithstanding all this, it is quite possible to show that their general declarations upon these points are virtually contradicted or neutralized, —practically at least, and sometimes even theoretically, —by their more specific statements upon some of the topics involved in the detailed exposition of the subject; and that thus it can be proved, that they do not really ascribe the justification of sinners wholly to the grace of God and to the work of Christ, —that they do not wholly exclude human merit, but ascribe to men themselves, and to their own powers, a real share in the work of their own salvation; and that while this can be proved to be true of their doctrine as it stands theoretically, their scheme, as a whole, is also, moreover, so constructed as to be fitted, when viewed in connection with the natural tendencies of the human heart, to foster presumption and self-confidence, to throw obstacles in the way of men's

submitting themselves to the divine method of justification, and to frustrate the great end which the gospel scheme of salvation was, in all its parts, expressly designed and intended to accomplish, —viz., that, as our Confession of Faith says, “both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.”

Sec. I. Popish and Protestant Views

In dealing with the subject of justification, we must, first of all, attempt to form a clear and correct apprehension of what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this topic, as opposed to that which the Reformers deduct from the word of God. Justification, it is admitted on both sides, is descriptive generally of the change or changes, in whole or in part, that must take place in respect of men individually, in order to their escaping from the evils of their natural condition, and attaining to happiness and heaven. The nature of the change or changes necessary must depend upon the actual features of men's natural condition, the evils from which they must be delivered. And the way and manner in which they are brought about must be somewhat regulated by the natural powers or capacities of men themselves to procure or effect them, or to assist in procuring or effecting them. It is admitted, also, that the two leading features of men's natural condition, which render salvation necessary, and must in some measure determine its character, are guilt and depravity, —or liability to punishment because of transgression of God's law, and a tendency or inclination, more or less powerful and pervading, to violate its requirements and prohibitions. The corresponding changes, called graces, because admitted to be in some sense God's gifts, and called the blessings or benefits of redemption, because admitted to be in some sense procured for men by what Christ has done for them, are an alteration upon men's state or condition in relation to God and His law, whereby their guilt is cancelled, their sins are pardoned, and they are brought into a state of acceptance and favour; and a change upon their actual moral character, whereby the tendency to sin is mortified and subdued, and a state of heart and motive more accordant with what God's law requires is produced. Thus far, and when these general terms are employed, there is no material difference of opinion; though the second change, —that upon men's moral character, —is usually called by

Protestants the regeneration or renovation of man's moral nature, and by Papists the infusion of righteousness or justice, —righteousness or justice denoting, in their sense of it, actual conformity to what God requires, either in point of internal character (*justitia habitualis*) or of outward actions (*justitia actualis*).

It is admitted, further, that these changes upon men's state and character, necessary to their salvation and ultimate happiness, are to be traced, in general, to the grace or kindness of God, who confers or produces them, and to the work of Christ, who in some way has procured or purchased them for men. And the sum and substance of all that the Reformers demanded, as necessary to the pure preaching of the gospel, — the scriptural exposition of the leading principles of the method of salvation, —was, that the conceded ascription of these changes to the grace of God and the work of Christ, should be literally and honestly maintained, according to the proper import of the words, and should be fully carried out, in the more detailed exposition of the subject, without any other principles or elements being introduced into it which might virtually and practically, if not formally and theoretically, involve a denial or modification of them: while the great charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was, that, in their fuller and more minute exposition of the way and manner in which these changes were effected upon men individually, they did introduce principles or elements which, more or less directly, deprived the grace of God and the work of Christ of the place and influence which the sacred Scriptures assigned to them.

As the change upon men's state and condition from guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance is, substantially, a change in the aspect in which God regards them, or rather in the way in which He resolves thenceforth to deal with them, and to treat them, it must, from the nature of the case, be an act of God, and it must be wholly God's act, —an act in producing or effecting which men themselves cannot be directly parties; and the only way in which they can in any measure contribute to bring it about, is by their meriting it, or doing something to deserve it, at God's hand, and thereby inducing Him to effect the change or to perform the act. It was as precluding the possibility of this, that the Reformers attached so much importance to the doctrine which we

formerly had occasion to explain and illustrate, —viz., that all the actions of men previous to regeneration are only and wholly sinful; and it was, of course, in order to leave room for men in some sense meriting gifts from God, or deserving for themselves the blessings which Christ procured for mankind, that the Council of Trent anathematized it.

The other great change is an actual effect wrought upon men themselves, of which they are directly the subjects, and in producing or effecting which there is nothing, in the nature of the case, though there may be in the actual character and capacities of men, to prevent them from taking a part. The Protestant doctrine of men's natural inability to will anything spiritually good, which has been illustrated in connection with the doctrine of original sin, of course precludes them from doing anything that can really improve their moral character in God's sight, until this inability be taken away by an external and superior power; while the doctrine of the Council of Trent about man's freedom or power to will and do good remaining to some extent notwithstanding the fall, which forms part of their decree on the subject of justification, paves the way, and was no doubt so intended, for ascribing to men themselves some real efficiency in the renovation of their moral natures.

From the view taken by the Church of Rome of the nature and import of justification, the whole subject of the way and manner in which both these changes are effected, in or upon men individually, was often discussed in the sixteenth century under this one head; though one of the first objects to which the Reformers usually addressed themselves in discussing it, was to ascertain and to bring out what, according to Scripture usage, justification really is, and what it comprehends. The decree of the fathers of Trent upon this important subject (session vi.), comprehended in sixteen chapters and thirty-three canons, is characterized by vagueness and verbiage, confusion, obscurity, and unfairness. It is not very easy on several points to make out clearly and distinctly what were the precise doctrines which they wished to maintain and condemn. Some months were spent by the Council in consultations and intrigues about the formation of their decree upon this subject. And yet, notwithstanding all their pains, —perhaps we should rather say, because of them, —they have not brought out a very distinct and

intelligible view of what they meant to teach upon some of its departments.

The vagueness, obscurity, and confusion of the decree of the Council of Trent upon this subject, contrast strikingly with the clearness and simplicity that obtain in the writings of the Reformers and the confessions of the Reformed churches regarding it. There were not wanting two or three rash and incautious expressions of Luther's upon this as upon other subjects, of which, by a policy I formerly had occasion to expose, the Council did not scruple to take an unfair advantage, by introducing some of them into their canons, in a way fitted to excite an unwarrantable prejudice against the doctrine of the Reformers. And it is true that Luther and Melancthon, in some of their earlier works, did seem to confine their statements, when treating of this subject, somewhat too exclusively to the act of faith by which men are justified, without giving sufficient prominence to the object of faith, or that which faith apprehends or lays hold of, and which is the ground or basis of God's act in justifying, —viz., the righteousness of Christ, But though their views upon this subject became more clear and enlarged, yet they held in substance from the beginning, and brought out at length, and long before the Council of Trent, most fully and clearly the great doctrine of the Reformation, —viz., that justification in Scripture is properly descriptive only of a change upon men's legal state and condition, and not on their moral character, though a radical change of character invariably accompanies it; that it is a change from a state of guilt and condemnation to a state of forgiveness and acceptance; and that sinners are justified, or become the objects of this change, solely by a gratuitous act of God, but founded only upon the righteousness of Christ (not on any righteousness of their own), —a righteousness imputed to them, and thus made theirs, not on account of anything they do or can do to merit or procure it, but through the instrumentality of faith alone, by which they apprehend or lay hold of what has been provided for them, and is freely offered to them.

Let us now attempt to bring out plainly and distinctly the doctrine which the Council of Trent laid down in opposition to these scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. The first important question is what justification is; or

what the word justification means; and upon this point it must be admitted that the doctrine of the Council of Trent is sufficiently explicit. It defines justification to be “*translatio ab eo statu, in quo homo nascitur filius priini Adae, in statum gratiae et adoptionis filiorum Dei per secundum Adam Jesum Christum, salvatorem nostrum,*” — words which, in their fair and natural import, may be held to include under justification the whole of the change that is needful to be effected in men in order to their salvation, as comprehending their deliverance both from guilt and depravity. But that this is the meaning which they attached to the word justification, —that they regarded all this as comprehended under it, —is put beyond all doubt, by what they say in the seventh chapter, where they expressly define justification to be, “*non sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiae et donorum.*” Justification, then, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, includes or comprehends not only the remission of sin, or deliverance from guilt, but also the sanctification or renovation of man’s moral nature, or deliverance from depravity. In short, they comprehend under the one name or head of justification, what Protestants— following, as they believe, the guidance of Scripture— have always divided into the two heads of justification and regeneration, or justification and sanctification, when the word sanctification is used in its widest sense, as descriptive of the whole process, originating in regeneration, by which depraved men are restored to a conformity to God’s moral image. Now, the discussion upon this point turns wholly upon this question, What is the sense in which the word justification and its cognates are used in Scripture? And this is manifestly a question of fundamental importance, in the investigation of this whole subject, inasmuch as, from the nature of the case, its decision must exert a most important influence upon the whole of men’s views regarding it. At present, however, I confine myself to a mere statement of opinions without entering into any examination of their truth, as I think it better, in the first instance, to bring out fully at once what the whole doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, as contrasted with that of the Reformers, really is.

It may be proper, however, before leaving this topic, to advert to a misrepresentation that has been often given of the views of the

Reformers, and especially of Calvin, upon this particular point. When Protestant divines began, in the seventeenth century, to corrupt the scriptural doctrine of justification, and to deviate from the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Reformation, they thought it of importance to show that justification meant merely the remission or forgiveness of sin, or guilt, to the exclusion of, or without comprehending, what is usually called the acceptance of men's persons, or their positive admission into God's favour.— or their receiving from God, not only the pardon of their sins, or immunity from punishment, but also a right or title to heaven and eternal life. And in support of this view, these men appealed to the authority of the Reformers, and especially of Calvin. Now it is quite true, that Calvin has asserted again and again that justification comprehends only, or consists in, the remission or forgiveness of sin or guilt. But I have no doubt that a careful and deliberate examination of all that Calvin has written upon this point, will fully establish these two positions, —first, that when Calvin asserted that justification consisted only in the remission of sin, he meant this simply as a denial of the Popish doctrine, that it is not only the remission of sin, but also the sanctification or renovation of the inner man, —this being the main and, indeed, the only error upon the point which he was called upon formally to oppose; and, secondly, that Calvin has at least as frequently and as explicitly described justification as comprehending, not only remission of sin in the strict and literal sense, but also positive acceptance or admission into the enjoyment of God's favour, —“*gratuita Dei acceptio*,” as he often calls it, —including the whole of the change effected upon men's state or legal condition in God's sight, as distinguished from the change effected upon their character. This is one of the numerous instances, constantly occurring, that illustrate how unfair it is to adduce the authority of eminent writers on disputed questions which had never really been presented to them, —which they had never entertained or decided; and how necessary it often is, in order to forming a correct estimate of some particular statements of an author, to examine with care and deliberation all that he has written upon the subject to which they refer, and also to be intelligently acquainted with the way and manner in which the whole subject was discussed at the time on both sides.

When the Council of Trent defined regeneration to be a component part

or a constituent element of Justification, along with pardon or forgiveness, they were probably induced to do so partly because they could appeal to some of the fathers, and even to Augustine, in support of this use of the word, but also because their real object or intention was to make this sanctification, or infused or inherent righteousness, as Romanists commonly call it, the cause or ground of the forgiveness of sin. A change of legal state, and a change of moral character, are things so manifestly different in their own nature, that they could scarcely avoid attempting some separate explanation of them, and of the way in which they were conferred or effected, even though they might regard them as both comprehended under the name justification. The question. Upon what ground or consideration does God forgive men's sins I or, in other words. To what is it that He has regard, when, with respect to any individual. He passes an act of forgiveness? — this question, viewed by itself as a distinct independent topic, is obviously one which requires and demands an answer, whether the answer to it may exhaust the exposition of the subject of justification with reference to its cause or not. The Reformers, after proving from the word of God that justification, according to Scripture usage, described only a change of state, and not a change of character, strenuously demanded that this question, as to the cause or ground of forgiveness, or as to what it was to which God had respect, when, in the case of any individual, He cancelled his guilt, and admitted him into the enjoyment of His favour and friendship, should be distinctly and explicitly answered; and, accordingly, Protestant divines in general, when they are discussing the subject of justification, understood in the limited scriptural sense of the word, and explaining the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, make it their object to extract from the decree of the Council of Trent any materials that bear directly upon this point.

The Council, indeed, have not presented this subject nakedly and distinctly, as in fairness they ought to have done, but have made use of their general definition of justification, as comprehending also regeneration, for involving the whole subject in a considerable measure of obscurity. What may be fairly deduced from their statements as to the cause or ground of forgiveness or pardon, viewed as a distinct topic by itself, is this: After defining justification to be not only the remission of

sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man, they proceed to explain the causes of this justification; and in doing so, they make a very liberal use of scholastic phrases and distinctions. The final cause, they say, is the glory of God and Christ, and eternal life; the efficient cause is God (Deus misericors) exercising; compassion; the meritorious cause is .Jesus Christ, who by His sufferings and death merited justification for us, and satisfied the leather in our room; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism; and “the only formal cause is the righteousness (justitia) of God, not that by which He Himself is righteous, but that by which he makes us righteous, by which we, receiving it from Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only reckoned or reputed, but are called and are truly righteous.” In this last statement of the Council about the formal cause of justification being only an actual righteousness which God gives us or infuses into us, and which thereby comes to be inherent in us, it would seem as if they had tacitly intended to describe, as they ought to have done openly and plainly, rather the formal cause or ground of forgiveness, or of the change of state, than of justification in their own wide sense of it; for it is evident that the righteousness, or actual personal conformity of character to God’s law, which He bestows upon men by His Spirit, cannot be, as they assert it is, the formal cause of that sanctification or renovation of the inner man which they make a part of justification, and to which, therefore, everything that is set forth as a cause of justification must be causally applicable. This inherent righteousness, which God bestows upon men or infuses into them, might be said to be identical with the sanctification of the inner man, or, with more strict exactness, might be said to be an effect, or result, or consequence of it, but it cannot in any proper sense be a cause of it.

This personal righteousness bestowed by God might, indeed, be said to be the formal cause of if it were intended to convey the idea that it is the ground or basis on which God’s act in forgiving rests, or that to which he has a regard or respect when He cancels a man’s guilt, and admits him to the enjoyment of His favour. And this is indeed the meaning which accords best with the general strain of the council’s statements. It is not necessarily inconsistent, in every sense, with their making Christ and His work the meritorious cause of justification. In making Christ and His

work the meritorious cause of justification, they, of course, in accordance with their definition of justification, make this the meritorious cause, equally and alike of forgiveness and of renovation, the two parts of which justification consists, or, as Bellarmine expresses it, “*mortem Christi, quae pretium fuit redemptionis, non solum causam fuisse reinissionis peccatorum, sed etiam internam re renovationis.*” And this Protestants regard as in itself a great general scriptural truth, though they believe that it errs both by excess and defect, when it is put forth as a part of the teaching of Scripture on the subject of justification. It errs by excess, in comprehending renovation as well as forgiveness under the head of justification; and it errs by defect, in representing the work or righteousness of Christ as standing in no other or closer relation to forgiveness or acceptance than as being merely its meritorious cause. It is only with this second error that we have at present to do. The council not only makes the work or righteousness of Christ equally and alike the meritorious cause of forgiveness and renovation, but it expressly denies (can. x.) that men are formally justified by Christ’s righteousness, or, in other words, that Christ’s righteousness is the formal cause of our justification; and it expressly asserts, as we have seen, that the only formal cause of our justification is the personal righteousness which God bestows or infuses into men. Bellarmine carefully guards against the inference that, because the eleventh canon condemns the doctrine that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ alone, it admitted by implication that we are justified formally by it at all.

Now, it is plainly impossible to make one consistent and harmonious doctrine out of those various positions, affirmative and negative, which the council has laid down, except upon the assumption that the council really meant to teach that there is no direct and immediate connection between the work or righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of the sins of men individually; and, to represent Christ as merely meriting the communication to men of personal righteousness, and thereby, or through the medium of this personal righteousness which He merited for them, indirectly or remotely meriting the forgiveness of sin. of which this personal righteousness, infused and inherent, as they describe it, is the direct and immediate cause. That the Council of Trent really intended to teach this doctrine, though it is brought out somewhat obscurely, and

though we are obliged to infer it from a careful comparison of its different statements upon the subject, is clearly shown by Chemnitius in his valuable work, “*Examen Concilii Tridentini*,” not only from an examination of the decrees themselves, but from the statements of Andradius, an eminent Popish divine, who was present at the council, and afterwards published a work in defence of its decisions. That this is the doctrine which the council intended to teach, and that it is in consequence the ordinary recognised doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, is confirmed, or rather established, by the consideration that the generality of Romish writers are accustomed, without any doubt or hesitation, to give this as the state of the question between them and Protestants upon this topic, —viz., Whether the cause of our justification be a righteousness inherent in us or not I or this, Whether the cause of our justification be a righteousness infused into and inherent in us; or an external righteousness, —that is, the righteousness of Christ, —imputed to us? And that in discussing this question, so stated, they just labour to produce evidence from Scripture that that to which God has an immediate respect or regard in forgiving any man's sins, and admitting him to the enjoyment of His favour, is, not the righteousness of Christ, but an infused and inherent personal righteousness. As this is a point of some importance in order to a right apprehension of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, it may be proper to produce some evidence of this position.

Bellarmino says, “*Status totius controversiae revocari potest ad hanc simplicem quaestionem, sitne formalis causa absolute justificationis, justitia in nobis inhaerens, an non?*” and then he proceeds to show that the determination of the question in the affirmative at once overturns all the leading errors of the Reformers upon the whole subject of the causes and grounds of justification: “*Omnes refutantur, si probetur justitia inhaerens, qua absolute et simpliciter justificatur;*” and more particularly, “*Si justitia inhaerens est formalis causa absolute justificationis, non igitur requiritur imputatio justitiae Christi.*”

In like manner, Dens, in his “*Theologia Moralis*,” says, “*Probo contra haereticos: quod justificatio formaliter fiat per infusionem gratiae habitualis inhaerentis animae, non vero per justitiam Christi nobis*

extrinsece imputatam." Perrone also, in his "Praelectiones Theologicae," lays down this proposition, as taught by the Council of Trent, and as being, therefore, de fide, or an essential binding article of faith: "Impii formaliter non justificantur vel sola imputatione justitiae Christi vel sola peccatorum remissione; sed justificantur per gratiam et caritatem, quae in cordibus eorum per Spiritum Sanctum diffunditur, atque illis inhaeret." And, in answer to the Scripture statements adduced to prove that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, he admits that we are justified by it as the meritorious cause: but denies that we are justified by it as the formal cause.

The most eminent Protestant divines have been quite willing to admit that these statements of Popish writers give a fair account of the state of the question, and have had no hesitation in undertaking the defence of the positions which this view of the state of the question assigned to them. They have not, indeed, usually attached much weight in this matter to the scholastic distinctions about the different kinds of causes; because, as Turretine says, "in the matter of justification before God, the formal cause cannot be distinguished from the meritorious cause, since the formal cause, in this respect, is nothing else than that, at the sight of which, or from a regard to which, God frees us from condemnation, and accepts us to eternal life." On these grounds Protestant writers have held themselves fully warranted in imputing to the Church of Rome the maintenance of this position, —viz., that that to which God has directly and immediately a respect or regard, in pardoning a man's sins, and admitting him into the enjoyment of His favour, is a personal righteousness infused into that man, and inherent in him; while they have undertaken for themselves to establish from Scripture the negative of this position, and to show that that which is the proper ground or basis of God's act in forgiving or accepting any man, —that to which alone He has a respect or regard when He justifies him, —is the righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

It may be proper to mention, that among orthodox Protestant divines who have agreed harmoniously in the whole substance of the doctrine of justification, there may be noticed some differences in point of phraseology on some of the topics to which we have referred, and

especially with respect to the causes of justification. These differences of phraseology are not of much importance, and do not give much trouble in an investigation of this subject. Calvin sometimes spoke of justification as consisting in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. But, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness in this connection, he seems to have meant nothing more than acceptance or positive admission into the enjoyment of God's favour, —the bestowal of a right or title to eternal life, as distinguished from, and going beyond, mere pardon. In any other sense, —and, indeed, in the strict and proper sense of the expression, —the statement is inaccurate; for the imputation of Christ's righteousness does not stand on the same level or platform as the remission of sins, and of course cannot go to constitute, along with it, one thing designated by the one term, —justification, —as is the case with acceptance or admission into God's favour. The imputation of Christ's righteousness, correctly understood, is to be regarded as in the order of nature preceding both remission and acceptance, and as being the ground or basis, or the meritorious impulsive or formal cause, of them; or that to which God has respect when in any instance he pardons and accepts.

Again, some orthodox divines have thought that the most accurate mode of speaking upon the subject, is to say that the formal cause of our justification is Christ's righteousness imputed; others, that it is the imputation of Christ's righteousness; and a third party, among whom is Dr Owen, in his great work on justification, think that there is no formal cause of justification, according to the strict scholastic meaning of the expression; while all orthodox divines concur in maintaining against the Church of Home, that, to adopt Dr Owen's words, the righteousness of Christ is that whereby, and wherewith, a believing sinner is justified before God; or whereon he is accepted with God, hath his sins pardoned, is received into grace and favour, and hath a title given him unto the heavenly inheritance."

Having thus brought out the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the meaning, nature, and ground of justification, we proceed now to explain her doctrine as to its means and results. And first with respect to the means of justification. The Reformers were unanimous and decided in maintaining the doctrine that faith alone justified: that men

were justified by faith only; and this gave rise to a great deal of discussion between them and the Romanists, —discussions bearing not only upon the import and evidence of this general position, but likewise upon the meaning and nature of justifying faith, and upon the way and manner in which faith justifies, or in which it acts or operates in the matter of justification. By the position that faith alone justifies, the Reformers meant in general that faith was the only thing in a man himself, to the exclusion of all personal righteousness, habitual or actual, of all other Christian graces, and of all good works, to which his forgiveness and acceptance with God are attributed or ascribed in Scripture, —the only thing in himself which is represented in God’s word as exerting anything like causality or efficiency in his obtaining justification. They did not hold that faith was the only thing which invariably accompanies justification, or even that it was the only thing required of men in order to their being justified: for they admitted that repentance was necessary to forgiveness, in accordance with the doctrine of our standards, that “to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us repentance unto life,” as well as “faith in Jesus Christ.” But as repentance is never said in Scripture to justify, as men are never said to be justified by or through repentance, or by or through anything existing in themselves, except faith, the Reformers maintained that faith stood in a certain relation to justification, such as was held by no other quality or feature in men’s character or conduct, —that it justified them, —nothing else about them did: that men were justified by faith, and could not be said to be justified by anything else existing in themselves, whatever might be its nature or its source.

They did not teach that this faith which alone justified was ever alone, or unaccompanied with other graces: but, on the contrary, they maintain that, to adopt the words of our Confession, “it is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.” Calvin, in explaining this matter, says, “*Hoc semper lectoribus testatum esse volo, quod in hac quaestione nominamus solam fidem, non mortuam a nobis fingi, et quae per eam non operatur: sed ipsam statui unicam justificationis causam. Fides ergo sola est quae justificat: fides tamen quae justificat, non est sola.*” It is a curious fact, that while many Romish writers, and others who have corrupted the doctrine of Scripture upon

this subject, have misrepresented the great doctrine of the Reformation, that faith alone justifies, as meaning or implying that nothing but faith is in any sense required of men in order to their being forgiven, or does in fact invariably exist in justified men, Bellarmine accurately and fairly lays it down as one of the leading differences between the Reformers and the Church of Rome on the subject of justifying faith, that the Reformers held, “*fidem solam justificare, nunquam tamen posse esse solam,*” whereas the Romanists taught, in full and exact contrast with this, “*fidem non justificare solam, sed tamen posse esse solam.*”

Again, the Reformers did not ascribe to faith, in the matter of justification, any meritorious or inherent efficacy in producing the result, but regarded it simply as the instrument or hand by which a man apprehended or laid hold of, and appropriated to himself, the righteousness of Christ; and it was only in that very general and, strictly speaking, loose and improper sense, which was consistent with this view of its function and operation in the matter, that they called it, as Calvin does in the extract above quoted from him, the cause of justification. Such were the clear and explicit doctrines of the Reformers on the subject of the means of justification, its relation to faith, and the place and function of faith in the matter.

On all these topics the Council of Trent has spoken with some degree of obscurity and unfairness, insinuating misrepresentations of the real doctrines of the Reformers, and bringing out somewhat vaguely and imperfectly what they meant to teach in opposition to them. In accordance with their principles, they could not admit that there was any sense in which faith alone justified, or in which men were justified by faith only; for, as we have seen, they held that inherent personal righteousness was the only formal cause, and that baptism was the instrumental cause of justification. Accordingly, they denied that a sinner is justified by faith alone in such wisdom as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of justification. Now, this is quite equivalent to denying that in any sense faith alone justifies: for anything which acts or operates in order to obtaining justification, may be said to justify; and as the canon clearly implies that there is always something else conjoined with faith itself in the matter of

justification, different from faith itself and equally with it operating in order to obtain justification, it follows that in no sense does faith alone justify. And, in accordance with this view, they explain the sense in which they understand the apostle's ascription of justification to faith, -in which alone they admit that faith justifies at all, -in this way. "We are therefore, or for this reason, said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification." By this they mean that faith justifies, or is said to justify, because, or inasmuch as it is the chief means of producing that personal righteousness which is the true cause or ground of justification: or, as it is thus rather oddly and awkwardly explained by Bellarmine: "Fidem non tam justificare, quam justificare, ut initium, et radicem primam justificationis: hinc enim sequetur non ipsam solam justificare, sed se eam agere in hoc negotio, quod suum est, ut etiam ceteris virtutibus locum relinquat." The title of the chapter from which this curious extract is taken is, "Fidem justificare, sed non solam idem enim facere timorem, spem, et dilectionem," etc. And he had previously laid down this as one of the leading differences between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justifying faith: "Quod ipsi (the Protestants) solam fidem justificare contendunt, nos ci comites adjungimus in hoc ipso officio justificandi, sive ad justitiam disponedi."

Indeed, the function or place which the Council of Trent assigns to faith in this matter, is rather that of preparing or disposing men to receive justification, than of justifying: and even in this subordinate work of preparing or disposing men to receive justification, they give to faith only a co-ordinate place along with half a dozen of other virtues. For the sake of clearness. I shall explain this important point in the words of Bellarmine, rather than in the vague and obscure verbiage which the Council of Trent has thought proper to employ upon this subject. He says, "Adversarii sola fide justificationem aquiri, sive apprehendi docent: Catholici contra, ac prasertim Synodus ipsa Tridentina (quam omnes Catholici, ut magistram sequuntur) sess. vi., cap. vi. Septem actus enumerat, quibus impii ad justitiam disponuntur, videlicet fidei, timoris, spei, dilectionis, poenitentiae, propositi suscipiendi sacramenti, et propositi novae vitae, atque observationis inandatorum Dei." So that men, before they can obtain the forgiveness of their sins and the

renovation of their natures— the two things in which, according to the Church of Rome, justification consists, —must exercise faith, fear, hope, love, penitence, and have a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and of leading a new and obedient life; and, even after they have done all this, they are not justified, for none of these things justifies, but only prepares or disposes to justification.

This subject, of men disposing or preparing themselves to receive justification, is an important feature in the theology of the Church of Rome, and may require a few words of explanation. First of all, it is needed only in adults: all baptized infants receive in baptism, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, forgiveness and regeneration, without any previous disposition or preparation, —God in baptism first renewing, and then forgiving them, and thus completely removing from them all the effects of original sin, —a doctrine, the falsehood and injurious influence of which has been already exposed; but all adults must be disposed or prepared, by exercising the seven virtues, as Romanists commonly call them, above enumerated, before they receive either forgiveness or renovation. We are not called upon at present to advert to the absurdity of the alleged antecedency of all these virtues or graces to the sanctification of the inner man, in which partly justification consists; but when we find faith placed in the very same relation to justification, as the other virtues with which it is here classed, and even (then not allowed to justify, or to be that by which men are justified, but merely to prepare or dispose men for receiving justification, we are irresistibly constrained to ask, if this is anything like the place assigned to it, in the matter of justification, by the Apostle Paul when he was expounding the way of a sinner's salvation to the Christians at Rome!

But we must at present consider what the modern Church of Rome teaches about this matter of disposing or preparing men for justification, —a subject on which the apostle certainly left the Roman Christians of his day in profound ignorance, though he seems to have intended to open up to them the whole doctrine of justification, so far as he knew it. The Council of Trent gives us scarcely any direct or explicit information as to what they mean by these seven virtues disposing or preparing men for justification, except that it is necessary that they should all exist, and be

exercised, before men are forgiven and renewed, and that they exert some influence in bringing about the result. It tells us, however, that none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit or deserve the grace of justification itself; and this had so far an appearance of deference to plain scriptural principles. It is not, however, by any means certain, —nay, it is very improbable, —that the council, by this declaration, meant to take away from these preliminary and preparatory virtues anything but the strict and proper merit of condignity, which they reserved for the good works of justified men. The council does not, indeed, formally sanction, as I have already mentioned, the distinction which prevailed universally in the Church of Rome at the time when the Reformation commenced, between merit of congruity and merit of condignity. But neither has it formally nor by implication condemned it; and it is certain that most Romish writers since the council have continued to retain and to apply this distinction, —have regarded the decision which we are considering, merely as denying to these dispositive or preparatory works merit of condignity, and have not scrupled, notwithstanding this decision, to ascribe to them merit of congruity: or, in other words, to represent them as exerting some meritorious efficacy, though in a subordinate sense, and of an imperfect kind, in procuring for men justification. Bellarmine fully and explicitly asserts all this. he maintains that the decision of the council, that these dispositive and preparatory works do not merit justification, means merely that they do not merit it *ex condigno*, —contends that they do merit it *ex congruo*, —and asserts that this is the view taken by most, though not by all, Romish writers, both as to the truth of the case and the real import of the decision of the council; from all which we are warranted in concluding, that the decision of the council, denying merit to those things which precede justification, is equivocal, and was intended to be equivocal and deceptive, Bellarmine for one, —and this is true also of the generality of Romish writers, —goes so far as to assert explicitly that these virtues are meritorious causes of justification; and he was fully warranted in doing so, if it be true that the Council of Trent did not deny, or intend to deny, to them merit of congruity; and if it be also the general doctrine of the Church of Rome, as he asserts it is, “*Potius fundari meritum de congruo in aliqua dignitate operis, quam in promissione.*”

There was also a great deal of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists on the definition and nature of justifying faith, and the way and manner in which it acted or operated in the matter of justification. The Reformers generally contended that justifying faith was fiducia, and had its seat in the will; and the Romanists that it was merely assensus, and had its seat in the understanding. This is a subject, however, on which it must be admitted that there has been a considerable difference of opinion, or, at least, of statement, among orthodox Protestant divines in more modern times; and which, at least in the only sense in which it has been controverted among Protestants who were in the main orthodox, does not seem to me to be determined in the standards of our church. "While the Reformers unanimously and explicitly taught that faith which alone justified did not justify by any meritorious or inherent efficacy of its own, but only as the instrument of receiving or laying hold of what God had provided, —had freely offered and regarded as the alone ground or basis on which He passed an act of forgiveness with respect to any individual, viz., the righteousness of Christ, —the Council of Trent can scarcely be said to have determined anything positive or explicit as to the office or function of faith in justification, or as to the way and manner in which it can be said to justify, beyond what is contained in the statement formerly quoted, viz., that we are said to be justified by faith for this reason, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification. There is little information given us here except this, that the reason why Scripture assigns so much prominence to faith, in the matter of justification, is, because faith is the chief means of originating and producing Christian graces and good works; while, at the same time, it should be remembered that Romanists teach, as we have seen, that it does not necessarily and invariably produce them, as Protestants hold, but that it may exist alone or unaccompanied by them.

But while the Council of Trent does not formally and explicitly teach more than this upon this point, there is nothing in the decree to preclude, and much in the general scope and spirit of its statements to countenance, the doctrine which has unquestionably been held by the great body of the most eminent Romish writers, viz., that faith has in itself some real and even meritorious efficacy, —i.e., *meritum de congruo*,

as already explained, —in disposing to, and in procuring or obtaining, justification. This doctrine is thus expressed by Bellarmine, who lays it down as the doctrine of the Church of Rome, *Fidem etiam a caritate disjunctam, alieius esse pretti, et vim habere justilicandi per modum dispositionis, et impe-trationis* and again, *Fidem impetrare justificationem, . . . ac per hoc justificare per modum dispositionis ac meriti* and again, after stating fairly enough the doctrine of the Reformers in this way, "*Fidem non justificare per modum cause, aut dignitatis, aut meriti, sed soliim relative, quia videlicet credendo accipit, quod Deus promittendo offert,*" he thus states in contrast the doctrine of the Church of Rome, "*Fidem justificare impetrando, ac promerendo . . . justificationem;*" and again, "*Fidem . . . impetrare, atque aliquo modo mereri justificationem;*" while he applies similar statements to the other virtues, which, equally with faith, precede and dispose to justification, describing them expressly as meritorious causes of justification.

We have now only to advert briefly to the differences between the Romanists and the Reformers on some points which may be comprehended under the general head of the results or consequences of justification; and, first, we may explain the views respectively entertained by them, as to the way in which sins committed subsequently to justification are pardoned. The Reformers taught that these sins were pardoned upon the same ground, and through the same means, as those committed before justification, —viz., upon the ground of Christ's righteousness, and through the exercise of faith apprehending, or laying hold of, and appropriating it. As the Church of Rome teaches that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, so she has invented another sacrament, and established it as the only channel through which post-baptismal sins, as she commonly calls them, can be forgiven; for the Council of Trent anathematizes all who say that "a man who has fallen after baptism is able to receive the justice which he has lost, by faith alone, without the sacrament of penance." They do not, however, regard the forgiveness, which the sacrament of penance conveys in regard to post-baptismal sins, as so perfect and complete as that which baptism conveys in regard to the sins which preceded it: for they teach that the sacrament of penance, while it takes away all the guilt of mortal sins, in so far as this would otherwise have exposed men to eternal punishment,

leaves men still exposed to temporal punishment, properly so called, for their mortal sins, and to the guilt, such as it is, of their venial sins; and thus needs to be supplemented by satisfactions, rendered either by sinners themselves, or by others in their room, and either in this life or in purgatory. These doctrines are plainly taught in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth canons; and as there is no room for doubt as to what the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this point is, we need not at present further dwell upon it.

The same observation applies to the second topic, which might be comprehended under the general head of the results or consequences of justification, —viz., this, that the Church of Rome teaches that it is possible for men, when once justified, to keep in this life wholly and perfectly the law of God; nay, even to go beyond this, and to supererogate, and that they can truly and properly merit or deserve, with proper merit of condignity, increase of grace and eternal life. These doctrines, with the exception of that of works of supererogation, —which can be shown to be the doctrine of the church otherwise, though not so directly, —are taught clearly and unequivocally in the eighteenth, twenty-fourth, and thirty-second canons.

The last topic which it is needful to advert to, in order to complete the view of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this important subject, is the certainty or assurance which believers have, or may have, or should have, of their being in a justified state, and of their persevering in it. This topic is explained in canons thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth. The Council of Trent taught that no man can have any certainty or assurance that he will persevere and attain to eternal life, without a special revelation; but this topic was not much discussed at the time of the Reformation, and it belongs more properly to the controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians. The dispute between the Reformers and the Romanists in connection with this matter turned mainly upon this question, whether men could or should have any certainty or assurance that they were at present in a justified state, and would, of course, be saved if they persevered in it. And upon this point many of the most eminent orthodox Protestant divines have been of opinion that both the Reformers and the Council of Trent carried their

respective views to an extreme, and that the truth lay somewhere between them. The Romanists, in their anxiety to deprive men of all means of attaining to anything like certainty or assurance that they were in a justified and safe condition, and thus to keep them entirely dependent upon the church, and wholly subject to her control, denied the possibility of certainty or assurance; while the Reformers, in general, maintained its necessity, and, in order, as it were, to secure it in the speediest and most effectual way, usually represented it as necessarily involved in the very nature of the first completed act of saving faith. The generality of orthodox Protestant divines in more modern times have maintained, in opposition to the Church of Rome, the possibility of attaining to a certainty or assurance of being in a justified and regenerated condition, and the duty of seeking and of having this certainty and assurance, as a privilege which God has provided for His people, and a privilege the possession of which is fitted to contribute greatly not only to their happiness, but to their holiness; while they have commonly so far deviated from the views entertained by many of the Reformers, as to deny its necessity, except in the sense of obligation, and more especially to represent it as not necessarily involved in the exercise of saving faith: and this is the view given of the matter in the standards of our church. Put this is a topic of comparatively subordinate importance, as it does not essentially affect men's actual condition in God's sight, their relation to Him, or their everlasting destiny, but rather their present peace and comfort, and the advancement of the divine life in their souls.

There have thus been brought out many most important differences between the doctrines of the Church of Rome and those generally held by orthodox Protestants, on the meaning and nature, the ground and cause, the means and instrument, the results and consequences, of justification: and we must now proceed to give some explanation of the way in which the Reformers established their doctrines upon these subjects, and proved that those of the Church of Rome were inconsistent with the word of God, and dangerous to the souls of men.

II. Nature of Justification

We shall advert briefly to the grounds on which we maintain that justification is properly descriptive only of a change of state in men's judicial relation to God, and to His law, as including forgiveness and acceptance or admission to God's favour, in opposition to the Romish doctrine that it comprehends a change of character, the renovation of men's moral nature, or, as Papists commonly call it, the infusion of an inherent righteousness. Justification is God's act— it is he who justifies; and we must be guided wholly by the statements of His word in determining what the real nature of this act of His is. We must regard justification as just being what the word of God represents it to be; we must understand the word in the sense in which it is employed in the sacred Scriptures. The question then is, In what sense are the words justification and its cognates used in Scripture; and more especially, should any variety in its meaning and application be discovered there, in what sense is it employed in those passages in which it is manifest that the subject ordinarily expressed by it is most fully and formally explained? Now, the truth upon this point is so clear and certain in itself, and has been so generally admitted by all but Romanists, that it is unnecessary to occupy much time with the illustration of it.

It has been proved innumerable times, by evidence against which it is impossible to produce anything that has even plausibility, that the word justification is generally used in Scripture in what is called a forensic or judicial sense, as opposed to condemnation; that it means to reckon, or declare, or pronounce just or righteous, as if by passing a sentence to that effect; and that it does not include in its signification, as the Council of Trent asserts the making just or righteous, by effecting an actual change on the moral character and principles of men. The Council of Trent says that justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man. But the inspired writers plainly do not ordinarily employ it to describe an actual change effected upon men's character, but only a change effected upon their legal state or condition by a forensic or judicial act of the Justifier. It implies the pronouncing, more or less formally, of a sentence.— a sentence, not of condemnation, but of acquittal or acceptance. It has been alleged that the original and radical idea of the word δικαιοω is to punish: and there are some considerations which favour this notion, though it cannot be said to

be established by satisfactory evidence, that even if this were admitted to be the primary or radical idea expressed by the word, there would be no great difficulty in tracing the process by which it came to acquire what seems to be the nearly opposite meaning it bears in the New Testament. When a man has had a sentence of condemnation passed upon him for an offence, and has, in consequence, endured the punishment imposed, he is free from all further charge or liability, and might be said to be now justified in the derived sense of the word, or to have now virtually a sentence of acquittal pronounced upon him. A punished person in this way virtually becomes a justified one. and the two notions are thus not so alien or contradictory as they might at first sight appear to be. And it should not be forgotten that, in the matter of the justification of a sinner before God, there has been a punishment inflicted and endured, which is in every instance the ground or basis of the sinner's justification. When the apostle says. as he is represented in our translation, "He that is dead is free from sin," the literal, real meaning of his statement is. "He that has died has been justified from sin," and the import of this declaration (which furnishes, I think, the key to the interpretation of the chapter), is, that a man by dying, and thereby enduring the punishment due to his sin (which sinners of course do in their Surety, whose death is imputed to them), has escaped from all further liability, and has a sentence virtually pronounced upon him. whereby he is justified from sin.

But whatever might be the primary meaning of the word justify, and whatever the process of thought by which its meaning may have been afterward modified, it can be very easily and conclusively proved, that both in the Old and in the New Testament it is ordinarily employed in a forensic or judicial sense, and means not to make or render righteous by changing the character, but to reckon, declare, or pronounce righteous by a sentence formal or virtual, changing the state or condition in relation to a judge and a law. The Socinian system of justification is, in its general scope and tendency, very much akin to the Popish one; for both tend to assign to men themselves an influential and meritorious share in securing their own ultimate happiness: and yet even the Socinians admit that the word justify is used in the New Testament in a forensic sense, to denote the declaring or pronouncing men righteous. It is true that something else than a love of truth might lead them to concur with Protestants in the

interpretation of this word; for the idea of God's making men righteous by effecting some change upon their character, or what the Romanists call the infusion of righteousness, —which they allege to be included in justification, —docs not harmonize with the Socinian system, according to which men do not need to be made righteous, since they have always been so, —do not need to have righteousness infused into them, since they have never existed without it.

Almost the only man of eminence in modern times, beyond the pale of the Church of Rome, who has contended that the proper meaning of the word justify in Scripture is to make righteous, —i.e., to sanctify, —is Grotius, whose inadequate sense of the importance of sound doctrine, and unscriptural and spurious love of peace, made him ever ready to sacrifice or compromise truth, whether it was to please Papists or Socinians. The course adopted upon this subject in Newman's Lectures on Justification is rather curious and instructive. Newman's general scheme of doctrine upon this subject, though it was published some years before he left the Church of England, and though Dr Pusey issued a pamphlet for the purpose of showing that there was nothing Popish about it, is beyond all reasonable doubt identical, in its fundamental principles and general tendencies, with that of the Council of Trent and the Church of Rome, to which its author has since formally submitted himself. The fact, however, that the articles of the church to which he then belonged (and which, at the time, he does not seem to have had any intention of leaving), had fixed the meaning of the word justify to be, to "account righteous before God," as well as perhaps some sense of the scriptural evidence in support of this view of its meaning, prevented him from openly adopting the definition which the Council of Trent gave of justification; and obliged him to admit that the proper meaning of the word in Scripture is to declare or pronounce, and not to make or render, righteous. He feels, however, that this admission exposes him to some disadvantage and difficulty in the exposition and defence of his Popish system; and he is, besides, greatly distressed at finding himself in the awkward position, to use his own words, of venturing "to prefer Luther in any matter even of detail to St Austin," the former of whom, he says, was merely the founder of a school, or sect, while the latter was a father in the Holy Apostolic Church; and on these accounts he is obliged to devise

some expedient for practically and in substance withdrawing the concession he had been compelled to make; audit is this: "To justify, means in itself 'counting righteous,' but includes under its meaning 'making righteous;' in other words, the sense of the thing is 'counting righteous;' and the sense of the thing denoted by it is, making righteous. In the abstract, it is a counting righteous; in the concrete, a making righteous." These words may probably be regarded as not very intelligible, but the general object or tendency of them is plain enough; and it is met and exposed simply by recollecting that Scripture, being given by inspiration, and therefore a higher authority than even the unanimous consent of the fathers, just means what it says, and that by the terms which it employs it conveys to us accurate conceptions of the things denoted by them. The course pursued by Newman in this matter is fitted to impress upon us at once the difficulty, and the importance, for Popish purposes, of evading the clear scriptural evidence of the forensic sense of the word—justify.

But it is unnecessary to adduce in detail the scriptural evidence in support of the Protestant meaning of the word, —justify. I may briefly advert, however, to the way in which Popish writers have attempted to meet it. They do not deny that the word is sometimes, nay often, taken in Scripture in a forensic sense. Its meaning is too clearly and conclusively fixed by the context in some passages, especially in those in which it is formally opposed to the word condemn, to admit this position. But they usually contend that this is not the only meaning which the word bears in the Scriptures, —that there are cases in which it means to make righteous, —and that, consequently, they are entitled to regard this idea as contained in its full scriptural import. Now, it is to be observed that the position which Protestants maintain upon this subject is not, that in every passage where the word occurs there exists evidence by which it can be proved from that passage alone, taken by itself, that the word there is used in a forensic sense, and cannot admit of any other. They concede that there are passages where the word occurs in which there is nothing in the passage itself, or in the context, to fix down its meaning to the sense of counting righteous, in preference to making righteous. Their position is this, —that there are many passages where it is plain that it must be taken in a forensic sense, and cannot admit of any other; and

that there are none, or at least none in which the justification of a sinner before God is formally and explicitly spoken of, in which it can be proved that the forensic sense is inadmissible or necessarily excluded, and that it must be taken in the sense of making righteous. If these positions are true, then the Protestant view of the Scripture meaning and import of justification is established; for we are of course entitled to apply to those passages in which the sense of the word is not fixed by that particular passage, the meaning which it must bear in many passages, and which cannot be shown to be certainly inadmissible in any one. This being the true state of the argument, Romanists, in order to make out their case, are bound to produce passages in which it can be shown that the word cannot be taken in a forensic sense, and must be regarded as meaning to make righteous. And this, accordingly, they undertake; usually, however, endeavouring in the first place to involve the subject in obscurity, by trying to show that there are various senses, —four at least, —in which the word justify is used in Scripture. The Romanists, of course, in this discussion are fully entitled to choose their own ground, and to select their own texts, in which they think they can prove that the forensic sense is inadmissible or necessarily excluded, and that of making righteous is required; while all that Protestants have to do is merely to prove that the Romanists have not succeeded in conclusively establishing these positions.

The texts usually selected by Humanists for this purpose are the following: — “Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them he also called; and whom He called, them he also justified; and whom He justified, them he also glorified,” — where, as there is no explicit mention of regeneration or sanctification in this description of the leading steps of the process of the salvation of sinners, it is contended that this must be comprehended in the word justify, which seems to fill up the whole intermediate space between calling and glorifying. Again: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” — when the general scope of the passage, and the position of the word justified, it is alleged, show that at least it is not taken in a forensic sense. Again, the apostle speaks of the “renewing of the Holy Ghost: which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we should be

made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Again: “He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.” — the original of which in the “textus receptus,” as it is called, is δικαιοσ δικαιοθήτω ἵτι Now, some Protestant writers have admitted that in these passages, or in some of them, the forensic use of the word δικαιοσ can be disproved; and Le Blanc, in the work which I formerly referred to, and described, has produced all the concessions of this kind which he could discover, and has laboured himself to prove that these concessions could not have been fairly withheld, and cannot be refused without a very forced and unwarrantable construction of the passages. Those Protestant divines who have been disposed to admit that in these passages, or in some of them, it can be shown that the word justify is not used in a forensic sense, usually contend that it is quite sufficient, in order to establish the Protestant doctrine, and to overthrow the Popish one, about the meaning of justification, to show that the forensic sense is that in which it is generally and ordinarily taken in Scripture, and that it is taken in that sense, and in no other, in those passages where the subject of the justification of a sinner before God is most fully and formally set forth. There is force in this view of the matter; and if these positions can be established, as they certainly can, this is sufficient to show that it is unwarrantable to introduce into the scriptural description of what the justification of a sinner is, any other idea than that of a change of state in relation to God and to His law, even though one or two instances may occur in the Scriptures in which the word is used in a somewhat wider and larger sense. This consideration is sufficient to save Protestant commentators from any very strong temptation to pervert these passages from what may seem to be their true meaning, in order to wrest a weapon out of the hands of an opponent; and I use the word temptation here, because it should never be forgotten that the highest and most imperative duty of all honest investigators of Christian truth, is just to ascertain the true and real meaning of every portion of the inspired word of God. I cannot enter into a minute and detailed examination of those passages, and will make only one or two observations regarding them.

It will scarcely be disputed that, had these been the only passages in the New Testament where the word justify occurred, the presumption would have been against it being taken in a forensic sense, —to describe a

change of legal relation, the passing of a sentence of acquittal. But, from the explanation we have given of the conditions of the argument, it will be seen that much more than this must be proved in regard to them, in order to their being of any service to the Papists, —even that the forensic sense is clearly and conclusively shut out. Now, I think it has been satisfactorily proved that this cannot be effected, and that, on the contrary, in regard to all the passages quoted, —except, perhaps, the one which occurs in the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation, —it can be shown, and without any violent and unwarrantable straining of the statements, that the ordinary and usual sense of the word in the New Testament is not clearly and necessarily excluded. In regard to the first of them, —that occurring in the eighth of the Romans, —it is contended that we have no right to assume, as the Popish argument does, that the apostle must necessarily have comprehended, in the description he gave, every step in the process of a sinner's salvation, every one of the leading blessings which God bestows; that the train of thought which the apostle was pursuing at the time, —or, what is in substance the same thing, the context and scope of the passage, —did not require this, as Calvin has shown in his commentary upon it: and that even if we were to assume.— what, however, is not necessary, and is therefore, from the conditions of the argument, unwarrantable, —that all the leading blessings of salvation must have been directly or by implication adverted to, we are under no more necessity of supposing that regeneration, by which men are made righteous, must be included under justification, than under vocation or glorification.

There is no serious difficulty in the passage quoted from the sixth of First Corinthians. Justify cannot here mean to make righteous, —i.e., it cannot be identical with, or comprehensive of, regeneration and sanctification: for it is distinguished from them, " while they are expressly mentioned. And as to the allegation that it cannot be here understood in a forensic sense, because it is introduced after "washed and sanctified," and is ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit, it is answered, that the inspired writers do not always, in other cases, restrict themselves to what may be called the natural order of time, —that the apostle's train of thought in the preceding context naturally led him to give prominence and precedency to washing and sanctification; while he was also naturally

led on, in magnifying their deliverance and in enforcing their obligations, to introduce, as completing the description of what had been done for them, their justification, or deliverance from guilt and condemnation: and that justification as well as sanctification may be, and is, ascribed to the Holy Spirit as well as to Christ, since it is He who works faith in them and thereby unites them to Christ, which union is the origin and the ground of all the blessings they enjoy.

The argument which the Romanists found on the third chapter of Titus amounts in substance to this: that the statement seems to imply that men are renewed by the Holy Ghost, in order that they may be justified by grace: but it has been proved, first, that neither the connection of the particular clauses of the sentence, nor the general scope of the passage, requires us to admit that the apostle intended to convey this idea: and, secondly, that, independently of all questions as to the exact philological meaning of the word justify, this doctrine is inconsistent with the plain teaching of the word of God in regard to the whole subject. I think it has been established, by such considerations as these, that in none of these three passages is there any necessity for regarding the word—justify— as meaning or including to make righteous, or for departing in the interpretation of them from its ordinary forensic sense.

The only one remaining, is that in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, “He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.” Now there does seem to be greater difficulty about this one; for the only senses which, in accordance with the context, and without considerable straining, the word δικαιωθήτω seems here to admit, are either, “Let him be made righteous,” — i.e., more righteous.— or, “Let him do righteousness,” — i.e., more righteousness. But, by a remarkable coincidence, it so happens that there is good and conclusive ground, on the soundest and most universally recognised principles of criticism, for believing that the reading in the “textus receptus” is erroneous; that the word δικαίω was not here used by the apostle; that δικαιωθήτω ought to be removed from the text, and the words δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω, literally expressing the second of the two meanings above mentioned, as apparently required by the context, substituted in its room. Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf, —i.e., all the most recent and most

eminent investigators into the sacred text, —have done this without any hesitation; and the purely critical grounds on which this change is based, have commended themselves to the minds of all competent judges. I cannot prosecute this subject further; but what appear to me to be satisfactory discussions of these texts, as adduced by Le Blanc and the Romanists, may be found in Dr Owen's great work on Justification, in Witsius' Economy of the Covenants, and De Moor's Commentary on Marckius.

The word justify, then, in its scriptural use, means to reckon, or pronounce, or declare righteous, or to resolve on treating as righteous; and the justification of a sinner, therefore, is descriptive of a change effected by an act of God, not upon his moral character, but upon his state or condition in relation to the law under which he was placed, and to God, the author and the guardian of that law, —a change whereby he who is the object of it ceases to be held or reckoned and treated as guilty, and liable to punishment, —has a sentence of acquittal and approbation pronounced upon him, —is forgiven all his past offences, and is admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour and friendship. God has, indeed, —as is clearly set forth in His word, and as the Reformers fully admitted, —made complete and effectual provision that every sinner whom He pardons and accepts shall also be born again, and renewed in the whole man after His own image; but He does not describe to us this change upon men's moral character by the name of justification. He assigns to this other equally indispensable change a different name or designation; and although, —according to the fundamental principles of the scheme which He has devised for the salvation of sinners, which he has fully revealed to us in His word, and which He is executing by His Spirit and in His providence, —there has been established and secured an invariable connection in fact between these two great blessings which He bestows, —these two great changes which he effects, —yet, by the representations which he has given us of them in His word. He has imposed upon us an obligation to distinguish between them, to beware of confounding them, and to investigate distinctly and separately all that we find revealed regarding them in the sacred Scriptures. If this be so, the first and most obvious inference to be deduced from it is, that the Council of Trent and the Church of Rome have erred, have corrupted and perverted the truth

of God, in defining justification to be not only the remission of sin, but also the renovation of the inner man; and thus confounding it with, or unwarrantably extending it so as to include, regeneration and sanctification, or the infusion of an inherent personal righteousness. Every error in the things of God is sinful and dangerous, and tends to extend and propagate itself; and while thus darkening men's understandings, it tends also to endanger, or to affect injuriously, their spiritual welfare. An error as to the scriptural meaning and import of justification, —and especially an error which thus confounds, or mixes up together, the two great blessings of the gospel, —must tend to introduce obscurity and confusion into men's whole conceptions of the method of salvation.

It is true that even Augustine, notwithstanding all his profound knowledge of divine truth, and the invaluable services which he was made the instrument of rendering to the cause of sound doctrine and of pure Christian theology, does not seem to have ever attained to distinct apprehensions of the forensic meaning of justification, and usually speaks of it as including or comprehending regeneration; and this was probably owing, in some measure, to his want of familiarity with the Greek language, to his reading the New Testament in Latin, and being thus somewhat

led astray by the etymological meaning of the word justification. The subject of justification, in the scriptural and Protestant sense of it, had not been discussed in the church, or occupied much of its attention, since the time of the Apostle Paul. The whole tendency of the course of sentiment which had prevailed in the church from the apostolic age to that of Augustine, was to lead men to throw' the doctrine of justification into the background, and to regard it as of inferior importance. When Pelagius, and his immediate followers, assailed the doctrines of grace, it was exclusively in the way of ascribing to men themselves the power or capacity to do God's will and to obey His law, and to effect whatever changes might be necessary in order to enable them to accomplish this. And to this point, accordingly, the attention of Augustine was chiefly directed; while the subject of justification remained in a great measure neglected. But from the general o o o soundness of his views and feelings

in regard to divine things, and his profound sense of the necessity of referring everything bearing upon the salvation of sinners to the grace of God and the work of Christ, his defective and erroneous views about the meaning and import of the word justification did not exert so injurious an influence as might have been expected, either upon his theological system or upon his character; and assumed practically very much the aspect of a mere philological blunder, or of an error in phraseology, rather than in real sentiment or conviction. And Calvin, accordingly, refers to it in the following terms: “Ac ne Augustini quidem sententia vel saltern loquendi ratio per omnia recipienda est. Tametsi enim egregie hominem omni justitia: laude spoliat, ac totam Dei gratiam transcribit: gratiam tamen ad sanctificationem refert, qua in vita? novitatem per Spiritum regeneramur.” The whole tendency on the part of the great body of the church for about a thousand years after Augustine, notwithstanding all the respect that was professedly entertained for him, was to throw all that was sacred and scriptural in his system of doctrine into the background, and to bring all that was defective and erroneous in his opinions into prominence and influence; and hence there is this singular aspect presented by the decrees of the Council of Trent, that while it might probably be difficult to prove that they contain much, if anything, which formally, and in terminis, contradicts any of the leading doctrines of Augustine, they yet exhibit to us a system of theology which, in its whole bearing, spirit, and tendency, is opposed to that which pervaded the mind and the writings of that great man, and which much more nearly approximates in these respects to that of his opponents in the Pelagian controversy.

But while this much may be justly said in defence of by far the greatest and most useful man whom God gave to the church from the apostolic age till the Reformation, it should not be forgotten that his defective and erroneous views upon the subject of justification were at once the effect and the cause of the attention of the church being withdrawn, through the artifices of Satan, from a careful study of what Scripture teaches as to the nature and necessity of forgiveness and acceptance, and the way and manner in which men individually receive and become possessed of them; and of men being thus led to form most inadequate impressions of what is implied in their being all guilty and under the curse of the law as

transgressors, and of the indispensable necessity of their being washed from their sins in the blood of Christ. The natural tendency of men is to consider the guilt incurred by the violation of God's law as a trivial matter, which may be adjusted without any great difficulty; and this tendency is strengthened by vague and erroneous impressions about the character of God, and the principles that regulate His government of the world. And where something about Christianity is known, this universal and most dangerous tendency appears in the form of leading men to cherish, and to act upon, a vague impression that, because Christ came into the world to save us from our sins, men need have no great anxiety about any guilt that may attach to them, even while they have not a single distinct and definite conception about the way in which Christ's mediatorial work bears upon the deliverance and salvation of the human race, or of the way in which men individually become possessed of forgiveness and acceptance.

I have no doubt that it is to be regarded as an indication and result of this state of mind and feeling, that there has been so strong and general a tendency to extend, beyond what Scripture warrants, the meaning of justification, and to mix it up with regeneration and sanctification. Romish writers, in defending the doctrine of their church upon this subject, sometimes talk as if they thought that deliverance from guilt and condemnation, —mere forgiveness and acceptance, —were scarcely important enough to exhaust the meaning of the scriptural statements about justification, or to be held up as constituting a great and distinct blessing, which ought to be by itself a subject of diligent investigation to the understanding, and of deep anxiety to the heart. All false conceptions of the system of Christian doctrine assume, or are based upon, inadequate and erroneous views and impressions of the nature and effects of the fall, —of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell; producing, of course, equally inadequate and erroneous views and impressions of the difficulty of effecting their deliverance, and of the magnitude, value, and efficacy of the provision made for accomplishing it. Forgiveness and regeneration, even when admitted to be in some sense necessary, are represented as comparatively trivial matters, which may be easily procured or effected, —the precise grounds of which need not be very carefully or anxiously investigated, since there is no difficulty in

regarding them as, in a manner, the natural results of the mercy of God, or, as is often added, though without any definite meaning being attached to it, of the work of Christ. This appears most fully and palpably in the Socinian system, which is just a plain denial of all that is most peculiar and important in the Christian revelation, and in the scheme there unfolded for the salvation of sinners. But it appears to a considerable extent also in the Popish system, where, though the bearing of the vicarious work of Christ upon the forgiveness and renovation of men is not denied, it is thrown very much into the background, and left in a state of great indefiniteness and obscurity; and in which the importance of forgiveness and admission into God's favour, as a great and indispensable blessing, is overlooked and underrated, by being mixed up with renovation and sanctification, —men's thoughts being thus withdrawn from the due contemplation of the great truth that they need forgiveness and acceptance, and from the investigation, under a due sense of responsibility, of the way and manner in which they are to receive or obtain it.

There are few' things more important, either with reference to the production of a right state of mind and feeling in regard to our religious interests, or to the formation of a right system of theology, than that men should be duly impressed with the conviction that they are by nature guilty, subject to the curse of a broken law, condemned by a sentence of God, and standing as already condemned criminals at this tribunal. If this be indeed the real condition of men by nature, it is of the last importance, both as to the formation of their opinions and the regulation of their feelings and conduct, that they should be aware of it; and that they should realize distinctly and definitely all that is involved in it. When this is understood and realized, men can scarcely fail to be impressed with the conviction, that the first and most essential thing in order to their deliverance and welfare is, that this sentence which hangs over them be cancelled, and that a sentence of an opposite import be either formally or virtually pronounced upon them, —a sentence whereby God forgives their sins and admits them into the enjoyment of His favour, or in which he intimates His purpose and intention no longer to hold them liable for their transgressions, or to treat them as transgressors, but to regard and treat them as if they had not transgressed; and not only to abstain from

punishing them, but to admit them into the enjoyment of His favour. The passing of such an act, or the pronouncing of such a sentence, on God's part, is evidently the first and most indispensable thing for men's deliverance and welfare. Men can be expected to form a right estimate of the grounds on which such an act can be passed, —such a change can be effected upon their condition and prospects, —only when they begin with realizing their actual state by nature, as guilty and condemned criminals, standing at God's tribunal, and utterly unable to render any satisfaction for their offences, or to merit anything whatever at God's hand.

III. Imputation of Christ's Righteousness

Whatever meaning might be attached to the word justification in Scripture, and even though it could be proved that, as used there, it comprehended or described both a change in men's state and in men's character, it would still be an important question, deserving of a separate and very careful investigation, What are the grounds or reasons on account of which God forgives any man's sins, and admits him into the enjoyment of His favour? And it would still be an imperative duty, incumbent upon all men, to examine with the utmost care into everything which Scripture contains, fitted to throw any light upon this infinitely important subject. Now, I have already shown that, while the Council of Trent ascribes, in general, the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners to the vicarious work of Christ as its meritorious cause, in the first place it gives no explanation of the way and manner in which the work of Christ bears upon the accomplishment of this result in the case of individuals; and then, in the second place, it represents the only formal cause of our forgiveness to be an inherent personal righteousness, infused into men by God's Spirit, —thus teaching that that to which God has a respect or regard in passing an act of forgiveness in the case of any individual, is a personal righteousness, previously bestowed upon him, and wrought in him; while the only place or share assigned, or rather left, to the work of Christ in the matter, is to merit, procure, or purchase the grace, or gracious exercise of power, by which this inherent personal righteousness is infused.

The Reformers and the Reformed confessions, on the other hand, asserted that that to which God has directly and immediately a respect in forgiving any man's sins, or that which is the proper cause or ground of the act of forgiveness and acceptance, is not an inherent personal righteousness infused into him, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. By the righteousness of Christ, the Reformers understood the whole vicarious work of Christ, including both His sufferings as satisfactory to the divine justice and law, which required that men's sins should be punished, and His whole obedience to the law, as meritorious of the life that was promised to obedience; the former being usually called by later divines, when these subjects came to be discussed with greater minuteness and detail, His passive, and the latter His active, righteousness. By this righteousness being imputed to any man, they meant that it was reckoned to him, or put down to his account, so that God, from a regard to it thus imputed, virtually agreed or resolved to deal with him, or to treat him, as if he himself had suffered what Christ suffered, and had done what Christ did; and had thus fully satisfied for his offences, and fully earned the rewards promised to perfect obedience. The Reformers taught that, when God pardoned and accepted any sinner, the ground or basis of the divine act, —that to which God had directly and immediately a respect or regard in performing it, or in passing a virtual sentence cancelling that man's sins, and admitting him into the enjoyment of His favour, —was this, that the righteousness of Christ was his, through his union to Christ; that being his in this way, it was in consequence imputed to him, or put down to his account, just as if it were truly and properly his own; and that this righteousness, being in itself fully satisfactory and meritorious, formed an adequate ground on which his sins might be forgiven and his person accepted. Now, the Papists deny that, in this sense, the righteousness of Christ, as satisfactory and meritorious, is imputed to men as the ground or basis of God's act in forgiving and accepting them; and set up in opposition to it, as occupying this place, and serving this purpose, an inherent personal righteousness infused into them. And in this way the state of the question, as usually discussed between Protestant and Romish writers, is, as we formerly explained and proved, clearly defined and marked out, although the decisions of the Council of Trent upon this subject are involved in some obscurity.

The main grounds on which the Reformers contended that the righteousness of Christ, imputed to a man, or given to him in virtue of his union to Christ, and then held and reckoned as his, was that to which God had respect in forgiving him, and admitting him to the enjoyment of His favour, were these: First, that, according to the general principles indicated in the sacred Scriptures as regulating God's dealings with fallen man, a full satisfaction and a perfect righteousness were necessary as the ground or basis of an act of forgiveness and acceptance; and that there is no adequate satisfaction and no perfect righteousness which can avail for this result except the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ; and, secondly, that the statements contained in Scripture as to the place which Christ and His vicarious work, including His obedience as well as His sufferings, hold in their bearing upon the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners, necessarily imply this doctrine; and that, indeed, the substance of these statements cannot be correctly, fully, and definitely brought out, or embodied in distinct and explicit propositions, except just by asserting that Christ's righteousness is given and imputed to men, and is thus the ground or basis on which God's act in forgiving and accepting them rests.

It is manifest that the doctrine of Christ being the surety and substitute of sinners, and performing in that capacity a vicarious work, implies that it was necessary that something should be suffered and done by Him which might stand in the room and stead of what should have been suffered and done by them; and that in this way they, for whose salvation it was designed, have the benefit of what He suffered and did in their room imparted to them. This, accordingly, is admitted to be in substance what the Scripture states as to the ground or basis of forgiveness by all, even Arminians, who admit a proper vicarious atonement or satisfaction; and they thus admit, though some of them make great difficulties about the language or phraseology, the whole substance of what is contended for under the name of the imputation of our sins to Christ as the ground of His sufferings, and of the imputation of Christ's sufferings to us as the ground or basis of our pardon. Now, the Reformers, and Calvinistic divines in general, have extended the same general principle to merit and acceptance, which is admitted by all but Socinians to apply to the two other correlatives, viz., satisfaction and forgiveness. The proper grounds on which a criminal, who had violated a law, and had had a sentence of

condemnation pronounced upon him, is exempted from liability to punishment, are either his having already endured in his own person the full punishment appointed, or his having imputed to him, and so getting the benefit of, a full satisfaction made by another in his room; for I assume, at present, the necessity of a satisfaction or atonement, —a principle which, of course, precludes any other supposition than the two now' stated. But a man might, on one or other of these two grounds, be pardoned or forgiven, so as to be no longer liable to any further punishment, while yet there was no ground or reason whatever why he should be admitted into the favour or friendship of the judge or lawgiver, —receive from him any token of kindness, or be placed by him in a position of honour and comfort. We find, however, in Scripture, that, in the case of all justified men, these two things are, in point of fact, invariably and inseparably combined; and that when God justifies a man, He not only pardons all his sins, but admits him into the enjoyment of His favour, and virtually pronounces upon him a sentence whereby He gives him a right or title to happiness and heaven, and to everything necessary for the full and permanent enjoyment of them.

The two things, however, though invariably combined, in fact, in the gospel method of salvation, and in all on whom it takes practical effect, are quite distinct in themselves, and easily separable in idea; nay, they are so entirely distinct in their own nature, that we cannot but conceive that each must have its own suitable and appropriate ground to rest upon. As the proper ground of an act of forgiveness or of immunity from further punishment, extended to a condemned criminal, in a case where there are principles that preclude a mere discretionary pardon by a sovereign act of clemency, must be the endurance of the penalty prescribed, either personal or by a vicarious satisfaction, so the proper ground of a sentence of approbation and reward must, from the nature of the case, be obedience to the law, personal or vicarious, i.e., imputed. If a regard to the honour of the law demanded, in the case of sinners, that there should be satisfaction as the ground of forgiveness, because it had threatened transgression with death, so it equally demanded that there should be perfect obedience as the ground or basis of admission to life. Perfect obedience to the law, —or, what is virtually the same thing, merit the result of perfect obedience, —seems just as necessary as the ground or

basis of a virtual sentence of approbation and reward, as satisfaction is as the ground or basis of a sentence of forgiveness and immunity from further punishment. And as there is no perfect righteousness in men themselves to be the ground or basis of their being accepted or admitted to favour and happiness, —as they can no more render perfect obedience than they can satisfy for their sins, —Christ’s perfect obedience must become theirs, and be made available for their benefit, as well as His suffering, —His merit as well as His satisfaction.

Papists unites with Arminians in denying the necessity of a perfect righteousness, as the ground or basis of God’s act in accepting men’s persons, and giving them a right and title to heaven; and in maintaining that all that is implied in the justification of a sinner, so far as it is descriptive of a mere change of state, consists only in forgiveness, based upon Christ’s vicarious sufferings or penal satisfaction. The Arminians hold the doctrine of the imputation of faith for, or instead of, righteousness or perfect obedience; and the chief scriptural ground on which they defend this doctrine is the statement of the apostle, that “faith is counted or reckoned for righteousness,” — πίστις λογίζεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην. Their interpretation of this statement certainly could not be easily rejected, if the preposition εἰς could be shown to convey anything like the idea of substitution, as the word for, by which it is rendered in our version, often does. But no such idea can be legitimately extracted from it. The prepositions used in Scripture in reference to Christ’s vicarious atonement or satisfaction in our room and stead, for us, — for our sins, — are, ἀντι and ὑπερ, and never ν, which means towards, in order to, with a view to, —ideas which, in some connections, may be correctly enough expressed by the English word/or, but which cannot convey the idea of substitution. Faith being counted εἰς δικαιοσύνην, means merely, —and cannot, according to the established usus loquendi, mean anything else than, —faith being counted in order to righteousness, or with a view to justification; so that this statement of the apostle does not directly inform us how, or in what way, it is that the imputation of faith bears upon the result of justification, —this we must learn from other scriptural statements, —and most certainly does not indicate that it bears upon this result by being, or by being regarded and accepted as, a substitute for righteousness or perfect obedience.

The Arminians commonly teach that faith, —and the sincere though imperfect obedience, or personal righteousness, as they call it, which faith produces, —is counted or accepted by God as if it were perfect obedience, and in this way avails to our justification, and more especially, of course, from the nature of the case, to our acceptance and title to heaven. Now, with respect to this doctrine, I think it is no very difficult matter to show, —though I cannot at present enter upon the proof, —first, that it is not supported by any scriptural evidence; secondly, that it has been devised as an interpretation of certain scriptural statements which have some appearance of countenancing it, —an interpretation that might supersede the common Calvinistic explanation of them, and might not contradict the general Arminian doctrine upon the subject of justification; and, thirdly, that it implies a virtual admission, or indicates a sort of lurking consciousness, of the scriptural truth of some general principles which really establish the Calvinistic, and overturn the Arminian, doctrine on the subject of justification, —viz., a distinction, in nature and ground, between forgiveness and acceptance; and the necessity, after all, of a perfect righteousness, actual or by imputation, as the ground or cause of acceptance and admission into the enjoyment of God's favour. These two important principles the Arminians formally and explicitly deny, and the denial of them constitutes the main ground of controversy between them and the Calvinists in this whole question. And yet their doctrine of the imputation of faith for, or instead of, righteousness, implies something tantamount to a virtual admission of both. They do not allege that this imputation of faith for righteousness is the ground of the pardon of our sins, for that they admit to be the vicarious sufferings of Christ. If it bears, therefore, upon our justification at all, it can be only, from the nature of the case, upon our acceptance and admission into God's favour; and if faith, and the imperfect obedience which follows from it, is regarded and accepted in the way of imputation instead of righteousness, this can be only because a higher and more perfect righteousness than is, in fact, found in men, is in some way or other necessary, —needful to be brought in, —in the adjustment of this matter, with a view to men's eternal welfare. But though all this can be shown to be fairly implied in their doctrine of the imputation of faith instead of righteousness, they continue explicitly to deny the necessity of a real or actual perfect righteousness as the ground or basis of acceptance and a title to heaven, lest the admission

of this should constrain them to adopt the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

Papists have another way of making this argument about the necessity of a perfect righteousness, in the use of which the Arminians have not ventured to follow them, and which even the Socinians hesitate to adopt. It is by asserting that, even if it be conceded that a perfect righteousness is necessary, there is no occasion to have recourse to Christ's righteousness; for that men's own inherent personal righteousness is, or may be, perfect. Bellarmine distinctly lays down and maintains this doctrine, in opposition to the common Protestant argument for the necessity of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, from there being no other that is perfect. he says that our inherent righteousness consists chiefly in faith, hope, and love, which Papists commonly call the theological virtues; he then proceeds to prove from Scripture that all these virtues may be perfect in men in this life, and thus constitute them perfectly righteous, His argument, indeed, plainly requires him to prove that these virtues are actually, and in point of fact, perfect in man in this life. This, however, he scarcely ventures to attempt, and merely labours to prove from Scripture that they may be perfect, or that perfection in them may possibly be attained; and after having established this to his own satisfaction, he triumphantly concludes, "*Quod si fidem, spem, et caritateni, ac per hoc justitiam inherentem, perfectam habere possimus, frustra laborant haeretici in asserenda imputatione justitiae, quasi alioqui nullo modo simpliciter, et absolute justi esse possimus.*" The employment of such an argument as this brings out very clearly, —more so than their cautious and guarded general statements, —the real doctrine of the Church of Rome in regard to the ground of a sinner's justification; while, at the same time, from its manifest contrariety to the plainest scriptural declarations, it is not necessary to enlarge in refuting it.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the great direct and proper proof of the Protestant doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, given and imputed, being that to which God has a respect or regard in justifying a sinner, is the second position which we laid down, —viz., that the scriptural statements about Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, and about the bearing of His sufferings and obedience upon their deliverance

and salvation, imply this, and indeed can be embodied in distinct and definite propositions only by asserting this doctrine. As the Scriptures indicate that a perfect righteousness is necessary, as the ground or basis of our acceptance and admission to a right to life, as well as a full satisfaction as the ground or basis of our forgiveness or exemption from punishment, so they set before us such a perfect righteousness as available for us, and actually benefiting us, in the obedience which Christ, as our surety, rendered to all the requirements of the law. The apostle assures us that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" where our translation unwarrantably, by changing the construction, —giving in the one case "to redeem," and in the other, "that we might receive," while both are expressed in the original by the same word ἵνα, —conceals the fact that the apostle plainly declared that Christ was made under the law, and of course complied with all its requirements, both as demanding punishment, and as imposing perfect obedience, in order thereby to effect two distinct objects, —viz., that he might deliver us from its curse, and that he might invest us with the privileges of sons. It makes no material difference whether we suppose that both the clauses introduced with ἵνα hold directly of, or are immediately connected in grammatical regimen with, Christ's being made under the law, —or that the latter clause, "might receive," holds directly of the preceding one, —viz., that "He might redeem us;"— for there is nothing inconsistent with the teaching of the Scripture, in regarding the blessing of forgiveness as being in some sense, in the order of nature, though not of time, antecedent and preparatory to that of acceptance, or the bestowal of a right to life and all the privileges of sonship.

The Scriptures represent the deliverance and salvation of men, and all the blessings which these require or imply, as traceable not only to Christ's sufferings and death, —i.e., to His penal satisfaction, —but generally to Christ, and to His whole work as our surety; while they also represent all that he did in our nature upon earth as vicarious, —as performed in the capacity of a surety or substitute, acting in the room and stead of others. They also more directly represent Him as our righteousness, —as made of God unto us righteousness, —and as making many righteous by His

obedience; statements which, in their fair and natural import, imply that His obedience, as well as His sufferings, bear directly and immediately upon our reception into the enjoyment of the divine favour, and our participation in the blessings of redemption. And if His whole obedience to the law thus bears directly and immediately upon our enjoyment of the blessings of salvation, it can be only by its being held or reckoned as performed in our room, —by its being imputed to us, or put down to our account, so as thereby actually to avail for our benefit.

We can form no distinct or definite conception either of the satisfaction or the meritorious obedience of Christ, acting or operating directly upon our forgiveness and acceptance with God, except in this way. We must bring to bear upon them the Scripture ideas both of substitution and imputation; and when we do so, we can form an intelligible and distinct conception of that which the scriptural statements upon the subject seem so plainly to indicate; while, without the introduction and application of these scriptural ideas of substitution and imputation, the whole subject is dark, obscure, and impalpable. We can give no distinct or intelligible statement or explanation of how either the satisfaction or the meritorious obedience of Christ bear upon, and affect, the forgiveness and the acceptance of sinners, except by saying that they were rendered in the room and stead of men, and that they are applied to, and made available for, those in whose room they were rendered, by being made over to them, and put down to their account, so that they in consequence are regarded and treated as if they had endured and done them themselves. This is what is obviously suggested by the general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject; and it is only in this way that we can clearly and definitely express the substance of what an examination of Scripture statements forces upon our minds as the actual reality of the case.

Romanists, accordingly, while professedly arguing against the imputation of Christ's righteousness for the justification of sinners, have felt themselves constrained to make concessions, which involve the whole substance of what Protestants contend for in this matter. Bellarmine, speaking of the views of the Reformers upon this subject, says, in an often quoted passage, "*Si solum vel lent, nobis imputari Christi merita, quia nobis donata sunt, et possumus ea Deo Patri offerre pro peccatis nostris,*

quoniam Christus suscepit super se onus satisfaciendi pro nobis, nosque Deo Patri reconciliandi, recta esset eorum sententia.” And Protestant divines have usually answered by saying, they just mean this, and nothing more than this, when they contend that Christ’s satisfactory sufferings and meritorious obedience are imputed to men for their justification, — viz., that the merits of Christ are given to them, and that they, as it were, present them to the Father as the ground of their forgiveness and acceptance. And all that they ask of the Romanists is, that, in place of evading this concession, as Bellarmine does, by attempting to involve the subject in obscurity by the help of the scholastic distinction of a formal cause, they would just form a clear and definite conception of what the statement means, and honestly apply it to the matter in hand. If it be admitted that the meritorious obedience of Christ is given to us, and may be presented or offered by us, to the Father, and if men would attempt to realize what this means, they could not fail to see that they are bound, in consistency, to hold that it was rendered in our room and stead, —that it is, in consequence, freely bestowed upon us, —and, being on this ground held or reckoned as ours, becomes thus the basis on which God communicates to us all the blessings which Christ, by His meritorious obedience, purchased for us, and which are necessary for our eternal happiness.

It is proper to mention that there have been some, though few, Calvinistic divines, who have rejected the distinction between forgiveness and acceptance, and between the passive and the active righteousness of Christ, as not being in their judgment sufficiently established by Scripture, and have appealed to the authority of Calvin, without any sufficient warrant, as sanctioning this opinion. The Calvinistic divines who have most distinguished themselves by deviating from the orthodox doctrine upon this subject, are Piscator and Wendelinus, who both belonged to the German Reformed Church, the former of whom flourished about the beginning, and the latter about the middle, of the seventeenth century; while, on the other hand, it is interesting to notice that, until all sound doctrine was destroyed in the Lutheran Church by the prevalence of Rationalism, these distinctions were strenuously maintained by the most eminent Lutheran divines. The general considerations on which Piscator and Wendelinus based their opinion are

of no force, except upon the assumption of principles which would overturn altogether the scriptural doctrines of substitution and imputation. The whole question upon the subject resolves into this, Whether we have sufficiently clear indications of the distinction in Scripture, —a question in the discussion of which it has been shown that the Scripture evidence is sufficient, and that the opponents of the distinction demand a measure of evidence in point of amount, and of directness or explicitness, that is quite unreasonable. At the same time, many eminent divines have been of opinion that the controversies which have been carried on, on this subject, have led some of the defenders of the truth to give a prominence and an importance to this distinction beyond what Scripture warrants, and scarcely in keeping with the general scope and spirit of its statements. There is no trace of this tendency to excess in the admirably cautious and accurate declarations of our Confession of Faith; and the danger of yielding to it, and, at the same time, the importance of maintaining the whole truth upon the point as sanctioned by Scripture, are very clearly and ably enforced by Turretine.

Papists, and other opponents of the truth upon this subject, usually represent an imputed righteousness as if it were a putative, fictitious, or imaginary righteousness. But this representation has no foundation in anything that was held by the Reformers, or that can be shown to be involved in, or deducible from, their doctrine. The righteousness of Christ, including the whole of His perfect and meritorious obedience to the law, as well as His suffering, was a great and infinitely important reality. It was intended to effect and secure the salvation of all those whom God had chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is in due time, and in accordance with the arrangements which God in His infinite wisdom has laid down, bestowed upon each of them, through his union to Christ by faith, not in any mere fiction of law, but in actual deed; and being thus really, and not merely putatively or by a fiction, bestowed upon them, it is, of course, held or reckoned as theirs, and thus becomes the ground— the full and adequate ground— on which God further bestows upon them the forgiveness of all their sins, and a right to the heavenly inheritance, and to all the privileges of sonship; so that they feel it ever thereafter to be at once their duty and their privilege, on the ground of clear and definite conceptions of what Christ has purchased

and merited for them, to ascribe all that they are, and have, and hope for. to Him who not only washed them from their sins in His own blood, but has also made them kings and priests unto God and His Father.

IV. Justification by Faith alone

The justification of sinners, —i.e., the actual forgiveness of their sins, and the acceptance of their persons, or the bestowal upon them of a right and title to life, —are ascribed in Scripture to God, or to His grace; they are ascribed to Christ, and to what He has done and suffered in our room and stead; and they are ascribed to faith. The propositions, then, that men are justified by God's grace, that they are justified by Christ's sufferings and merits, and that they are justified by faith, are all true, and should all be understood and believed. A full exposition of the Scripture doctrine of justification requires that all these propositions be interpreted in their true scriptural sense, and that they be combined together in their just relation, so as to form a harmonious whole. It is to the third and last of these fundamental propositions, constituting the scriptural doctrine of justification, that we have now briefly to advert, —viz., that men are justified by faith.

This proposition is so frequently asserted in Scripture, in express terms, that it is not denied by any who acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible. But the discussion of the sense in which the proposition is to be understood, and the way and manner in which this truth is to be connected and combined with the other departments of scriptural doctrine upon the subject of justification, occupied, as we have already explained, a most important place in the controversies which were carried on between the Reformers and the Romanists. The disputes upon this subject involved the discussion of three different questions, viz., First, What is the nature of justifying faith, or what is the definition or description of that faith to which justification is ascribed in Scripture? Secondly, Whether there be anything else in men themselves that concurs or co-operates with their faith in the matter of their justification, — anything else in them that is represented as standing in the same relation to their justification as faith does? Thirdly, In what way, by what process,

or by what sort of agency or instrumentality is it that faith justifies; and how is the agency or instrumentality, that is assigned to faith in the matter of justification, to be connected and combined with the causality assigned in the matter to the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ imputed?

The first question, then, respected the nature of justifying faith, or the proper definition or description of that faith to which in Scripture justification is ascribed. I have already explained that, upon this point, the differences between the Reformers and the Romanists lay in this, that the Romanists defined faith to be assensus, and placed its seat in the intellect; and that the Reformers defined it to be fiducia, and placed its seat in the will; while, at the same time, mentioned that a very considerable diversity of sentiment had prevailed among orthodox Protestant divines in subsequent times as to the way in which justifying faith should be defined and described, and expressed my opinion that some diversity of sentiment upon this point was not precluded by anything laid down in the standards of our church. I shall merely make a few observations regarding it, premising that this is one of the topics where, I think, it must be admitted that greater precision and accuracy, and a more careful and exact analysis, than were usually manifested by the Reformers in treating of it, were introduced into the exposition and discussion of the subject by the great systematic divines of the seventeenth century.

Romanists define justifying faith to be the mere assent of the understanding to the whole truth of God revealed; and in this view of its nature and import they have been followed by a class of divines who are generally known in modern times, and in this country, under the name of Sandemanians, and who have commonly been disposed to claim to themselves the credit of propounding much clearer and simpler views of this subject, and of scriptural doctrine generally, than those who give a somewhat different definition or description of faith. Those who define faith to be the mere assent of the understanding to truth revealed, of course regard everything else that may be in any way necessary to justification, or that can be proved to exist invariably in justified men, as the fruit, or consequence, or result of faith; while they maintain that

nothing but the mere belief of truth revealed enters into its proper nature, or should form any part of the definition that ought to be given of what faith is. And the Protestant defenders of this view of the nature of justifying faith differ from its Popish advocates chiefly in this, —which, however, is a difference of great importance.— that the Protestants regard everything else that may be connected with justification, or that must exist in justified men, as the invariable and necessary fruit or consequence of the belief of the truth; while the Romanists, as we have seen, maintain that true faith —that faith which justifies whenever justification takes place— may exist, without producing any practical result, and, of course, without justifying. We have already proved this, in regard to the Romanists, by quotations from Bellarmine; and we may add, that so confidently does he maintain this position, that he founds upon it as an argument, to prove that faith alone does not justify.

The great majority of the most eminent and most orthodox Protestant divines have held this view of the nature of justifying faith to be defective; i.e., they have regarded it as not including all that ought to be included in the definition of faith. While the Reformers thought justifying faith to be most properly defined by fiducia, trust or confidence, they do not, of course, deny that it contained or comprehended notitia and assensus, knowledge and assent. They all admitted that it is the duty of men.— and, in a sense, their first and most fundamental duty, —in order to their salvation, to understand and believe what God had revealed; and that the knowledge and belief of the truth revealed— of what God has actually said in His word— must be the basis and foundation of all the other steps they take in the matter of their salvation, and the source or cause, in some sense, of all the necessary changes that are effected upon them. It is by the truth which he reveals that God brings Himself into contact with His rational creatures; and we learn from His word, that the instrumentality of the truth revealed is employed by Him in all His dealings with them, and in all the changes which He effects upon them, with a view to their salvation. Now, the direct and proper correlative acts to truth revealed by God to His rational creatures, are, understanding its meaning, and assenting to it, or believing it, as real and certain; and these, of course, are acts of the intellect. The knowledge and belief of the truth revealed are, therefore, the primary and fundamental duties incumbent upon men,

and are essential parts or elements of justifying and saving faith. Were we in a condition in which we were at liberty to determine this question purely upon philosophical grounds, and had no other materials for deciding it, it might be contended— and I do not well see how, in these circumstances, the position could be disproved— that the knowledge and belief of the doctrines revealed in Scripture must certainly and necessarily lead men to trust in Christ, and to submit to His authority, and thus produce or effect everything necessary for justification and salvation; and that, on this ground, justifying faith might be properly defined to be the belief of the truth revealed; while everything else, which some might be disposed to comprehend under it, might be rather regarded as its invariable and necessary result or consequence. The question, however, cannot be legitimately settled in this way; for, indeed, the question itself properly is, In what sense is the faith to which justification is ascribed used in Scripture? or what is it which the Scripture includes in, or comprehends under, the word faith? And this question can be settled only by an examination of the passages in which the word faith and its cognates occur, —an examination on which we do not propose at present to enter.

It can scarcely be disputed that the word faith is used in Scripture in a variety of senses, and more especially that it is employed there in a wider and in a more limited signification, as if it were used sometimes to designate a whole, and at other times some one or more of the parts or elements of which this whole is composed. It is on this account that it has always been found so difficult to give anything like a formal definition of faith in its scriptural acceptance, —a definition that should include all that the Scripture comprehends under faith itself, as proper to it, and nothing more. At the same time, while it is admitted that faith is sometimes used in Scripture in the sense of mere belief or assent to truth, in such a sense as would require us, were it received as the only and complete definition of faith, to regard trust or confidence in Christ, receiving and embracing Him, rather as consequences of faith, than as parts or acts of faith, I think it has been proved by Protestant divines, in opposition to the Romanists, that trust or confidence, which is an act of the will, does enter into the ordinary and full idea of scriptural-faith; and that the faith by which men are said to be justified, includes in it (and not

merely produces) something more than the belief of truths or doctrines, —even trust or confidence in a person, —in Him who has purchased for us all the blessings of redemption, who has all these blessings in Himself, and who, in His word, is offering Himself and all these blessings to us, and inviting us to accept them. It may be said to be more correct, metaphysically, to represent this trust or confidence in Christ, this receiving and resting upon Him for salvation, as the fruit, or result, or consequence of faith, in its strict and proper sense: and no doubt it is a result or consequence of knowing and assenting to the truths revealed in Scripture concerning Him, and concerning this salvation which He has purchased and is offering; but it is also true, —i.e., I think this has been proved, —that Scripture represents the faith by which men are justified as including or containing that state of mind which can be described only by such words as trust and confidence, and as involving or comprehending that act, or those acts, which are described as accepting, embracing, receiving, and resting upon Christ and His work for salvation. There is nothing in this scriptural view of the matter, —nothing in this scriptural use of language, —which in the least contradicts any sound metaphysical principles about the connection between the operations of the understanding and the will; for the substance of the whole matter is just this, that the Scripture does not ordinarily and generally call that faith which is descriptive of a state of mind that is merely intellectual, and which does not comprehend acts that involve an exercise of the powers of the will; and, more especially, it does not represent men as justified by faith, or as possessed of the faith which justifies, until they have been enabled, —no doubt under the influence, or as the result, of scriptural views of Christ and His work, —to exercise trust and confidence in Him as their Saviour; to accept, to lay hold of, and to apply to themselves, the blessings of forgiveness and acceptance, which he has purchased for them, and is offering to them in the word of the truth of the gospel.

But I need not dwell longer upon this point, and must proceed to advert to the second question, viz., Whether faith alone justifies; or whether there be anything else in men themselves that is represented in Scripture as the cause, in any sense, why men individually receive forgiveness and acceptance at the hand of God. It was the unanimous doctrine of the Reformers, and one to which they attached very great importance, that

men are justified by faith alone: not meaning that the faith which justified them existed alone, or solitarily; but, on the contrary, maintaining that this faith “is ever accompanied with all other saving graces:” not meaning that nothing else was required of men in order to their being forgiven, — for they believed that, in order that we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us repentance unto life as well as faith in Jesus Christ; but meaning this, that there is nothing else in men themselves to which their justification is in Scripture ascribed, —nothing else required of them, and existing in them, which stands in the same relation to justification as their faith does, or exerts any causality, or efficiency, or instrumentality in producing the result of their being justified.

The Council of Trent openly denied this fundamental doctrine of the Reformers, and maintained that there were six other virtues, as they call them, which all concurred with faith in obtaining for men the grace of justification. They did not, indeed, assign to these virtues, or even to faith itself, any power of justifying, properly so called, but only that of preparing or disposing men to justification. They did, however, —and that is the only point with which we have at present to do, —deny the Protestant doctrine, that faith is the only thing in men themselves by which they are justified; and they denied this, in the way of ascribing to these six other virtues the very same relation to justification, and the very same kind of influence in producing or procuring it, which they ascribe to faith: and this was very distinctly and explicitly brought out in the quotations I have already made from Bellarmine. These six virtues are, — fear, hope, love, penitence, a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and a purpose of leading a life of obedience; and Bellarmine, and other defenders of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, labour to prove from Scripture that these qualities, or states of mind and feeling, are represented there as procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins, and the enjoyment of God’s favour. It is certain that there is not one of them which is ever, in express terms, said in Scripture to justify men, or by which men are said to be justified, while men are frequently and most explicitly said to be justified by faith: and this single consideration may be fairly regarded as by itself a proof that, at least, they do not stand in the same relation to justification as faith does, —that it

holds a place, and exerts an influence, in the justification of sinners, which do not belong to any of them. All that can be proved from Scripture about these things, speaking of them generally, is, first, that they all exist in, and are wrought by God upon, those men whom He justifies; and, secondly, that they are all duties which He requires of men; and that, of course, upon both these grounds they are in some sense pleasing and acceptable to Him. These positions can be proved; but the proof of them affords no ground whatever for the conclusion that men are justified by these graces, or that they exert any influence in procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour: for it is manifest that God may require, as a matter of duty, or bestow as a matter of grace, what may exert no influence, and have no real efficient bearing upon other gifts which he also bestows.

Indeed, it may be justly contended that no gift or favour which God bestows, can, simply as such, exert any real influence in procuring for men other favours at His hand. God may, indeed, in the exercise of His wisdom, resolve, with a view to general and ulterior objects, to bestow His gifts or favours in a certain order, and with something like mutual dependence between them; and we may be able to see something of the suitableness and wisdom of this arrangement; but this affords no ground for our asserting that the one first conferred exerted any influence in procuring or obtaining for us the one that was subsequently bestowed. As the discharge of duties which God requires of men, these virtues are, in so far as they may be really in conformity with what He enjoins, agreeable to His will, pleasing and acceptable in His sight: but this does not prove that they can procure for men the forgiveness of their sins, or a right or title to eternal life.

The fact, then, that these things are represented in Scripture as required by God of men, and as conferred by Him as graces or favours upon all those whom he justifies, —and this is all that the Scripture proofs adduced by Romanists, in discussing this subject, establish, —affords no evidence that men are justified by them, or that they have any place or influence in procuring or obtaining for men forgiveness and acceptance.

But, perhaps, it may be said that the same considerations apply equally to faith, which is also a duty required by God, and a grace bestowed by Him.

We admit that they do; but then we answer, first, that we assert, and undertake to prove, as will be afterwards explained, that though faith is both a duty commanded and a grace bestowed, it is not in either of these capacities, or simply as such, that it justifies, but solely as the instrument or hand by which men receive and lay hold of the righteousness of Christ; and, secondly, that the object and the practical result of these considerations are not directly to disprove or exclude the justifying efficacy of these virtues, but merely to show that the inference in support of their alleged justifying efficacy, —which is based solely upon the fact that they are represented as existing in all justified men, being conferred by God and required by Him, —is unfounded. Men are never said, in Scripture, to be justified by them; and the only process by which it is attempted to show that any justifying efficacy attaches to them, is by this inference from other things said about them in Scripture; and if this inference can be shown to be unfounded, —and this, we think, the considerations above adduced accomplish, —then the argument which we are opposing falls to the ground. The state of the case is very different with respect to faith. We do not need to prove, by an inferential process of reasoning, from Scripture that faith justifies; for this is frequently asserted in express terms, and thus stands proved without any argument or inference. We have merely to answer the inferential process by which it is attempted to prove, in the absence of all direct scriptural authority, that men are justified by these virtues as well as by faith; and having done this, we then fall back again upon the position that men are expressly said in Scripture to be justified by faith, while it cannot be shown, either directly or by inference, that they are represented as being justified by any of those virtues to which Romanists assign a co-ordinate place with faith in the matter.

Not only, however, are men said to be justified by faith, while they are not said, directly or by implication, to be justified by anything else existing in themselves: they are also said to be justified by faith without works or deeds of law. This, indeed, is the great doctrine which the Apostle Paul lays down, and formally and elaborately proves, in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians; and no effort has been spared by Romanists, and other opponents of evangelical truth, to pervert the apostle's statements into an accordance with their views. This, of course, opens up

a wide field of critical discussion, upon which we do not enter. The great subject of controversy is, What is it that the apostle intended to exclude from any co-operation or joint efficacy with faith in the matter of the justification of sinners, under the name of works or deeds of law? Now, it was contended by all the Reformers, that, according to the natural and proper import of the apostle's words, and the general scope and object of his argument, especially in his Epistle to the Romans, he must have intended to exclude from all joint or co-ordinate efficacy with faith in the matter of justification, all obedience which men did or could render to the requirements of the law under which they were placed, whatever that might be; while it has been alleged by Romanists, and other enemies of the doctrine of gratuitous justification, that he meant merely to exclude, as some say, the works of the ceremonial law; others, obedience to the Mosaic law in general; and others, all works performed, or obedience rendered to the divine law, by men, in the exercise of their natural and unaided powers, previously to the reception of divine grace, and the production of justifying faith.

The opinion which would limit the apostle's exclusion of works from co-operating with faith in the justification of sinners, to the observance of the requirements of the ceremonial law, is too obviously inconsistent with the whole tenor and scope of his statements, to be entitled to much consideration. It is not denied that there are statements in the apostle's writings upon the subject of justification, especially in the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he has chiefly in view those who enforced the observance of the Mosaic law as necessary to forgiveness and acceptance; and is showing, in opposition to them, that the obedience which might be rendered to it had no influence in the matter, and was wholly excluded from any joint efficacy with faith in obtaining justification; while it is contended that, even in the Epistle to the Galatians, he argues for the exclusion of the observance of the Mosaic law, from the matter of justification, upon principles and grounds which have a wider and more general bearing, and which equally exclude all mere obedience to law, as such. And in the Epistle to the Romans, —where, after having proved the guilt and sinfulness of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, he addressed himself equally to both classes, —his object evidently required, and his statements plainly imply, that it was law, as such, under whatever form,

and obedience to law, by whomsoever rendered, and from whatsoever principle proceeding, that are excluded from any influence in procuring the justification of sinners.

The Romanists generally allege that the apostle meant to exclude only works done, or obedience to law rendered, by men's natural and unaided powers, before they receive the grace of God, and are enabled to exercise faith; and thus they leave room for bringing in their six other virtues, which they ascribe to the operation of God's grace, and regard as springing from faith. This is, perhaps, upon the whole, the most plausible expedient for perverting the apostle's meaning, at least so far as the Epistle to the Romans is concerned; but it is liable to insuperable objections. It is wholly unwarranted and gratuitous. There is nothing in the apostle's statements to suggest it, —nothing in his argument, or in the principles on which it is based, to require it; nothing in any part of Scripture to oblige or entitle us to force upon him an idea which seems not to have been present to his own mind. The distinction between these two kinds or classes of works has evidently been devised, —i.e., so far as its application to this matter is concerned, for in itself it is a real and important distinction, —in order to serve a purpose; and its only real foundation is, that some men have chosen to believe and assert that these virtues or graces, since they exist in justified men, must have some share in procuring their justification. And while the distinction is thus, in this application of it, wholly unwarranted and gratuitous, it can be shown to be positively inconsistent with the scope of the apostle's argument, which implies that any mere obedience rendered to any law, —any mere compliance with any of God's requirements, in whatever source originating, on whatever principles based, —viewed simply as such, would, if introduced into the matter of a sinner's justification, as having any efficacy in procuring or obtaining it, be inconsistent at once with the purely gratuitous character of God's act in pardoning and accepting, and with the place or influence assigned to faith in the matter, grace or gratuitousness, and faith, are described as not only consistent, but as fully and admirably harmonizing with each other; while obedience to law, so far as concerns the matter of justification, is represented as a principle of an opposite character or tendency, not only having no influence in procuring justification, but tending, —so far as it may be introduced into

this matter, and relied upon in connection with it, —to exclude the operation of the principles on which God has been pleased to regulate this subject, and to frustrate His gracious design. This is the doctrine taught by Paul, clearly implied in many of his particular statements, and in the general scope and substance of his argument: and there is nothing whatever in any part of his writings that requires or entitles us to modify this view of his meaning.

One main objection that has been adduced against receiving this interpretation of Paul's statements as the true doctrine of Scripture on the subject of justification, is, that the Apostle James seems to teach an opposite doctrine, when, in the second chapter of his epistle, he asserts that men are justified by works, and not by faith only; and that Abraham and Rahab were justified by works. This question of the reconciliation of Paul and James upon the subject of justification, has also given rise to much interesting critical discussion. I shall only state, in general, that I am persuaded that the two following positions have been established regarding it. First, that the Apostle James did not intend to discuss, and does not discuss, the subject of justification in the sense in which it is so fully expounded in Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians; that he does not state anything about the grounds or principles on which, —the way and manner in which, —sinners are admitted to forgiveness and the favour of God; and that his great general object is simply to set forth the real tendency and result of that true living faith which holds so important a place in everything connected with the salvation of sinners. The truth of this position is very clearly indicated by the terms in which James introduces the subject in the fourteenth verse: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" or rather the faith, for the original has the article, ἡ πίστις; i.e., the faith which he says he has, or professes to have, but really has not, —can that faith save him! This is the subject which alone the apostle proposed to discuss, and there is nothing in the following statements sufficient to show that any other subject than this was introduced in the course of the discussion, or that the apostle gave, or intended to give, any deliverance whatever upon the grounds or reasons of the justification of a sinner before God, or upon the way and manner in which he obtains forgiveness and acceptance. Secondly, that the justification of which

dames speaks, and which he ascribes to works, refers to something in men's history posterior to that great era when their sins are forgiven, and they are admitted to the enjoyment of God's favour, —i.e., to the proof or manifestation of the reality and efficacy of their faith to themselves and their fellow-men. This position may be shown to be virtually involved in, or clearly deducible from, the former one, and has, besides, its own proper and peculiar evidence, —especially in the application which the apostle makes of the case of Abraham, in saying that he was justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar; for it is quite certain, from the history of Abraham's life, that, many years before he was thus justified by works, he had, as the Apostle Paul tells us, been justified by faith, —i.e., had had his sins forgiven, and had been admitted fully and unchangeably into the favour and friendship of God, and had thus passed that great crisis on which the eternal happiness of every sinner depends, and the nature, grounds, and means of which it was Paul's sole object to expound in all that he has written upon the subject of justification. So evident is the posteriority of the justification by works, of which James speaks, to the proper forgiveness and acceptance of sinners, that many Popish writers, —in this, manifesting greater candour than that large body of Episcopalian writers who have followed the system of interpretation set forth in Bishop Bull's "Harmonia Apostolica," — regard James' justification as applying, not to the first, but to what they call the second, justification, or that process by which a justified person is made more righteous.

This notion of theirs about a first and second justification, — comprehending, as they do, under that word, both forgiveness and sanctification, —is utterly unfounded, and tends to pervert the whole doctrine of Scripture upon the subject. For the Scripture teaches that, while God, by His grace, makes justified men progressively more holy, he "continues to forgive" the sins which they commit, on the very same grounds, and through the very same process, by which the forgiveness of all their past sins was originally bestowed upon them. But still the application of this notion to the interpretation of James' statements upon the subject, shows a somewhat juster appreciation than many of the Protestant corrupters of the doctrine of justification have exhibited, of the difficulty of extracting anything from James that could contradict and

overturn Paul's great doctrine of justification by faith alone, without deeds of law.

If these two positions can be established, the apparent discrepancy between the apostles is removed; each asserts his own doctrine without contradicting the other; and we remain not only warranted, but bound, to hold as absolute and unqualified, Paul's exclusion of works or of mere obedience to law, from the matter of a sinner's justification before God: and to regard his doctrine that men are justified by faith, without deeds of law, as meaning, what it naturally and obviously imports that men are justified by faith alone, or that there is nothing else in them which concurs or co-operates with faith in procuring or obtaining their forgiveness and acceptance. But here again it may be alleged that faith itself is a work or act of obedience: and that therefore, upon this interpretation of the apostles' statements, it too must be excluded from any influence or efficacy in justification. This leads us to the consideration of the third question, as to the way and manner in which faith justifies, or the place it holds in the matter of justification: and a brief exposition of this topic will not only solve the objection that has now been stated, but afford additional confirmation to the great Protestant doctrine, that men are justified by faith only; and at the same time lead to an explanation of the relation that subsists among the great doctrines, that men are justified by God's grace, that they are justified by Christ's righteousness, and that they are justified by faith alone.

XXII. The Sacramental Principle

We have referred only incidentally to the doctrine of the Church of Rome as to the bearing and influence of the sacraments in the justification of sinners. But as this is a very important feature of the Romish system of theology, —as the Romish doctrine on this subject was strenuously opposed by the Reformers, —and as the doctrine of sacramental justification, as it has been called, has been revived in our own day, and been zealously maintained even by men who have not yet joined the Church of Rome, —it may be proper to make some further observations upon it.

I. Sacramental Grace

The natural enmity of the human heart to the principles and plans of the divine procedure in regard to the salvation of sinners, —the natural tendency to self-righteousness which is so strongly and universally characteristic of mankind, —has appeared in two different forms: first, a tendency to rely for the forgiveness of sin and the enjoyment of God's favour upon what men themselves are, or can do; and, secondly, a tendency to rely upon the intervention and assistance of other men or creatures, and upon outward ordinances. Heathenism exhibited both; and the corrupted Judaism of our Saviour's days, —the prevailing party of the Pharisees, —exhibited both. The Sadducees of the apostolic days, and the Socinian and the rationalistic, or the semi-infidel and the infidel, forms of professed Christianity in modern times, have exhibited only the first of these tendencies, in different degrees of grossness, on the one hand, or of plausibility, on the other; while Popery, like heathenism and corrupted Judaism, exhibits a combination of both. There appeared in the church at an early period, a tendency to speak of the nature, design, and effects of the sacraments, or the "tremendous mysteries," as some of the fathers call them, in a very inflated and exaggerated style, —a style very different from anything we find in Scripture upon the subject. This tendency increased continually as sound doctrine disappeared and vital

religion decayed, until, in the middle ages, Christianity was looked upon by the great body of its professors as a system which consisted in, and the whole benefits of which were connected with, a series of outward ceremonies and ritual observances. The nature, design, and effects of the sacraments occupied a large share of the attention of the schoolmen; and, indeed, the exposition and development of what is sometimes called in our days the sacramental principle," may be justly regarded as one of the principal exhibitions of the anti-scriptural views and the perverted ingenuity of the scholastic doctors. An exaggerated and unscriptural view of the value and efficacy of the sacraments was too deeply ingrained into the scholastic theology, and was too much in accordance with the usual policy of the Church of Rome, and the general character and tendency of her doctrine, to admit of the Council of Trent giving any sanction to the sounder views upon the subject which had been introduced by the Reformers, and especially by the Calvinistic section of them, —for Luther always continued to hold some defective and erroneous notions upon this point. The doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is set forth in the first part of the decree of the seventh session of the Council of Trent, which treats de Sacramentis in genere, and in other statements made in treating of some of the sacraments individually. The leading features of their doctrine are these: —that, through the sacraments of the Church, all true righteousness either begins, or when begun, is increased, or when lost, is repaired; that men do not obtain from God the grace of justification by faith alone without the sacraments, or at least without a desire and wish to receive them; that the sacraments confer grace always upon all who receive them, unless they put an obstacle in the way (ponunt obicem), —that is, as they usually explain it, unless they have, at the time of receiving them, a deliberate intention of committing sin, —and that they confer grace thus universally ex opere operato, or by some power or virtue given to them, and operating through them. And with respect, more particularly, to the forgiveness of sin, the Church of Rome teaches, as we have seen, that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, — that all previous sins are certainly forgiven in baptism, —and that no sin is forgiven, not even the original sin of those who die in infancy, without it;— and, finally, that post-baptismal sin is forgiven only in the sacrament of penance, that is, through the confession of the sinner and the absolution of the priest.

This is just, in substance, the doctrine which is taught by the modern Tractarians, under the name of the “sacramental principle.” Mr Newman, in his Lectures on Justification, published several years before he left the Church of England, gives the following summary of his views upon the subject: “Justification comes through the Sacraments; is received by faith; consists in God’s inward presence, and lives in obedience and again: “Whether we say we are justified by faith, or by works, or by Sacraments, all these but mean this one doctrine, that we are justified by grace, which is given through Sacraments, impetrated by faith, manifested in works.” he admits, indeed, that, in some sense, faith is the internal, while baptism is the external, instrument of justification; but, in explaining their respective offices and functions as instruments in the production of the result, he ascribes to faith a position of posteriority and subordination to baptism. “The Sacraments,” he says, “are the immediate, faith is the secondary, subordinate, or representative instrument of justification.” “Faith being the appointed representative of Baptism, derives its authority and virtue from that which it represents. It is justifying because of Baptism; it is the faith of the baptized, of the regenerate, that is, of the justified. Justifying faith does not precede justification; but justification precedes faith, and makes it justifying. And here lies the cardinal mistake of the views on the subject which are now in esteem (evangelical). They make faith the sole instrument, not after Baptism but before; whereas Baptism is the primary instrument, and makes faith to be what it is, and otherwise is not.” He admits, indeed, what could not well be denied, that, in some sense, faith exists before baptism, —i.e., of course, in adults; but he denies that faith has then, —or until after baptism makes it, as he says, justifying, —any influence whatever upon justification. This was certainly raising the efficacy of the sacraments at least as high as the Council of Trent did; while it also exhibited, in addition to its heresy, a depth of folly and absurdity, and a daring opposition to the plain teaching of Scripture, which the Council of Trent had usually the sense and the decency to avoid.

The essential idea of this Popish and Tractarian doctrine of the sacraments is this: that God has established an invariable connection between these external ordinances, and the communication of Himself, — the possession by men of spiritual blessings, pardon, and holiness; with

this further notion, which naturally results from it, that he has endowed these outward ordinances with some sort of power or capacity of conveying or conferring the blessings with which they are respectively connected. It is a necessary result of this principle, that the want of the outward ordinance, —not the neglect or contempt of it, but the mere want of it, from whatever cause arising, —deprives men of the spiritual blessings which it is said to confer. The Church of Rome has found it necessary or politic to make some little exceptions to this practical conclusion; but this is the great general principle to which her whole system of doctrine upon the subject leads, and which ordinarily she does not hesitate to apply. The Protestant doctrine, upon the other hand, is, that the only thing on which the possession by men individually of spiritual blessings, —of justification and sanctification, —is made necessarily and invariably dependent, is union to Christ; and that the only thing on which union to Christ may be said to be dependent, is faith in Him: so that it holds true, absolutely and universally, that wherever there is faith in Christ, or union to Christ by faith, there pardon and holiness, —all necessary spiritual blessings, —are communicated by God and received by men, even though they have not actually partaken in any sacrament or external ordinance whatever. If this great principle can be fully established from Scripture, —as Protestants believe it can, —then it overturns from the foundation the Popish and Tractarian doctrine about the office and function of the sacraments; while, on the other hand, if they can establish from Scripture their doctrine of the sacraments, this would necessitate a rejection or modification of the great Protestant principle above stated. It is to be observed, however, that even after this Protestant principle has been established from Scripture, and after the Popish and Tractarian view of the sacraments, which is inconsistent with it, has been disproved, it still remains incumbent upon Protestants to explain what the design and efficacy of the sacraments are, —what is the place they hold, and what is the influence they exert, in connection with the bestowal by God, and the reception by men, of spiritual blessings. The general doctrine of Protestants upon this subject, though there is some diversity in their mode of explaining it, is this, —that the sacraments are symbolical or exhibitivè ordinances, signs and seals of the covenant of grace, not only signifying and representing Christ and the benefits of the new covenant, but sealing, and, in some sense, applying, them to

believers. They regard them, however, as mere appendages to the word or the truth, and as exerting no influence whatever, apart from the faith which the participation in them expresses, and which must exist in each adult before participation in them can be either warrantable or beneficial. These are the leading topics involved in the discussion of this subject, and this is the way in which they are connected with each other.

There is one remark that may be of some use in explaining the discussions which have taken place upon this point, —namely, that when the subject of the sacraments in general, —that is, of i their general nature, design, and efficacy, —is under consideration, it is usually assumed that the persons who partake of them are possessed of the necessary preliminary qualifications; and, more particularly, that when statements are made upon this subject which are applied equally to baptism and the Lord's Supper, or when the general object and design of baptism and the Lord's

Supper are set forth in the abstract, it is adult participation only which theologians have ordinarily in view, —the participation of those who, after they have grown up to years of understanding, desire to hold communion with the visible church of Christ. It is in this aspect that baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper, is usually referred to, and presented to us, in the New Testament; and it is from the case of adult participation that we ought to form our general views and impressions of the meaning and design of these ordinances. It tends greatly to introduce obscurity and confusion into our whole conceptions upon the subject of baptism, that we see it ordinarily administered to infants, and very seldom to adults. This leads us insensibly to form very defective and erroneous conceptions of its design and effect, or rather to live with our minds very much in the state of blanks, so far as concerns any distinct and definite views upon the subject. There is a difficulty felt, —a difficulty which Scripture does not afford us materials for altogether removing, —in laying down any very distinct and definite doctrine as to the precise bearing and efficacy of baptism in the case of infants, to whom alone ordinarily we see it administered. And hence it becomes practically, as well as theoretically, important to remember, that we ought to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of baptism from the baptism of

adults, in which it must be, in every instance, according to the general doctrine of Protestants, either the sign and seal of a faith and regeneration previously existing, —already effected by God’s grace, —or else a hypocritical profession of a state of mind and feeling which has no existence. This is the original and fundamental idea of the ordinance of baptism, as it is usually represented to us in Scripture. And when we contemplate it in this light, there is no more difficulty in forming a distinct and definite conception regarding it than regarding the Lord’s Supper. We have no doubt that the lawfulness of infant baptism can be conclusively established from Scripture; but it is manifest that the general doctrine or theory with respect to the design and effect of baptism, as above stated, must undergo some modification in its application to the case of infants. And the danger to be provided against, is that of taking the baptism of infants, with all the difficulties attaching to giving a precise and definite statement as to its design and effect in their case, and making this regulate our whole conceptions with respect to the ordinance in general, —and even with respect, to sacraments in general, —instead of regarding adult baptism as affording the proper and fundamental type of it; deriving our general conceptions of it from that case, and then, since infant baptism is also fully warranted by Scripture, examining what modifications the leading general views of the ordinance must undergo when applied to the special and peculiar case of the baptism of infants. The Reformers, when discussing this subject, having adult baptism chiefly in their view, usually speak as if they regarded baptism and regeneration as substantially identical; not intending to assert or concede the Popish principle of an invariable connection between them, as a general thesis, —for it is quite certain, and can be most fully established, that they rejected this, —but because the Council of Trent, in treating of the general subject of justification, discussed it chiefly in its bearing upon the case of those who had not been baptized in infancy, and with whom, consequently, baptism, if it was not a mere hypocritical profession, destitute of all worth or value, was, in the judgment of Protestants, a sign and seal of a faith and a regeneration previously wrought in them, and now existing; and because it was when viewed in this aspect and application, that the great general doctrine of the design and efficacy of the sacraments, in their bearing upon the justification of sinners, stood out for examination in the clearest and most definite form. Accordingly,

all that Calvin says upon the declaration of the Council of Trent, that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, is this: “It is a great absurdity to make baptism alone the instrumental cause. If it be so, what becomes of the gospel? Will it, in turn, get into the lowest corner I But they say baptism is the sacrament of faith. True: but when all is said, I will still maintain that it is nothing but an appendage to the Gospel (Evangelii appendicem). They act preposterously in giving it the first place, —that is, in preference to the gospel or the truth; and this is just as if a man should say that the instrumental cause of a house is the handling of the workman's trowel (trullo manubrium). he who, putting the gospel in the background, numbers baptism among the causes of salvation, shows thereby that he does not know what baptism is or means, or what is its functions or use.”

These considerations are to be applied— and, indeed, must be applied— to the interpretation of the general abstract statements about a sacrament or the sacraments, and more particularly about baptism, which are to be found in the confessions of the Reformed churches. They ought to be kept in view in considering the general declarations of our own Confession and Catechisms. Sacraments are there described f “as holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits, and to confirm our interest in Him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His word.” This statement, of course, applies equally and alike to both sacraments; and it evidently is assumed, that those whose interest in Christ is to be confirmed by the sacraments, are persons who already, before they participate in either sacrament, have an interest in Christ, and are possessed of the necessary qualifications, whatever these may be, for the reception and improvement of the sacraments. This is brought out, if possible, still more clearly in the simple statement of the Shorter Catechism, that “a sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers;” to believers, —a statement plainly conveying, and intended to convey, the doctrine that one fundamental general position concerning the sacrament is, that they are intended for believers, and, of course, for believers only, unless

some special exceptional case can be made out, as we are persuaded can be done in the case of the infants of believers. In like manner, baptism is described in our Confession as a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be in do him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life." Now here, first, it is to be observed, in general, that this is just an application to the special case of baptism, —its import, object, and design, —of the general definition previously given of the sacraments, and, of course, with the assumption of the possession of the necessary qualifications of the persons baptized: and secondly, and more particularly, that it applies primarily and fully only to the case of adult baptism, where the previous existence of these qualifications may be tested; while it still remains a question, to be determined after the lawfulness of infant baptism has been established, how far this general description of baptism applies fully to infant baptism, how far some modification of the general doctrine may be necessary in that special case.

It is common to adduce against the Popish and Tractarian view of the design and efficacy of the sacraments, —against the alleged invariable connection between them, and the communication and reception of spiritual blessings, —the general character of the Christian dispensation as contrasted with the Jewish, in that, under the gospel, external rites and ceremonies have nothing like prominence assigned to them; and that its whole arrangements are manifestly adapted to the object of addressing directly men's understandings and consciences, and engaging them in the worship and service of God, —while very little provision is made for impressing their external senses. I have no doubt that the predominant spiritual character of the Christian dispensation affords a very strong presumption against the Popish system, with its seven sacraments, and its huge and burdensome load of rites and ceremonies, contrasting, as it does, very glaringly with the Christianity of the New Testament. Put a general and indefinite consideration of this sort is scarcely of itself sufficient to overturn a distinct and definite position which professed to rest upon scriptural evidence. Men are not able to determine, upon

general grounds, with anything like certainty, whether a particular principle or arrangement is, or is not, inconsistent with the spiritual character of the Christian dispensation. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, deduce, as an inference from the spiritual character of Christianity, that no external ordinances were intended to be permanently administered in the Christian church, and allege that the apostles baptized and administered the Lord's Supper for a time merely in accommodation to Jewish weakness and prejudice. Even if a great deal that was plausible could be said in support of the general position, that the permanent observance of any outward ordinances is inconsistent with the spiritual character of the Christian dispensation, it would still be a competent and valid answer to the Quakers, to undertake to prove from Scripture that it was manifestly Christ's intention that the observance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper should continue permanently in His church. And, in like manner, Papists might argue, that, if the permanent observance of these two outward ordinances is not inconsistent with the spiritual character of the Christian dispensation, neither can it be easily proved that such an inconsistency necessarily attaches to any particular view of their office or function, or of the relation subsisting between them and spiritual blessings.

I have made these observations chiefly for the purpose of teaching the general lesson, that in estimating the truth or falsehood of a doctrine which professes to rest upon scriptural authority, the best and safest course is to examine, first and chiefly, the scriptural statements that bear most directly and immediately upon the point under consideration, instead of resting much upon mere inferences from views or principles of a somewhat general and indefinite description. Now, it cannot be said that we have in Scripture any explicit statements, bearing very directly and immediately upon the precise question of what is the design and effect of the sacraments, and of whether or not there subsists an invariable connection between the observance of them and the reception of spiritual blessings. The Scriptures, indeed, contain nothing bearing very directly upon the topics usually discussed in systems of theology, under the head, *De Sacramentis in genere*. They tell us nothing directly about the general subject of sacraments, as such; but the New Testament sets before us two outward ordinances, and two only, —the observance of

which is of permanent obligation in the Christian church, and which both manifestly possess the general character of being means of grace, or of being connected, in some way or other, with the communication and the reception of spiritual blessings. As these ordinances evidently occupy a peculiar place of their own in the general plan of the Christian system, and in the arrangements of the Christian church, it is natural and reasonable to inquire what materials there are in Scripture for adopting any general conclusions as to their nature, design, and efficacy, that may be equally applicable to them both: and what is usually given as the definition or description of a sacrament, or of the sacraments, is just an embodiment of what can be collected or deduced from Scripture as being equally predicable of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Under this general head, the question to which we have had occasion to refer may very reasonably be broached, —namely, Does the Scripture represent the observance of these ordinances as necessary to the enjoyment of any spiritual blessings does it contain any materials which establish an invariable connection between the observance of them, and the reception and possession of anything needful for men's salvation? And in considering this question, we must first examine the scriptural materials that seem to bear upon it most directly and immediately.

Now, this brings us back to the consideration of the topics formerly adverted to, as those on which the settlement of this subject depends. Protestants, as I have said, maintain that it is a scriptural doctrine, that the only thing on which the possession of spiritual blessings absolutely and invariably depends, is union to Christ; and that the only thing on which union to Christ depends, is faith in Him. As soon as, and in every instance in which, men are united to Christ by faith, they receive justification and regeneration; while without, or apart from, personal union to Christ by faith, these blessings are never conferred or received. Every one who is justified and regenerated, is certainly admitted into heaven whether he be baptized or not, and whether he have performed any actual good works or not, as was undoubtedly exhibited in the case of the thief whom the Redeemer saved upon the cross. In saying that the possessing of spiritual blessings, and the attaining to the everlasting enjoyment of God, depend absolutely and universally upon union to Christ through faith, and upon nothing else, we do not of course mean to

deny the importance and obligation either of sacraments or of good works in their proper order and connection, and upon legitimate scriptural grounds. It is undoubtedly the imperative duty of every one not only to repent, but to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, —to obey the whole law of God; and when these fruits, —this obedience, —are not manifested whenever an opportunity is afforded in providence of manifesting them, this of itself is a universally conclusive proof that the blessings of justification and regeneration have not been bestowed, and that, of course, men are still in their sins, subject to God's wrath and curse. In like manner, the sacraments are of imperative obligation; it is a duty incumbent upon men to observe them, when the means and opportunity of doing so are afforded them, so that it is sinful to neglect or disregard them. But there is nothing in all this in the least inconsistent with the position, that union to Christ by faith infallibly and in every instance secures men's eternal welfare, by conveying or imparting justification and regeneration, even though they may not have been baptized, or have performed any good works.

The Council of Trent insinuated that the Reformers taught that the sacraments "*non esse ad salutem necessaria, sed superflua.*" The Reformers never denied that the sacraments were necessary in the sense that has now been explained.— that is. that they were matters of imperative obligation, —and they never alleged that they were superfluous Calvin's remark upon the canon which we have just quoted is this, "*Facile patiar. ut quae nobis Christus dedit salutis adjumenta. eorum usus necessarius dicatur: quando scilicet datur facultas. Quanquam semper admonendi sunt fideles, non aliam esse cujusvis sacramenti necessitatem. quam instrumentalis causae, cui nequaquam alliganda est Dei virtus. Vocem sane illam nemo pius est qui non toto pectore exhorreat, res esse superfluas.*" Upon the subject of the necessity of the sacraments, Protestant divines have been accustomed to employ this distinction, and it brings out their meaning very clearly.— viz., that they are necessary, *ex necessitate procepti, non ex necessitate medii:* necessary. *ex necessitate procepti,* because the observance of them is commanded or enjoined, and must therefore be practiced by all who have in providence an opportunity of doing so, so that the voluntary neglect or disregard of them is sinful; but not necessary *ex necessitate medii.* or in

such a sense that the inert fact of men not having actually observed them either produce or proves the non-possession of spiritual blessing.— either excludes men from heaven, or affords any evidence that they will not. in point of fact, be admitted there. Regeneration or conversion is necessary both *ex necessitate procepti* and *ex necessitate medii*; it is necessary not merely because it is commanded or enjoined, so that the neglect of it is sinful, but because the result cannot, from the nature of the case, be attained without it, —because it holds true absolutely and universally, in point of fact, and in the case of each individual of our race, that “except we be born again, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Now, the question comes virtually to this. Can a similar necessity be established in regard to the sacraments? And here comes in the argument upon which Papists and Tractarians rest their case. They scarcely allege that there is any evidence in Scripture bearing upon the necessity (*ex necessitate medii*) of the sacraments generally, or of the two sacraments the observance of which Protestants admit to be obligatory, singly and separately. But they assert that, in regard to one of them.— viz., Baptism. — they can prove from Scripture that it is invariably connected with justification and regeneration, so that those who are not baptized do not receive or possess these blessings, and that those who are baptized do, universally in the case of infants, and in the case of adults whenever men are suitably disposed and prepared to receive them. — the preparation required not being very formidable. Now, this is a perfectly fair argument; and though there is a very large amount of presumption or probability from Scripture against its truth, both in general considerations and in specific statements, there is perhaps nothing which can at once and a priori disprove its truth, or deprive it of a right to be examined upon its own proper professed grounds. The establishment of the position, however, it should be observed, would not prove anything in regard to the sacraments in general, or entitle us to put a statement, asserting the invariable connection between the sacraments and grace or spiritual blessings, into the general definition or description of a sacrament. It would establish nothing about what is called the sacramental principle. In order to effect this, the same general position must be established separately and independently about the Lord’s Supper, and about any other ordinance for which the character and

designation of a sacrament are claimed; for the sacramental principle, rightly understood, whatever may be the definition or description given of it, is just that, and neither more nor less, which can be proved from Scripture to attach to, and to be predicable of, each and all of the ordinances to which the name sacrament may be applied. But though the general doctrine of Papists and Tractarians about the design and effect of the sacraments could not be proved merely by this process, still it would be a great matter for them if they could establish from Scripture the more limited position, that Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification; and that, according to God's arrangements, there subsists an invariable connection between the outward ordinance of baptism, and the communication and reception of forgiveness and renovation; and it may therefore be proper to make a few remarks upon the evidence they adduce to this effect.

II. Baptismal Regeneration

session of spiritual blessings, and even ascribe to the sacraments an important amount of actual influence upon the production of the result; maintaining that they confer grace *ex opere operato*, by an intrinsic power or virtue which God has bestowed upon them, and which operates invariably when men do not put a bar in the way of their operation,— that is, as it is usually explained by Romish writers, when men are free at the time of their participation in the sacrament of a present intention of committing sin. The Tractarians, indeed, have not formally committed themselves to the language of the Council of Trent upon the subject of the *opus operationis*; but they teach the whole substance of what is intended by it, and, generally, inculcate as high views of the efficacy of the sacraments as the Church of Rome has ever propounded, —as is evident from the extracts already quoted from Mr Newman, in which he, while still a minister of the Church of England, explicitly ascribed the whole efficacy of faith in justification to baptism, and declared that “baptism makes faith justifying.”

Protestants in general, on the contrary, regard the sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant of grace, signifying and representing in

themselves, as symbols appointed by God. Christ and His benefits, and the scriptural truths which set them forth, and expressing, in the participation of them by individual", their previous reception of Christ and His benefits by faith, —operating beneficially only in those in whom faith already exists, and producing the beneficial effect of confirming and sealing the truths and blessings of the gospel to the individual only through the medium of the faith which participation in them expresses. There is nothing like evidence in Scripture in favour of the general doctrine of an invariable connection between participation of the sacraments and the reception of spiritual blessings; and, indeed, as I have explained, there is nothing said in Scripture directly about sacraments in general, or about a sacrament as Mich. The only plausible evidence which Papists and Tractarians have to produce upon this point, is to be found in those passages which seem to establish an invariable connection between baptism on the one hand, and regeneration and salvation on the other. I cannot enter upon a detailed examination of these passages; but a few general observations will be sufficient to indicate the leading grounds on which Protestants have maintained that they do not warrant the conclusions which Romanists and Tractarians have deduced from them; and that, on the contrary, to adopt the language of our Confession, "grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto" baptism, "as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."

We remark, first, that, in opposition to the Popish and Tractarian view of an invariable connection between baptism and regeneration, and in support of the doctrine just quoted from our Confession of Faith, there is a large amount of scriptural evidence, both in general principles and in specific statements, which, though it may not amount to strict and conclusive proof, so as to entitle us to reject as incompetent any attempt to rebut the conclusion to which it points by an offer of direct scriptural evidence on the other side, is yet quite sufficient to require us to maintain this conclusion as a part of God's revealed truth, unless it be disproved by very clear, direct, and cogent scriptural proofs, and to authorize us to direct our attention, in considering the proofs that may be adduced upon the other side, to this special point, —viz., to show that they do not necessarily require the Construction put upon them, and to reckon it

quite sufficient for the establishment of our doctrine when we can show this.

We remark, in the second place, that the sacraments have manifestly, and by universal admission, a symbolical character, —that they are signs or representations of something signified or represented. And if this be so, then there is an obvious foundation laid, in accordance with the practice of all languages and the usage of the sacred writers, for a sort of interchange between the terms properly applicable to the sign, and those properly applicable to the thing signified, —for a certain promiscuous use of the expressions applicable to these two things. Our Confession of Faith lays down this position: u There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pa that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other;” and as this general position can be established, partly a priori from general views about the nature and objects of the sacraments which are admitted by all parties, and partly by general considerations of a philological kind, which cannot reasonably be disputed, we are entitled to apply it to the interpretation of the scriptural passages in which baptism may be spoken of. or referred to. as if it were virtually identical with the faith or regeneration which it signifies or represents.

We remark, in the third place, that participation in the ordinance of baptism is an imperative duty incumbent upon all who are enabled to believe in Christ and to turn to God through Him, which it is assumed that they will at once proceed, if they have an opportunity in providence, to discharge, not merely as a duty required by God's authority, but also as a suitable expression and appropriate evidence of the change that has been wrought in their views and principles: and. moreover, that the New Testament, in its general references to this subject, having respect principally and primarily, as I have explained, to the case of adult baptism, usually assumes that the profession made in baptism corresponds with the reality of the case.— that is. with the previous existence of faith and union to Christ, and deal with it upon this assumption. All these general considerations, when brought to bear upon the interpretation of the passages usually produced by Papists and Tractarians in support of their doctrine upon this subject, afford

abundant materials for enabling us to prove that these passages do not require, and therefore upon principles already explained, do not admit, of a construction which would make them sanction the notion that there is an invariable connection between baptism and regeneration, or even—what, however, is only a part of the general doctrine of an invariable connection that none are regenerated or saved without baptism.

Some of the passages commonly adduced in support of the Popish and Tractarian doctrine upon this subject, contain, in gremio, statements which not only disprove their interpretation of the particular passage, but afford a key to the explanation of other passages of a similar kind. It is said, for instance, — “the like figure whereunto. even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God).” Now here, indeed, as in one or two other passages, baptism is said to save us; but then a formal explanation is given of what this statement means; and it just amounts in substance to this, that it is not the outward ordinance of baptism, or anything which an outward ordinance is either fitted or intended to effect, to which this result is to be ascribed, but the reality of that of which baptism is the figure, —the sincerity of the profession which men make when they ask and receive the ordinance of baptism for themselves.

The only passage of those usually quoted by Papists and Tractarians in support of their doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which seems to bear with anything like explicitness upon the conclusion they are anxious to establish, is the declaration of our Saviour, “Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Protestants have usually contended that our Lord did not here speak of baptism at all, any more than he spoke of the Lord’s Supper in the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel; and they have no great difficulty in proving this much at least, which is all that the condition of the argument requires of them, —namely, that it cannot be proved that the water of which our Lord here speaks was intended by Him to describe the outward ordinance of baptism.

There is one of the passages commonly adduced by Papists and Tractarians, which, while it gives no real countenance to their doctrine, affords a very clear indication of the true state of the case in regard to this

matter, and of what it is that Scripture really meant to convey to us concerning it. It is the record of the commission given by our Lord to His apostles after His resurrection, as contained in the sixteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Mark's Gospel, where we find that, after directing them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, our Saviour added, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved;" (here Papists and Tractarians commonly stop in quoting the passage, but our Lord goes on), he that believeth not, shall be damned." None can fail to be struck with the very remarkable contrast between the two different portions of this declaration, —the manifestly intentional, and very pointed, omission of any reference to baptism in the second part of it. Had the first part of it stood alone, it might have seemed to countenance the idea that baptism was just as necessary to salvation, and as invariable an accompaniment of it, as faith, although even in that case a more direct and explicit statement would have been necessary to make it a conclusive proof of this position. Had it been followed up by the declaration, "He that believeth not, and is not baptized, shall be damned," the Popish doctrine might have been regarded as established. But when we find that our Saviour, in so very marked and pointed a manner, dropped all reference to baptism in stating the converse of His first declaration, and connected condemnation only with the want of faith, tin conviction is forced upon us, that He did so for the express purpose of indicating that He did not intend to teach that there was an invariable connection between salvation and baptism, though there certainly was between salvation and faith; and that he was careful to say nothing that might lead men to believe that the want of baptism excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The combination of baptism with faith, in the first part of the declaration, is easily explained by those general considerations which were formerly stated, and which warrant us in saying that, even had it stood alone, it would not have necessarily implied more than what all Protestants admit, namely, that it was our Lord s intention that baptism should be set forth by His apostles as not less really obligatory with faith as a matter of duty, and wax therefore usually to be expected in all who were enabled to believe as the certain consequence in all ordinary circumstance', the appropriate and incumbent expression of their faith.

If there be nothing in Scripture adequate to establish the doctrine of an

invariable connection between baptism and the spiritual blessings of forgiveness and regeneration.— but, on the contrary, much to disprove it, it is still more clear and certain that the Popish doctrine, that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, is destitute of any authority, and ought to be decidedly rejected.

Even if the doctrine of an invariable connection U-tween the sacraments and spiritual blessings could be established, as we have shown it cannot, it would still require additional and independent scriptural evidence to show that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*; while, on the other hand, the refutation of the doctrine of an invariable connection overturns at once that of the *opus opera turn*, and removes the only ground on which any attempt to prove it could be based. It should also be observed, that this doctrine with respect to the efficacy of the sacraments is much more directly and explicitly inconsistent with great scriptural truths, as to the principles that regulate the communication of spiritual blessings to men, than that merely of an invariable connection, —as is evident from this consideration, that this doctrine of the *opus operatum* ascribes to outward ordinances an influence and an efficacy in procuring forgiveness which the Scripture does not ascribe even to faith itself, —the only thing existing in men, or done by them, by which they are ever said in Scripture to be justified. Baptism, according to the Church of Rome, is the instrumental cause of justification, while faith is merely one of seven virtues, as they are called, which only prepare or dispose men to receive it; and a mere wish to receive the sacraments is represented as one of those six other virtues, each of which has just as much influence or efficacy as faith in procuring or obtaining justification, —the sacrament itself, of course, upon the principle of the *opus operatum*, having more influence or efficacy in producing the result than all these virtues put together; while, on the other hand, the Protestant doctrine, though assigning to faith, in the matter of justification, a function and an influence possessed and exerted by nothing else, does not ascribe to it any proper efficiency of its own in the production of the result, but represents it only as the instrument receiving what has been provided and is offered.

The subject of the sacraments forms a most important department in the system of Romanists. Their whole doctrine upon the sacraments in

general, —their nature, objects, efficacy, and number, —their peculiar doctrines and practices in regard to each of their seven sacraments individually, —all tend most powerfully to corrupt and pervert the doctrine of Scripture with respect to the grounds of a sinners salvation, and the way and manner in which God communicates to men spiritual blessings as well as to foster and confirm some natural tendencies of the human heart, which are most dangerous to men's spiritual welfare. The effects which they ascribe to the sacraments in general and individually, —the five spurious sacraments they have invented without any warrant from Scripture, —and the load of ceremonies with which they have clothed those simple, unpretending ordinances which Christ appointed, —all tend most powerfully to promote the two great objects which the Romish system is fitted to advance, namely, first, to lead men to reject the gospel method of salvation, and to follow out for themselves a plan of procedure opposed to its fundamental principles; and, secondly, to make men. in so far as they sincerely submit to the authority and receive the doctrines of their church, the abject slaves of the priest, by representing them as dependent, for the possession of spiritual blessings, upon act which the priest alone can perform, and by ascribing to these acts of his an important influence in procuring for them the spiritual blessings they need. Some Romish writers have indulged their imaginations in drawing fanciful analogies from a variety of sources in support of these seven sacraments; while others have produced glowing eulogies upon the bountiful kindness and liberality of holy mother church in providing so many sacraments and so many ceremonies to supply all their spiritual wants, and to afford them spiritual assistance and comfort in all varieties of circumstances, upon all leading emergencies from their birth till their death, —baptism when they come into the world to take away all original sin, both its guilt and its power, —confirmation to strengthen and uphold them in the right path when they are growing up towards manhood, —penance and the eucharist during all their lives whenever they need them, the one to wash away all their sins, and the other to afford them spiritual nourishment— and their extreme unction when they draw near to death.

The leading aspect in which these ordinances as represented and practised in the Church of Rome, ought to be regarded, is in relation to the scriptural authority on which their observance and obligation, and the

effects ascribed to them either expressly or by implication, rest, and the bearing of the doctrines and practice of the Church of Rome upon these points— on men's mode of thinking, feeling, and acting with reference to the only way of a sinners salvation revealed in the word of God: and the conclusion to which we come when we contemplate the Popish doctrines and practices in this aspect, is, that they are wholly unsanctioned by, nay, decidedly opposed to. the word of God, and unspeakably dangerous to men's eternal welfare- as having the most direct and powerful tendency to lead men to trust, in matters which concern their everlasting peace, to their fellow-men and to external observances, instead of trusting to the person and the work of Christ as the only ground of their hope, and looking to the state of their hearts and motives as the only satisfactory evidence that they are in a condition of safety. But it is impossible not to be struck also with the great skill and ingenuity with which all these observances and inventions are adapted to increase and strengthen the control of the church and the priesthood over the minds and consciences of men. Sacraments are provided for all the leading eras or stages in men's lives, and such representations are given of their nature and effects, as are best fitted to impress men with the deepest sense of the obligation and advantages of partaking in them. This tendency is brought out with increasing clearness when we advert to the two other sacraments which the Church of Rome has invented, —viz., holy orders and marriage: the first manifestly intended, —that is, so far as the ascription of a sacramental character is concerned, —to increase the respect and veneration entertained for the priesthood; and the second being just as manifestly intended to bring under the more direct and absolute control of the priesthood, a relation which exerts, directly and indirectly, so extensive and powerful an influence upon men individually, and upon society at large. If Popery be Satan's masterpiece, the theory and practice of the sacraments may perhaps be regarded as the most finished and perfect department in this great work of his. And it is not in the least surprising, that when recently the great adversary set himself to check and overturn the scriptural and evangelical principles which were gaining a considerable influence in the Church of England, he should have chiefly made use of the sacramental principle for effecting his design, —that is, the principle that there is an invariable connection between participation in the sacraments and the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, and that the

sacraments have an inherent power or virtue whereby they produce these appropriate effects. In no other way, and by no other process, could he have succeeded to such an extent as he has done, in leading men to disregard and despise all that Scripture teaches us concerning our helpless and ruined condition by nature; concerning the necessity of a regeneration of our moral nature by the power of the Holy Spirit; concerning the way and manner in which, according to the divine method of justification, pardon and acceptance have been procured and are bestowed; concerning the place and function of faith in the salvation of sinners, and concerning the true elements and distinguishing characteristics of all those things that accompany salvation, —and, finally, in no other way could he have succeeded to such an extent in leading men who had been ministers in a Protestant church to submit openly and unreservedly to that system of doctrine and practice which is immeasurably better fitted than any other to accomplish his purposes, by leading men to build wholly upon a false foundation, and to reject the counsel of God against themselves; while it is better fitted than any other to retain men in the most degrading, and, humanly speaking, the most hopeless bondage.

III. Popish View of the Lord's Supper

It is proper, before leaving this subject, to advert to the special importance of the place which the Lord's Supper, —or the sacrament of the altar, as Romanists commonly call it, —holds in the Popish system, and the peculiar magnitude of the corruptions which they have introduced into it. It hits the very heart and marrow of the Popish system, and brings out summarily and compendiously all the leading features by which it is characterized. In a general survey of the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon this subject, we meet first with the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which requires us to believe that, by the words of consecration pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine are changed, as to their substance, into the real flesh and blood of Christ, —the bread and wine altogether ceasing to exist, except in appearance only, and those being given to the partaker instead of the actual flesh and blood of the Redeemer. This doctrine not only

contradicts the senses and the reason, but it cannot possibly be received until both the senses and the reason have been put entirely in abeyance. The imposition of the belief of this doctrine may not unjustly be regarded as a sort of experimental test of how far it is possible for the human intellect to be degraded by submitting to receive what contradict the first principles of rational belief, and overturns the certainty of all knowledge. The manifest tendency of the inculcation of such a doctrine is to sink the human intellect into thorough and absolute slavery, or, by a natural reaction, to involve it in universal and hopeless scepticism. Both these ruinous results have been fully developed in the history of the Church of Rome. There this doctrine of transubstantiation is made the basis of the foundation of some deadly corruptions of the fundamental principles of Christian truth, and of some gross practical frauds and abuses. It is the foundation of the adoration of the host, or the paying of divine worship to the consecrated wafer, —a practice which, on scriptural principles, is not saved from the guilt of idolatry by the mistaken belief that it is the real flesh of Christ. It is the foundation also of the doctrine and practice of the sacrifice of the mass, —that is, of the offering up by the priest of the flesh and blood of Christ, or of the bread and wine alleged to be transubstantiated into Christ's flesh and blood, as a proper propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. The mass is the great idol of Popery, and it presents a marvellous and most daring combination of what is false, profane, and blasphemous, —of what is dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to men, both as pertaining to the life that now is and that which is to come. It dishonours and degrades the one perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, by representing it as repeated, or rather caricatured, daily and hourly by the juggling mummery of a priest. It tends directly to lead men to build their hopes of pardon upon a false foundation; and the whole regulations and practices of the Church of Rome in connection with it, are manifestly fitted and intended to impose upon men's credulity, and to cheat them out of their liberty and their property. The celebration of mass for their benefit is made a regular article of merchandise; and, by the device of private or solitary masses, the priests are enabled to raise much money for masses, which of course they never perform.

These hints may be sufficient to show that the whole subject of the

doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome in regard to the Eucharist, or the sacrament of the altar, is well worthy of being carefully investigated and thoroughly known, as presenting an epitome of the whole system of Popery, —of the dishonour done by it to the only true God and the only Saviour of sinners, and of its injurious bearing both on the temporal and spiritual welfare of men.

IV. Infant Baptism

The Reformers, and the great body of Protestant divines, in putting forth the definition of the sacraments in general, or of a sacrament as such, intended to embody the substance of what they believe Scripture to teach, or to indicate, as equally applicable to both sacraments; and in laying down what they believe concerning the general objects and the ordinary effects of the sacraments, they commonly assume that the persons partaking in them are rightly qualified for receiving and improving them, —and further, and more specially, that the person baptized are adults. It is necessary to keep those considerations in view in interpreting the general description given of sacraments and of baptism, in our Confession of Faith and the other Reformed confessions; and with these assumptions, and to this extent, there is no difficulty in the way of our maintaining the general principle, which can be established by most satisfactory evidence, —namely, that the fundamental spiritual blessings, on the possession of which the salvation of men universally depends, — justification and regeneration by faith, —are not conveyed through the instrumentality of the sacraments, but that, on the contrary, they must already exist before even baptism can be lawfully or safely received. The general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject of baptism applies primarily and directly to the baptism of adults, and proceeds upon the assumption, that the profession implied in the reception of baptism by adults, —the profession, that is. that they had already been led to believe in Christ, and to receive Him as their Saviour and their Master, —was sincere, or corresponded with the real state of their minds and hearts. It is necessary, therefore, to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of the objects and effects of baptism in itself, as a distinct subject, and in its bearing upon the general doctrine of the sacraments,

from the baptism of adults and not of infants. The baptisms which are ordinarily described or referred to in the New Testament, were the baptisms of men who had lived as Jews and heathens, and who, having been led to believe in Christ, —or, at least, to profess faith in Him, —expressed and sealed this faith, or the profession of it. by complying with Christ's requirement, that they should be baptized. This is the proper, primary, full idea of baptism; and to this the general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject, and the general description of the objects and ends of baptism, as given in our Confession of Faith, and in the other confessions of the Reformed churches, are manifestly adapted.

As, in the condition in which we are placed in providence, we but seldom witness the baptism of adults, and commonly see only the baptism of infants, —and as there are undoubtedly some difficulties in the way of applying fully to the baptism of infants the definition usually given of a sacrament, and the general account commonly set forth of the objects and ends of baptism, —we are very apt to be led to form insensibly very erroneous and defective views of the nature and effects of baptism, as an ordinance instituted by Christ in His church, or rather, to rest contented with scarcely any distinct or definite conception upon the subject. Men usually have much more clear and distinct apprehensions of the import, design, and effects of the Lord's Supper than of Baptism; and yet the general definition commonly given of a sacrament applies equally to both, being just intended to embody the substance of what Scripture indicates as equally applicable to the one ordinance as to the other. If we were in the habit of witnessing adult baptism, and if we formed our primary and full conceptions of the import and effects of the ordinance from the baptism of adults, the one sacrament would be as easily understood, and as definitely apprehended, as the other; and we would have no difficulty in seeing how the general definition given of the sacraments in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms applied equally to both. But as this general definition of sacraments, and the corresponding general description given of the objects and effects of baptism, do not apply fully and without some modification to the form in which we usually see baptism administered, men commonly, instead of considering distinctly what are the necessary modifications of it, and what are the grounds on which these modifications rest, leave the whole subject in a

very obscure and confused condition in their minds.

These statements may, at first view, appear to be large concessions to the anti-paedo-baptists, or those who oppose the lawfulness of the baptism of infants, and to affect the solidity of the grounds on which the practice of paedo-baptism, which has ever prevailed almost universally in the church of Christ, is based. But I am persuaded that a more careful consideration of the subject will show that these views, besides being clearly sanctioned by Scripture, and absolutely necessary for the consistent and intelligible interpretation of our own standards, are, in their legitimate application, fitted to deprive the arguments of the anti-paedo-baptists of whatever plausibility they possess. It cannot be reasonably denied that they have much that is plausible to allege in opposition to infant baptism; but I am persuaded that the plausibility of their arguments will always appear greatest to men who have not been accustomed to distinguish between the primary and complete idea of this ordinance, as exhibited in the baptism of adults, and the distinct and peculiar place which is held by the special subject of infant baptism, and the precise grounds on which it rests. Paedo-baptists, from the causes to which I have referred, are apt to rest contented with very obscure and defective notions of the import and objects of baptism, and to confound adult and infant baptism as if the same principles must fully and universally apply to both. And in this state of things, when those views of the sacraments in general, and of baptism in particular, which I have briefly explained, are pressed upon their attention, and seen and acknowledged to be well founded, they are not unlikely to imagine that these principles equally rule the case of infant baptism; and they are thus prepared to see, in the arguments of the anti-paedo-baptists, a much larger amount of force and solidity than they really possess. Hence the importance of being familiar with what should be admitted or conceded, as clearly sanctioned by Scripture, with respect to baptism in general, in its primary, complete idea, —estimating exactly what this implies, and how far it goes; and then, moreover, being well acquainted with the special subject of infant baptism as a distinct topic, with the peculiar considerations applicable to it, and the precise grounds on which its lawfulness and obligation can be established.

It is not my purpose to enter upon a full discussion of infant baptism, or

an exposition of the grounds on which the views of paedo-baptists can, as I believe, be successfully established and vindicated. I shall merely make a few observations on what it is that paedo-baptists really maintain, —on the distinct and peculiar place which the doctrine of infant baptism truly occupies, —and on the relation in which it stands to the general subject of baptism and the sacraments; believing that correct apprehensions upon these points are well fitted to illustrate the grounds on which infant baptism rests in all their strength, and the insufficiency of the reasons by which the opposite view has been supported.

Let me then, in the first place, remark that intelligent paedo-baptists hold all those views of the sacraments and of baptism which I have endeavoured to explain, and are persuaded that they can hold them in perfect consistency with maintaining that the infants of believing parents ought to be baptized. There is nothing in these views peculiar to the anti-paedo-baptists; and there is, we are persuaded, no real advantage which they can derive from them in support of their opinions. These views are clearly sanctioned by our Confession of Faith; while, at the same time, it contains also the following proposition as a part of what the word of God teaches upon the subject of baptism: “Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.” Now, let it be observed that this position is all that is essential to the doctrine of the paedo-baptists, as such. We are called upon to maintain nothing more upon the subject than this plain and simple proposition, which merely asserts the lawfulness and propriety of baptizing the infants of believing parents. Let it be noticed also, that the statement is introduced merely as an adjunct or appendage to the general doctrine of baptism; not as directly and immediately comprehended under it, any more than under the general definition given of a sacrament, but as a special addition to it, resting upon its own distinct and peculiar grounds. This is the true place which infant baptism occupies; this is the view that ought to be taken of it; and I am persuaded that it is when contemplated and investigated in this aspect, that there comes out most distinctly and palpably the sufficiency of the arguments in favour of it, and the sufficiency of the objections against it. On this, as on many other subjects, the friends of truth have often injured their cause, by entering too fully and minutely into

explanations of their doctrines, for the purpose of commending them to men's acceptance, and solving the difficulties by which they seemed to be beset. They have thus involved themselves in great difficulties, by trying to defend their own minute and unwarranted explanations, as if they were an essential part of the Scripture doctrine. It is easy enough to prove from Scripture that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, and that they are not three Gods, but one God; but many of the more detailed explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity which have been given by its friends, have been untenable and indefensible, and have only laid it open unnecessarily to the attacks of its enemies. In like manner, we think it no difficult matter to produce from Scripture sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the position, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized; but minute and detailed expositions of the reasons and the effects of infant baptism are unwarranted by Scripture; they impose an unnecessary burden upon the friends of truth, and tend only to give an advantage to its opponents. The condition and fate of infants, and the principles by which they are determined, have always been subjects on which men, not unnaturally, have been prone to speculate, but on which Scripture has given us little explicit information beyond this, that salvation through Christ is just as accessible to them as to adults. One form in which this tendency to speculate unwarrantably about infants has been exhibited, is that of inventing theories about the objects and effects of infant baptism. These theories are often made to rest as a burden upon the scriptural proof of the lawfulness and propriety of the mere practice itself; and thus have the appearance of communicating to that proof, which is amply sufficient for its own proper object, their own essential weakness and invalidity.

It is manifest that, from the nature of the case, the principles that determine and indicate the objects and effects of baptism in adults and infants, cannot be altogether the same; and the great difficulty of the whole subject lies in settling, as far as we can, what modifications our conceptions of baptism should undergo in the case of infants, as distinguished from that of adults: and, at the same time, to show that, even with these modifications, the essential and fundamental ideas involved in the general doctrine ordinarily professed concerning baptism are still preserved. The investigation even of this point is, perhaps, going

beyond the line of what is strictly necessary for the establishment of the position, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized. But some notice of it can scarcely be avoided in the discussion of the question.

infants of believing parents are to be baptized, consists chiefly in the proof which the word of God affords, to the following effect: —that, in the whole history of our race, God's covenanted dealings with His people, with respect to spiritual blessings, have had regard to their children as well as to themselves; so that the children as well as the parents have been admitted to the spiritual blessings of God's covenants, and to the outward signs and seals of these covenants;— that there is no evidence that this general principle, so full of mercy and grace, and so well fitted to nourish faith and hope, was to be departed from, or laid aside, under the Christian dispensation; but, on the contrary, a great deal to confirm the conviction that it was to continue to be acted on;— that the children of believers are capable of receiving, and often do in fact receive, the blessings of the covenant, justification and regeneration; and are therefore— unless there be some very express prohibition, either by general principle or specific statement — admissible and entitled to the outward sign and seal of these blessings;— that there is a federal holiness, as distinguished from a personal holiness, attaching, under the Christian as well as the Jewish economy, to the children of believing parents, which affords a sufficient ground for their admission, by an outward ordinance, into the fellowship of the church: —and that the commission which our Saviour gave to His apostles, and the history we have of the way in which they exercised this commission, decidedly favour the conclusion, that they admitted the children of believers along with their parents, and because of their relation to their parents, into the communion of the church by baptism.

This line of argument, though in some measure inferential, is, we are persuaded, amply sufficient in cumulo to establish the conclusion, that the children of believing parents are to be baptized, unless either the leading positions of which it consists can be satisfactorily proved to have no sanction from Scripture, or some general position can be established which proves the incompatibility of infant baptism, either with the character of the Christian dispensation in general, or with the qualities

and properties of the ordinance of baptism in particular. I do not mean to enter upon the consideration of the specific scriptural evidence in support of the different positions that constitute the proof of the lawfulness and propriety of baptizing the children of believing parents, or of the attempts which have been made to disprove them singly, and in detail. I can only advert to the general allegation, that infant baptism is inconsistent with some of the qualities or properties of the ordinance of baptism, as it is set before us in Scripture.

It is manifestly nothing to the purpose to say, in support of this general allegation, that baptism in the case of infants cannot be, in all respects, the same as baptism in the case of adults; or, that we cannot give so full and specific an account of the objects and effects of infant as of adult baptism. These positions are certainly both true; but they manifestly concern merely incidental points, not affecting the root of the matter, and afford no ground for any such conclusion as the unlawfulness of infant baptism. In the case of the baptism of adults, we can speak clearly and decidedly as to the general object, and the ordinary effects, of the administration of the ordinance. The adult receiving baptism is either duly qualified and suitably prepared for it, or he is not. If he is not duly qualified, his baptism is a hypocritical profession of a state of mind and heart that does not exist; and, of course, it can do him no good, but must be a sin, and, as such, must expose him to the divine displeasure. If he is duly qualified and suitably prepared, then his baptism, though it does not convey to him justification and regeneration, which he must have before received through faith, impresses upon his mind, through God's blessing, their true nature and grounds, and strengthens his faith to realize more fully his own actual condition, as an unworthy recipient of unspeakable mercies, and his obligations to live to God's praise and glory. We are unable to put any such clear and explicit alternative in the case of the baptism of infants, or give any very definite account of the way and manner in which it bears upon or affects them individually. Men have often striven hard in their speculations to lay down something precise and definite, in the way of general principle or standard, as to the bearing and effect of baptism in relation to the great blessings of justification and regeneration in the case of infants individually. But the Scripture really affords no adequate materials for doing this; for we have no sufficient

warrant for asserting, even in regard to infants, to whom it is God's purpose to give at some time justification and regeneration, that He uniformly or ordinarily gives it to them before or at their baptism. The discomfort of this state of uncertainty, the difficulty of laying down any definite doctrine upon this subject, has often led men to adopt one or other of two opposite extremes, which have the appearance of greater simplicity and definiteness, —that is, either to deny the lawfulness of infant baptism altogether, or to embrace the doctrine of baptismal justification and regeneration, and to represent all baptized infants, or at least all the baptized infants of believing parents, as receiving these great blessings in and with the external ordinances, or as certainly and infallibly to receive them at some future time. But this is manifestly unreasonable. “True fortitude of understanding,” according to the admirable and well-known saying of Paley, “consists in not suffering what we do know, to be disturbed by what we do not know.” And assuredly, if there be sufficient scriptural grounds for thinking that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized, it can be no adequate ground for rejecting, or even doubting, the truth of this doctrine, that we have no sufficient materials for laying down any precise or definite proposition of a general kind as to the effect of baptism in the case of infants individually.

But the leading allegation of the anti-paedo-baptists on this department of the subject is, that it is inconsistent with the nature of baptism, as set before us in Scripture, that it should be administered to any, except upon the ground of a previous possession of faith by the person receiving it. If this proposition could be established, it would, of course, preclude the baptism of infants who have not faith, and who could not profess it if they had it. We are persuaded that this proposition cannot be established, though we admit that a good deal which is plausible can be adduced from Scripture in support of it. It is admitted that all persons who are in a condition to possess and to profess faith, must possess and profess it before they can lawfully or safely receive the ordinance of baptism. This can be easily established from Scripture. It is admitted, also, that the ordinary tenor of Scripture language concerning baptism has respect, primarily and principally, to persons in this condition.— that is, to adults, —and that thus a profession of faith is ordinarily associated with the

Scripture notices of the administration of baptism; so that, as has been explained, we are to regard baptism upon a profession of faith, as exhibiting the proper type and full development of the ordinance. Had we no other information bearing upon the subject in Scripture than what has now been referred to, this might be fairly enough regarded as precluding the baptism of infants; but in the absence of anything which, directly or by implication, teaches that this previous profession of faith is of the essence of the ordinance, and universally necessary to its legitimate administration and reception, an inference of this sort is not sufficient to neutralize the direct and positive evidence we have in Scripture in favour of the baptism of infants. The only thing, which seems to be really of the essence of the ordinance in this respect is, that the parties receiving it are capable of possessing, and have a federal interest in, the promise of the spiritual blessings which it was intended to signify and to seal. Now, the blessings which baptism was intended to signify and seal are justification and regeneration, —that is, the washing away of guilt, and the washing away of depravity. These, and these alone, are the spiritual blessings which the washing with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, directly signifies and represents. Faith does not stand in the same relation to baptism as these blessings do, and for this obvious and conclusive reason, that it is not directly and expressly signified or represented in the external ordinance itself, as they are.

Faith is, indeed, ordinarily, and in the case of all who are capable of it, the medium or instrument through which these indispensable blessings are conveyed; and there is certainly much better scriptural evidence in support of the necessity of faith in order to being saved, than in support of the necessity of a profession of faith in order to being baptized. But yet it is quite certain, that faith is not universally necessary in order to a right I to these blessings, or to the actual possession of them. It is universally admitted that infants, though incapable of faith, are capable of salvation, and are actually saved; and they cannot be saved unless they be justified and regenerated. And since it is thus certain that infants actually receive the very blessings which baptism signifies and represents, without the presence of the faith which is necessary to the possession of these blessings in adults, —while yet the Scripture has much more explicitly connected faith and salvation than it has ever connected faith and

baptism, —there can be no serious difficulty in the idea of their admissibility to the outward sign and seal of these blessings, without a previous profession of faith.

If it be said that something more than a mere capacity of receiving the blessings which baptism signifies and represents, is necessary to warrant the administration of it, since the ordinance is, in its general nature and character, distinguishing, and it is not all infants that are admitted to it— it is not difficult to show, that not only does the admission of this general idea, as pertaining to the essence of the doctrine of baptism, not preclude the baptism of infants, but that we have in their case what is fairly analogous to the antecedently existing ground, which is the warrant or foundation of the administration of it to adults. In the case of adults, this antecedent ground or warrant is their own faith professed; and in the case of the infants of believing parents, it is their interest in the covenant which, upon scriptural principles, they possess simply as the children of believing parents, —the federal holiness which can be proved to attach to them, in virtue of God's arrangements and promises, simply upon the ground of their having been born of parents who are themselves comprehended in the covenant. If this general principle can be shown to be sanctioned by Scripture, —and we have no doubt that it can be conclusively established, —then it affords an antecedent ground or warrant for the admission of the children of believing parents to the ordinance of baptism analogous to that which exists in believing adults, —a ground or warrant the relevancy and validity of which cannot be affected by anything except a direct and conclusive proof of the absolute and universal necessity of a profession of faith, as the only sufficient ground or warrant, in every instance, of the administration of baptism; and no such proof has been, or can be, produced.

Calvin, in discussing this point, fully admits the necessity of some antecedent ground or warrant attaching to infants, as the foundation of admitting them to baptism; but he contends that this is to be found in the scriptural principle of the interest which the infants of believing parents have, as such, in virtue of God's arrangements and promises, in the covenant and its blessings. He says, “*Quo jure ad baptismum eos admittimus, nisi quod promissionis sunt haeredes? Nisi enim jam ante ad*

eos pertineret vitae promissio, baptismum profanaret, quisquis illis daret.”

My chief object in these observations has been to illustrate the importance of considering and investigating the subject of infant baptism as a distinct topic, resting upon its own proper and peculiar grounds, —of estimating aright its true relation to the sacraments in general, and to baptism as a whole, —and of appreciating justly the real nature and amount of the modifications which it is necessary to introduce into the mode of stating and defending the general doctrine as to the objects and effects of baptism, in the case of infants as distinguished from adults; and I have made them, because I am persuaded that it is when the subject is viewed in this aspect, that the strength of the arguments for, and the weakness of the arguments against, infant baptism, come out most palpably, and that by following this process of investigation we shall be best preserved from any temptation to corrupt and lower the general doctrines of the sacraments, —while at the same time we shall be most fully enabled to show that infant baptism, with the difficulties which undoubtedly attach to it, and with the obscurity in which some points connected with it are involved, is really analogous in its essential features to the baptism of adults, and implies nothing that is really inconsistent with the view taught us in Scripture with respect to sacraments and ordinances in general, or with respect to baptism in particular.

XXII. The Socinian Controversy

In the rationalistic perversion of the true principles of the Reformation, as to the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, we have the foundation on which Socinianism is based, —namely, the making human reason, or rather men’s whole natural faculties and capacities, virtually the test or standard of truth; as if the mind of man was able fully to take in all existences and all their relations, and as if men, on this ground, were entitled to exclude, from what is admitted to be a revelation from God, everything which could not be shown to be altogether accordant with the conclusions of their own understandings, or thoroughly comprehensible by them. In regard to this principle, and the general views of theology, properly so called, which have resulted from its application, it is not always easy to determine whether the application of this peculiar principium theologiae produced the peculiar theology, or the peculiar theology, previously adopted from some other cause, or on some other ground, led to the maintenance of the peculiar principium, as the only way by which the theology could be defended. If men had adopted rationalistic principles as their rule or standard in the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, they would certainly bring out, in the application of them, the Socinian system of theology; and, on the other hand, if, from any cause or influence, they had already imbibed the leading elements of the Socinian system of theology, and yet did not think it altogether safe or expedient to deny the divine origin of the Christian revelation, they must, as a matter of course, be forced to adopt, as their only means of defence, the rationalistic principle of interpretation. These two things must, from the very nature of the case, have always gone hand in hand. They could scarcely, in any case, be separated in the order of time; and it is of no great importance to determine, in particular cases, which may have come first in the order of nature, —which was the cause, and which the effect. Papists allege that Socinianism was one of the consequences of the Reformation, —of the unrestrained and licentious speculations upon religious matters which they ascribe to that important event. The principles on which the Reformers acted, and on which the Reformation was based, were not the

causes of, and are not responsible for, the errors and heresies which have sprung up in the Reformed churches. At the same time, it cannot be disputed, that the Reformation tended to introduce a state of society, and a general condition of things, which led to a fuller and more prominent development of error, as well as of truth, by giving freedom of thought, and freedom in the expression of opinion. In the Church of Rome, and in countries that are fully under its control, the maintenance of any other errors and heresies than those which that church sanctions, is attended with imminent danger, and leads to sacrifices which few men are disposed to make, even for what they may regard as true.

This was the condition of Christendom before the Reformation. It lay wholly under the domination of a dark and relentless despotism, the tendency and effect of which were, to prevent men from exercising their minds freely upon religious subjects, or at least from giving publicity to any views they might have been led to adopt, different from those which had the civil and ecclesiastical authorities on their side. Wherever the Reformation prevailed, this state of matters gradually changed. Despotism gave place to liberty. Liberty was sometimes abused, and this led to licentiousness. But it is not the less true that liberty is preferable to despotism, both as being in itself a more just and righteous condition of things, and as being attended with far greater advantages, and with fewer and smaller evils.

I. Origin of Socinianism

With respect to Socinianism in particular, there is much in the history of its origin, that not only disproves the Popish allegation of its being traceable to the principles of the Reformation, but which tends to throw back upon the Church of Rome a share, at least, of the responsibility of producing this most pernicious heresy. The founders of this sect were chiefly Italians, who had been originally trained and formed under the full influence of the Church of Rome. They may be fairly regarded as specimens of the infidelity, —or free-thinking, as they themselves call it, —which the Popish system, in certain circumstances, and in minds of a certain class, has a strong tendency in the way of reaction to produce.

They were men who had conic, in the exercise of their natural reason, to see the folly and absurdity of much of the Popish system, without having been brought under the influence of truly religious impressions, or having been led to adopt a right method of investigating divine truth. They seem to have been men who were full of self-confidence, proud of their own powers of speculation and argument, and puffed up by a sense of their own elevation above the mass of follies and absurdities which they saw prevailing around them in the Church of Rome; and this natural tendency of the men, and the sinful state of mind which it implied or produced, were the true and proper causes of the errors and heresies into which they fell. Still it was the Church of Rome, in which they were trained, and the influences which it brought to bear upon them, that, in point of fact, furnished the occasions of developing this tendency, and determining the direction it took in regulating their opinions. The irrational and offensive despotism which the Church of Rome exercised in all matters of opinion, even on purely scientific subjects, tended to lead men who had become, mentally at least, emancipated from its thralldom, first and generally, to carry freedom of thought to the extreme of licentiousness; and then, more particularly, to throw off the whole system of doctrine which the Church of Rome imposed upon men, without being at much pains to discriminate between what was false in that system, and what might be true. This is, indeed, the true history of Socinianism, —the correct account of the causes that in fact produced it.

Laelius Socinus, who is usually regarded as the true founder of the system, —though his nephew, Faustus, was the chief defender and promulgator of it, —seems to have formed his opinions upon theological subjects before he was constrained to leave Italy, and take refuge among the Protestants, where somewhat greater freedom of opinion was tolerated. he did not certainly find among the Reformers, with whom he came into contact, anything to encourage him in the theological views which he had imbibed; but neither was he brought, by his association with them, under any of those more wholesome influences, which would have led him to abandon them, and to embrace the great doctrines of the Reformation, he continued to manifest the same tendency, and the same disposition, which he had exhibited in Italy; and he retained the theological views which, in substance, he seems to have formed there. So

that, though he published little or nothing, and did not always very fully or openly avow his peculiar opinions, even in private intercourse, yet, as there is reason to believe that he was really and substantially the author of the system afterwards developed and defended by his nephew, his history is truly the history of the origin of the system; and that history is at least sufficient to show, that Popery is much more deeply involved in the guilt of producing Socinianism than Protestantism is.

It may be worth while, both as confirming the views now given of the character and tendencies of Laelius Socinus, and also as illustrating the method often adopted by such men in first broaching their novel and erroneous opinions, to give one or two specimens of what the Reformers with whom he came into contact have said regarding him. He carried on for a time a correspondence with Calvin; in which, while he does not seem to have brought out distinctly the theological views afterwards called by his name, he had so fully manifested his strong tendency to indulge in all sorts of useless and pernicious speculations, as at length to draw from that great man the following noble rebuke: You need not expect me to reply to all the monstrous questions (*portenta quaestionum*) you propose to me. If you choose to indulge in such aerial speculations, I pray you suffer me, a humble disciple of Christ, to meditate on those things which tend to the edification of my faith. And I indeed by my silence will effect what I wish, viz., that you no longer annoy me in this way. I am greatly grieved that the fine talents which the Lord has given you, should not only be wasted on things of no importance, but spoiled by pernicious speculations. I must again seriously admonish you, as I have done before, that unless you speedily correct this *quoerendi pruritum*, it may bring upon you much mischief. If I were to encourage, under the appearance of indulgence, this vice, which I believe to be injurious, I would be acting a perfidious and cruel part to you; and, therefore, I prefer that you should now be somewhat offended by my asperity, than that I should abstain from attempting to draw you away from the sweet allurements of the curiosity (or love of curious speculation) in which you are entangled. The time, I hope, will come, when you will rejoice that you were awakened from it, even by a rude shock.”

Zanchius, too, was an Italian, and, like Socinus, had fled from that

country, because it was not safe for him to remain there, in consequence of the anti-Papal views which he had adopted. Put then, unlike Socinus, he was a sincere and honest inquirer after truth. he had sought and obtained the guidance of the Spirit of God. He had studied the Bible, with a single desire to know what God had there revealed, that he might receive and submit to it. And he had in this way been led to adopt the same system of theology as Calvin and the other Reformers, and proved himself an able and learned defender of it. In the preface to his work on the Trinity, or “De Tribus Elohim,” as he calls it, he thus describes Socinus: “he was of a noble family, well skilled in Greek and Hebrew, and irreproachable in his outward conduct; and on these accounts I was on friendly terms with him. But he was a man full of diverse heresies, which, however, he never proposed to me, except, as it were, for the purpose of disputation, and always putting questions as if he wished for information. And yet for many years he greatly promoted the Samosatanian heresy, and led many to adopt it.”

Such was the origin of Socinianism, and such, to a large extent, has been the kind of men by whom it has been advocated, although many of them have been fortunate enough to find themselves in circumstances that rendered it unnecessary to have recourse to the policy and management which its founder adopted, as to the mode of bringing out his opinions.

II. Socinian Views as to Scripture

The Socinians differ from the great body of Christians in regard to the subject of the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. This was to be expected; for, as they had made up their minds not to regulate their views of doctrinal matters by the natural and obvious meaning of the statements contained in Scripture, it was quite probable that they would try to depreciate the value and authority of the Bible, so far as this was not plainly inconsistent with professing a belief, in any sense, in the truth of Christianity. The position, accordingly, which they maintain upon this point is, that the Bible contains, indeed, a revelation from God, but that it is not itself that revelation, or that it is not, in any proper sense, the word of God, though the word of God is found in it. They virtually discard the

Old Testament altogether, as having now no value or importance but what is merely historical. And, indeed, they commonly teach, that the promise of eternal life was not revealed, and was wholly unknown, under the Old Testament dispensation; but was conveyed to man, for the first time, by Christ himself, when he appeared on earth: men, under the patriarchal and Mosaic economies, having been, according to this view, very much in the same situation as the mass of mankind in general, —that is, being called upon to work out their own eternal happiness by their own good deeds, though having only a very imperfect knowledge of God, and of the worship and duty which he required, and having only a general confidence in His goodness and mercy, without any certainty or assurance as to their final destiny. Jesus Christ, according to Socinians, was a mere man, who was appointed by God to convey His will more fully to men; and the sole object of His mission was to communicate to men more correct and complete information concerning God and duty, —and especially to convey to them the assurance of a future state of blessedness, to be enjoyed by all who should do what they could in worshipping and serving God, according to the information he had communicated to them.

They profess, then, to receive as true, upon this ground, all that Christ Himself taught. They admit that the teaching of Christ is, in the main, and as to its substance, correctly enough set forth in the New Testament; and they do not allege that it can be learned from any other source. But then, as to the book which compose the New Testament, they maintain that they were the unaided compositions of the men whose names they bear; and deny that they, the authors, had any special supernatural assistance or superintendence from God in the production of them. They look on the evangelists simply as honest and faithful historians, who had good opportunities of knowing the subjects about which they wrote, and who intended to relate everything accurately, as far as their opportunities and memories served them; but who, having nothing but their own powers and faculties to guide them, may be supposed, like other historians, to have fallen sometimes into inadvertencies and errors. And as to the apostles of our Lord, whose writings form part of the canon of the New Testament, or the substance of whose teaching is there recorded, they commonly deny to them any infallible supernatural guidance, and

admit that they were well acquainted with the views of their Master, and intended faithfully to report them, and to follow' them in their own preaching. But they think that the apostles probably sometimes misunderstood or misapprehended them; and that they are not to be implicitly followed in the reasonings or illustrations they employed to enforce their teaching, —an observation, of course, specially directed against the Apostle Paul.

With these views of the apostles and evangelists, and of the books of the New Testament, they think themselves warranted in using much greater liberty with its words and language, in the way of labouring to force them into an accordance with their system of theology, than can be regarded as at all warrantable by those who believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, —that holy men wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God. Socinians are also fond of dwelling upon all those topics which seem fitted to shake in men's minds a due sense of the reverence with which the sacred Scriptures ought, as being the word of God, to be regarded, —such as the obscurity attaching to some of their statements, and the difficulty of ascertaining their true meaning; the various readings, and the difficulty in some cases of ascertaining the true text; the apparent inconsistencies, and the difficulty occasionally of reconciling them. In discussing these and similar topics, they follow the example of the Papists, —treat them commonly in the same light or semi-infidel spirit; and their general object is the same, —namely, to insinuate the unfitness of the Bible, as it stands, to be a full and accurate directory of faith and practice, so as to leave it men's only business to ascertain the true and exact meaning of its statements, that they may implicitly submit to them. These topics they are fond of dwelling upon, and of setting forth with prominence, and even exaggeration. And the application they make of them is, —first, and more specifically, to disprove the inspiration of the books of Scripture; and, secondly, and more generally, to warrant and encourage the use of considerable liberty in dealing with their statements, and to cherish a feeling of uncertainty as to the accuracy of the results that may be deduced from an examination of them. They thus make it sufficiently manifest, just as the Papists do, that they are rather disposed to shrink from a trial of their doctrines, by a direct and impartial examination of the exact sense and import of the whole statements of

Scripture, as they stand. They are fond, indeed, of declaiming upon the supremacy of the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith, in opposition to all human authorities, councils, creeds, confessions, etc., etc.; and though this general principle is unquestionably true and sound, yet it will commonly be found that there are, in Socinian and rationalistic declamations upon the subject, quite as plain indications of a feeling of soreness, that the creeds and confessions of human authority, —that is, of almost all who have ever professed to draw their faith from the Bible, — have been decidedly opposed to their theological views, as of reverence for the Scriptures. And there is ground for suspecting that the main reason of their preference for the Bible alone, is because they think they can show that the Scriptures are capable of being so dealt with as to countenance, or, at least, not to oppose, their system; while creeds and confessions commonly are not. Still Socinians have generally admitted, at least theoretically and in words, down till their recent adoption in our own day, both in America and in Britain, of the entire anti-supernaturalism of German neologians, that the true sense of Scripture, when correctly and clearly ascertained, was to be practically and substantially the rule or standard of men's faith; and have, in consequence, usually undertaken to show, that their system of theology was countenanced by Scripture, or, at least, was not opposed to it, but might be held by men who professed to receive the Bible as the rule of faith.

The leading peculiarity of their system of scriptural interpretation is just the principle, that nothing which is contrary to reason can be contained in a revelation from God; and that, therefore, if any statements of Scripture seem to impute to Jesus, or His apostles, the teaching of doctrines which are contrary to reason, they must, if possible, be explained in such a way as to avoid this difficulty, and be made to appear to teach nothing but what is accordant with reason. I will not enter again into the consideration of the general principle, or of the way and manner in which it ought to be applied, in so far as it has a foundation in truth; but will rather advert now to the way in which the Socinians actually deal with Scripture, in order to exclude from it anything irrational; though this is a topic which I fear can scarcely be made useful or interesting, without producing more in the way of examples than our space permits. It is very

plain that, if it be admitted in general that our faith is to be determined by ascertaining the meaning of Scripture statements, then the first and most obvious step to be adopted is just to employ, with the utmost impartiality and diligence, all the means which are naturally fitted, as means, to effect this end. If it be true, as it is, that the special blessing of God, and the guidance and direction of His Spirit, are necessary to attain this end, let us abound in prayer that we may receive it. If the use of all the ordinary critical and philological means and appliances which are applicable to the interpretation of such a collection of documents as the Bible contains, is necessary to this end, —as it is, —then let all these be diligently and faithfully employed; and let the result be deliberately and impartially ascertained, in the exercise of sound reason and common sense. This should evidently be the way in which the work should be entered on; and then, in so far as the principle about alleged contrariety to reason is true and sound, and admits of being fairly applied, let it be applied fully and frankly to the actual result of the critical and philological investigation, whatever may be the legitimate consequences of the application. But the Socinians commonly reverse this natural and legitimate process. They first lay down the principle, that certain doctrines, —such as the Trinity, the hypostatical union, the atonement, the eternity of punishment, —are irrational, or inconsistent with what natural reason teaches about God; and then, under the influence of this conviction, already existing, they proceed to examine Scripture for the purpose, not of simply ascertaining what it teaches, but of showing that these doctrines are not taught there, or, at least, that this cannot be proved.

Now, this condition of things, and the state of mind which it implies or produces, are manifestly unfavourable to a fair and impartial use of the means naturally fitted to enable men to ascertain correctly what Scripture teaches. Impartiality, in these circumstances, is not to be expected, —it would betray an ignorance of the known principles of human nature to look for it. Those who believe in these doctrines profess to have found them in Scripture, fairly interpreted, in the use of the ordinary appropriate means, —to base them upon no other foundation, —to know nothing about them but what is stated there,— and to be willing to renounce them, whenever it can be proved that they are not taught in the

Bible; while the Socinians are placed, by this principle of theirs, in this position,— as some of the bolder and more straightforward among them have not scrupled to avow.— that they would not believe these doctrines, even if it could be proved to their satisfaction that they were plainly taught by the apostles. Still they usually profess to undertake to show that they are not taught in Scripture, or, at least, that no sufficient evidence of a critical and philological kind has been produced to prove that they are taught there. The violent perversion of all the legitimate and recognised principles and rules of philology and criticism, to which they have been obliged to have recourse in following out this bold undertaking, can be illustrated only by examples taken from the discussions of particular doctrines, and the interpretation of particular texts; but we may advert briefly to one or two of the more general features of their ordinary mode of procedure in this matter.

In regard to the text of the New Testament, they are accustomed to catch eagerly at, and to try to set forth with something like plausibility, the most meagre and superficial critical evidence against the genuineness or integrity of particular passages, —as has been fully proved with respect to the attempts they have made to exclude, as spurious, the first two chapters both of Matthew and of Luke, because of their containing an account of the miraculous conception of Christ; and they sometimes even venture upon mere conjectural emendations of the text, which have not a shadow of critical authority to support them, —as, for instance, in their criticism upon Rom. ix. 5, —a practice condemned by all impartial critics.

In the interpretation of Scripture, one of the general presumptions which they are fond of using is this, —that the texts adduced in support of some doctrine which they reject, are brought only from one or two of the books of the New Testament, —that the alleged proofs of it are not by any means so clear, so frequent, or so widely diffused as might have been expected, if the doctrine in question had been intended to be taught, —or that no apparent proofs of it occur in passages where they might have been looked for, if the doctrine were true. In dealing with such considerations, which Socinians frequently insist upon, the defenders of orthodox doctrine usually maintain, —first, that most of the doctrines which Socinians reject are clearly and frequently taught in Scripture, and that

statements affording satisfactory evidence of their truth, more formal or more incidental, are found to pervade the word of God; and, secondly, that even if it were not so, yet a presumption based upon such considerations is unwarranted and unreasonable: for that we have no right, because no sure ground to proceed upon in attempting, to prescribe or determine beforehand, in what particular way, with what measure of clearness or frequency, or in what places of Scripture, a doctrine should be stated or indicated; but are bound to receive it, provided only God, in His word, has given us sufficient grounds for believing it to have been revealed by Him. If the doctrine can be shown to be really taught in Scripture, this should be sufficient to command our assent, even though it should not be so fully and so frequently stated or indicated there as we might perhaps have expected beforehand, on the supposition of its being true; especially as it is manifest that the word of God, in its whole character and complexion, has been deliberately constructed on purpose to call forth and require men's diligence and attention in the study of its meaning, and in the comparison of its statements; and to test also men's fairness, candour, and impartiality, as indicated by their being satisfied or not with reasonable and sufficient, though it may be not overwhelming, evidence of the doctrines there revealed.

Another general consideration, often insisted on by Socinians, in order to help out the very meagre evidence they can produce that particular passages in Scripture do not teach the orthodox doctrine, is this, —that all that they need to prove is, that the passage in question does not necessarily sanction the orthodox doctrine, but may possibly be understood in a different sense; and then they contend that they have done this at least. They often admit that, upon critical and philological grounds, a particular passage may be taken in the orthodox sense; but they contend that they have disproved the allegation that it must be taken in that sense, and that this is sufficient. Now, here again, orthodox divines maintain, —first, that in regard to many of the passages, the meaning of which is controverted between them and the Socinians, it can be shown, not only that they may, but that they must, bear the orthodox sense, and that no other sense is consistent with a fair application to them of the ordinary rules of philology, grammar, and criticism; and, secondly, that the Socinian demand that this must be proved in all cases,

or indeed in any case, is unreasonable and overstrained. We may concede to the Socinians, that, in the controversy with them, the onus probandi lies properly upon us, and that we must produce sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the truth of our doctrines from Scripture, before we can reasonably expect them to be received. But we cannot admit that any such amount of antecedent improbability attaches to the doctrines we hold, as to impose upon us any obligation to do more than show that the Scripture, explained according to the ordinary legitimate principles and rules applicable to the matter, teaches, and was intended to teach, them, —that a man, examining fairly and impartially as to what the Scripture sets forth upon these points, would naturally and as a matter of course, without straining or bias to either side, come to the conclusion that our doctrines are taught there, —and that these are the doctrines which the Scriptures were evidently intended, as they are fitted, to inculcate. We wish simply to know what the actual language of Scripture, when subjected to the ordinary legitimate processes of criticism, really gives out, —what it seems to have been really intended to convey. The resolution with which the Socinians set out, of labouring to establish a bare possibility that the words may not have the sense we ascribe to them, —that they may by possibility have a different meaning, —has no reasonable foundation to rest upon; and it produces a state of mind manifestly opposed to anything like a candid and impartial investigation of what it is that the Scripture truly means. Under the influence of this resolution, men will generally find no difficulty in getting up some plausible grounds for asserting, that almost any conceivable statement does not necessarily mean what appears plainly to be its real and intended meaning, and that it might by possibility mean something else; while they lose sight of, and wholly miss, the only question that legitimately ought to have been entertained, —namely, What is the true and real meaning which the words bear, and were intended to bear?

It is in entire accordance with these unreasonable and over-strained principles of interpretation, that Mr Belsham, —who held the most prominent place among the Socinians of this country at the conclusion of last century, and the beginning of this, —lays it down as one of his general exegetical rules, that “impartial and sincere inquirers after truth must be particularly upon their guard against what is called the natural

signification of words and phrases,” — a statement manifestly implying a consciousness that Socinianism requires to put a forced and unnatural construction upon scriptural expressions, such as would not readily commend itself to the common sense of upright men, unless they were prepared for it by something like a plausible generality, in the form of an antecedent rule. It is, however, just the natural signification of words and phrases that we are bound, by the obligations of candour and integrity, to seek: meaning thereby, that we are called upon to investigate, in the fair use of all legitimate means and appliances suitable to the case, what the words were really designed to express; and having ascertained this, either to receive it as resting upon the authority of God, or, should there seem to be adequate grounds for it, on account of the real and unquestionable contrariety to reason of the doctrine thus brought out, to reject the document containing it as resting upon no authority whatever.

III. Socinian System of Theology

Having explained the origin and causes of Socinianism, and the principles and leading features of the plan on which its supporters proceed in the interpretation of Scripture, we have now to give some exposition of the system of theology which, by the application of these principles, the Socinians have deduced from Scripture; or, to speak more correctly, which they consider themselves warranted in holding, notwithstanding their professed belief in the divine origin of the Christian revelation. We have been accustomed to speak of Socinianism as just implying a rejection or denial of all the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Christian system, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures; and this is, so far as it goes, a correct, though but a negative and defective, description of it. Socinianism, however, is not a mere negation; it implies a system of positive opinions upon all the important topics of theology, in regard to the divine character and moral government, —the moral character, capacities, and obligations of mankind, —the person and the work of Jesus Christ, —the whole method of salvation, —and the ultimate destinies of men. It is common, indeed, to speak of the meagre or scanty creed of the Socinians; and in one sense the description is unquestionably correct, for it includes scarcely any of those doctrines which have been

usually received by the great body of professing Christians as taught in Scripture. And when thus compared with the system of doctrine that has commonly been held in the Christian church, it may be regarded as being, to a large extent, of a negative character, and very scanty in its dimensions. At the same time, it should be observed, that while, in one point of view, the Socinian creed may be regarded as very meagre and scanty', inasmuch as it contains scarcely any of those doctrines which Christians in general have found in the word of God, yet it really contains a system of opinions, and positive opinions, upon all those topics to which these doctrines relate. The ideas most commonly associated with the name of Socinianism are just the denial or rejection of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the proper divinity of Christ and of His vicarious atonement, and of the personality of the Spirit. And without adverting at present to other features of the Socinian system, it ought to be observed, that while they deny or reject the doctrines that have been commonly held by the Christian church upon these points, they have their own doctrines regarding them, which are not mere negations, but may be, and are, embodied in positive propositions. They not only deny the doctrine of the Trinity, but they positively assert that the Godhead is one in person as well as in essence. They not only deny the proper divinity of Jesus Christ, but they positively assert that He was a mere man, —that is, a man and nothing else, or more than a man. They not only deny the vicarious atonement of Christ, which most other professing Christians reckon the foundation of their hopes for eternity, but they assert that men, by their own repentance and good works, procure the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour; and thus, while denying that, in any proper sense, Christ is their Saviour, they teach that men save themselves, —that is, in so far as they need salvation. While they deny that the Spirit is a person who possesses the divine nature, they teach that the Holy Ghost in Scripture describes or expresses merely a quality or attribute of God. They have their own positive doctrines upon all these points, —doctrines which their creed embraces, and which their writings inculcate. On all these topics their creed is really as wide and comprehensive as that of any other section of professing Christians, though it differs greatly from what has been generally received in the Christian church, and presents all these important subjects in a very different aspect.

Socinians, as Dr Owen observes, are fond of taking the place, and sustaining the part, of respondents merely in controversy; and it is no doubt true, that if they could succeed in showing that our doctrines receive no countenance from Scripture, we would not only be called upon to renounce these doctrines, but, in doing so, would, at the same time, as a matter of course, embrace views substantially Socinian. Still, it is right and useful that, during the controversy, we should have distinct and definite conceptions of what are the alternatives, —of what are their doctrines upon all points as well as our own, and of what are the positive opinions which we must be prepared to embrace and maintain if we think we see ground to abandon the orthodox system of doctrine and to adopt the Socinian. We are not to imagine, then, that what is commonly called the scanty creed of Socinianism is a mere negation; and we are to regard it as virtually embodying positive doctrines upon those points on which we ourselves hold opinions, —though opinions very different from theirs.

There is another observation of a general kind which I think it important that we should remember, —namely, that Socinianism really includes a scheme of doctrines upon all the leading subjects of theology, —upon all the main topics usually discussed in theological systems. The common impression is, that Socinianism merely describes certain views upon the subjects of the Trinity and the atonement; and these topics, indeed, have always and necessarily had much prominence in the controversies that have been carried on with the Socinians or lunarians. But right or wrong views upon these points must, from the nature of the case, materially affect men's opinions upon all other important topics in theology; and, in point of fact, Socinianism, even in the writings of its founders, was a fully developed system of doctrine upon everything material that enters, or has been supposed to enter, into the scheme of revelation. Socinianism has its own Theology in the strictest and most limited sense of that word, —that is, its peculiar views about God, His attributes and moral government, as well as its negation of a personal distinction in the Godhead. It has its own Anthropology.— that is, its own peculiar views in regard to the moral character and capacities of mankind as we find them in this world, though here it has just adopted the old Pelagian system. It has its own Christology, or its peculiar views as to who or what Christ was, —though here it has followed very much what were called the Samosatanean and

Photinian heresies of early times; names, indeed, by which it was often designated by the writers of the seventeenth century. It has its own Soteriology- that is, its peculiar views of the plan of salvation, —of the way and manner in which men individually are saved, or actually attain to final happiness, —as comprehending the topics usually discussed under the heads of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, justification, regeneration, and the work of the Holy Spirit; on the latter topic, indeed, adopting substantially the views of the Pelagians; but with respect to the first of them, —namely, the atonement, —they have discoveries and demerits which maybe, said to be almost wholly their own. They have their own Eschatology, as it is called, —that is, their peculiar views in regard to those topics which are usually discussed in theological systems under the general head “De novissimis,” or the last things, —and especially the resurrection and the final punishment, or the fate and destiny, of the wicked. And besides all this, they have views in a great measure peculiar to themselves, and in full harmony with the general character and tendency of their theological system, on the subjects of the Church, and especially of the Sacraments. We have a sounder view of what Socinianism is, and can form a juster apprehension of the estimate that ought to be made of it, when we regard it as a complete and well-digested system, extending over the whole field of theology, and professing to present a full account of all the leading topics which it most concerns men to know, of everything bearing upon their relation to God and their eternal welfare; a system, indeed, taking up and embodying some of the worst and most pernicious of the heresies which had previously distracted and injured the church, but likewise adding some important heretical contributions of its own, and presenting them, in combination, in a form much more fully developed, much better digested and compacted, and much more skilfully defended, than ever they had been before. It may tend to bring out this somewhat more fully, if we give a brief statement of what the views are which have been commonly held by Socinians on these different subjects, mainly for the purpose of illustrating the unity and harmony of their theological system, and showing that the controversy with the Socinians is not a mere dispute about some particular doctrines, however important these may be, but really involves a contest for everything that is peculiar and important in the Christian system.

It is true of all systems of theology, —taking that word in its wide and common sense, as implying a knowledge of all matters bearing upon our relation to God and our eternal destinies, —that they are materially influenced, in their general character and complexion, by the views which they embody about the divine attributes, character, and government, — that is, about theology in the restricted meaning of the word, or the doctrine concerning God. Hence we find that, in many systems of theology, there are introduced, under the head “De Deo,” and in the exposition of the divine attributes, discussions more or less complete, of many topics that are afterwards taken up and illustrated more fully under their own proper heads, —such as providence, predestination, and grace. Socinians have sought, like other theologians, to lay the foundation of their system of doctrine in certain peculiar views in regard to the divine attributes. Orthodox divines have commonly charged them with denying, or explaining away, certain attributes which reason and Scripture seem to unite in ascribing to God, with the view of diminishing the perfection of the divine glory and character, and thereby removing arguments in favour of orthodox doctrines, and bringing in presumptions in favour of their own. I cannot enter into details, but may briefly advert to two of the principal topics that are usually brought into the discussion of this subject.

Socinianism, —and, indeed, this may be said of most other systems of false religion, —represents God as a Being whose moral character is composed exclusively of goodness and mercy; of a mere desire to promote the happiness of His creatures, and a perfect readiness at once to forgive and to bless all who have transgressed against Him. They thus virtually exclude from the divine character that immaculate holiness which is represented in Scripture as leading God to hate sin, and that inflexible justice which we are taught to regard as constraining Him to inflict on sinners the punishment which He has threatened, and which they have merited. The form in which this topic is commonly discussed in more immediate connection with Socinianism, is this, —whether vindictive, or punitive justice, —that is, justice which constrains or obliges to give to sinners the punishment they have deserved, —be an actual quality of God— an attribute of the divine nature? The discussion of this question occupies a prominent place in many works on the

atonement; the Socinians denying that there is any such quality in God, — anything in His nature or character which throws any obstacle or impediment in the way of His at once pardoning transgressors, without any satisfaction to His justice; while orthodox divines have generally contended for the existence of such a quality or attribute in God, and for its rendering necessary a vicarious atonement, or satisfaction, in order that sinners might be forgiven.

The other topic under this general head to which we propose to advert, is that of the divine omniscience. Orthodox divines have always contended that scriptural views of this attribute, and of its application, afforded powerful arguments in favour of that entire dependence of men upon God's will and purposes which may be said to be a characteristic of the Calvinistic scheme of theology; and, accordingly, the discussion of it, and of the inferences that may be legitimately deduced from it, has entered largely into the Arminian controversy. The Socinians agree in the main with the Arminians upon this subject, — that is, so far as concerns a denial of Calvinistic doctrines; but being somewhat bolder and more unscrupulous than the Arminians, they have adopted a somewhat different mode of arriving at the same conclusion. The Arminians generally admit that God certainly foresees all future contingent events, such as the future actions of men exercising, without constraint, their natural powers of volition; but how this can be reconciled with their doctrine, that He has not foreordained these events, they do not pretend to explain. They leave this unexplained, as the great difficulty admittedly attaching to their system, or rather, as the precise place where they are disposed to put the difficulty which attaches to all systems that embrace at once the foreknowledge of God and the responsibility of man. The Socinians, however, being less easily staggered by the conclusive Scripture evidence of God's foreseeing the future free actions of men, especially that arising from the undoubted fact that He has so often predicted what they would be, boldly deny that He foresees these actions, or knows anything about them, until they come to pass; except, it may be, in some special cases, in which, contrary to His usual practice, he has foreordained the event, and foresees it because He has foreordained it. That they may seem, indeed, not to derogate from God's omniscience, they admit indeed that God knows all things that are knowable; but then

they contend that future contingent events, such as the future actions of responsible agents, are not knowable, —do not come within the scope of what may be known, even by an infinite Being; and, upon this ground, they allege that it is no derogation from the omniscience of God, that He does not, and cannot, know what is not knowable. They think that in this way, by denying the divine foreknowledge of future contingencies, they most effectually overturn the Calvinistic doctrine of God's foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass; while they, at the same time, concede to the Calvinists, in opposition to the Arminian view, that God's certain foreknowledge of the actions of men lays an immovable foundation for the position that he has foreordained them.

It may be worth while to mention upon this point for the fact is both very curious and very important that, in what is probably the earliest summary ever given of the whole Socinian system of doctrine, after it was fully developed, in a little work, understood to have been written with the view of explaining and defending it, by Ostorodns and Voidovius, when, in they were sent from Poland on a mission into the Low Countries, in order to propagate their doctrines there, it is expressly assigned as a reason why they denied God's foreknowledge of the future action» of men, that there was no other way of escaping from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. We shall afterwards have an opportunity of showing that there is inure truth and consistency in the Socinian, than in the Arminian, view upon this particular point, while they agree in the general conclusion, in opposition to Calvinists; but, in the meantime, the two instances we have given will show how wide and extensive are the Socinian heresies, and how thoroughly accordant it is with the general character and tendency of their system to indulge in presumptuous speculations about the incomprehensible God— to obscure the glory of His adorable perfections — and to bring Him nearer to the level of the creatures whom He has formed. As the Trinity must afterwards be more fully discussed, I say nothing more about it at present, except this— that here, too, Socinians manifest the same qualities and tendencies, by presuming to claim such a thorough knowledge of what the divine unity is, and of what it consists in, and to be warranted in maintaining, as a first and certain principle, that it is necessarily inconsistent with a personal distinction, or a plurality of persons, and generally by insisting

on applying to the divine nature notions and conceptions derived wholly from what takes place and is exhibited among men.

I have said that the Socinian doctrine about the moral character and capacities of mankind is just a re\wal of the old Pelagian heresy. Of course it amounts in substance to a denial of the fall and of all original depravity, and to an assertion that men are now, as to all moral qualities, tendencies, and capacities, in the same condition as when the race was created. The image of God in which man was formed consisted, according to them, merely in dominion over the creatures, and not in any moral perfection or excellence of nature. Adam had no original righteousness, or positive holy tendency of moral nature, any more than we have; and, of course, did not lose any quality of that sort by the sin into which he fell. he committed an act of sin, and thereby incurred the divine displeasure; but he retained the same moral nature and tendencies with which he was created, and transmitted these unimpaired to his posterity. He was created naturally mortal, and would have died whether he had sinned or not. Men are now, in moral nature and tendencies, just as pure and holy as Adam was when he came from the hand of his Creator, —without any proper holiness of nature, indeed, or positive tendency and inclination, in virtue of their moral constitution, to love and obey God, for that Adam never had; but also without any proneness or tendency to sin, although we are placed in somewhat more unfavourable circumstances than he was, in consequence of the many examples of sin which we see and hear of, —a position which somewhat increases the chances of our actually falling into sin. Still men may avoid sin altogether, and some do so, and obtain eternal blessedness; us the reward of their perfect obedience. And in regard to those who do commit actual sin, and are guilty of transgression, this at least is plain in general, —that since men are weak or frail, though not sinful or depraved, creatures, and since God is nothing but a kind and merciful Father, and has no punitive justice as a constituent element of His character, there can be no difficulty' in their obtaining His forgiveness, and being restored to His favour, and thus escaping all the consequences of their transgressions.

As it is true that men's whole theological system is usually connected intimately with the views or impressions they may have been led to form

of Gods character and government, so it is equally true that their whole views upon theological subjects are greatly affected by the opinions they may have been led to form of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon his posterity. Sound and scriptural views upon this important subject are indispensably necessary to anything like a correct system of theology; and errors in regard to it spread darkness and confusion over the whole field of theological investigation. Nothing has been more fully brought out by the history of theological discussions than the truth of this position; and the case of Socinianism most strikingly confirms it. If man has not fallen and ruined himself, he has no need of a Saviour, or of any extraordinary interposition of God, in order to his salvation. Sin can be no very heinous matter when committed by such frail creatures as men are; and, when viewed in connection with the character of so gracious and benevolent a being as God is, cannot be supposed to occasion any very great difficulty, or to require any very extraordinary provision, in order to its being forgiven and removed. And, accordingly, the whole Socinian system is based upon these general notions and impressions. he whom most other persons that take the name of Christians regard as their Saviour, and whom they believe to be represented in Scripture as God over all, —a possessor of the divine nature, —and to be held up there as the sole author of their salvation, an object of unbounded confidence and reverence, affection and worship, —and whom all admit to have been sent into the world that He might do everything that was needful, whatever that might be, to secure the salvation of men, —is regarded by the Socinians as a mere man, who had no higher nature than the human, who had no existence till He was born in Bethlehem, who did nothing, and who had nothing to do, for the fulfilment of His mission, but to communicate fuller and more certain information about the divine character and government, the path of duty, and future blessedness, and to set before them an example of obedience to Gods law and will. What they say of Christ is true, so far as it goes. he was a man, and He did what they ascribe to Him. But it is not the whole truth, and He did much more for our salvation. Were the Socinian view of man's natural condition correct, a mere man, who came to communicate information and to exhibit an example, might have sufficed for all that was needed. No satisfaction required to be made to divine justice, no righteousness to be wrought out, no change needed to be effected upon men s moral nature.

And, of course, there was no need of a divine Saviour to expiate and intercede, or of a divine Spirit to renew and sanctify. All this is superfluous, and, therefore, it is wholly discarded. The condition of man did not require it, and indeed did not admit of it; and therefore God did not provide it. Men needed only to be assured of God's readiness to pardon all their sins, without satisfaction to His justice, and to get clearer and more certain information than they could very readily procure themselves as to the course they ought to pursue, in order to share more abundantly in God's favour. This was not indeed altogether indispensable, but highly desirable. And God might have communicated it to men in many ways; but he has chosen to convey it by One who, though described in Scripture as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, was yet nothing more than a mere partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves. The sins of men are forgiven merely because God's nature leads Him to forgive, and does not lead Him to punish, sin. They need no change upon their moral constitution; accordingly, no provision has been made for changing it. They need merely to be instructed how they can best improve what they have, and most successfully exercise their own natural powers. And this, accordingly, was the sole end of Christ's mission, and of the revelation which He gave.

Christ is undoubtedly spoken of in Scripture as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and it has been generally supposed that these different offices, ascribed to Him, express, or indicate, the three chief departments of the work which He was to execute, in order to promote the spiritual welfare of men. The old Socinians reduced them to two, —virtually rejecting the priestly office altogether, or conjoining and confounding it with the kingly one; while modern Socinians have still further simplified the work, by abolishing the kingly office of Christ, and resolving all into the prophetic. In the Racovian Catechism, —which fills, in the complete edition of 1680, very nearly two hundred pages, —four pages are devoted to the kingly office, six are assigned to the priestly or sacerdotal office; and these six are chiefly devoted to the object of proving that Christ was not a priest, and did not execute priestly functions upon earth, although it is admitted that he did so, in some vague and indefinite sense, after He ascended to heaven. The exposition of the prophetic office occupies

nearly one hundred pages, or one-half of the whole work. And as this was really and substantially, upon Socinian principles, the only office Christ executed, they endeavour to make the most of it. A considerable space is occupied, in the Racovian Catechism, —and on this account, also, in many of the older works written against the Socinians, —in the discussion of this question, —Whether Christ, in the execution of His prophetic office, revealed to, and imposed upon, men a new code of moral duty, —imposed upon them new and stricter moral precepts which were not previously binding, in virtue of anything which they would learn from the exercise of their own faculties, or from any revelation which God might have formerly given. The Socinian, of course, maintained the affirmative upon this question, in opposition to orthodox divines. And the reason is manifest, —namely, that since Christ had nothing else to do, in the fulfilment of His mission upon earth, but just to reveal, or make known, matters of doctrine and duty, the more of this work he did, the more plausible will seem the Socinian account of His mission, viewed in connection with the exalted representations that seem to be given us of it in Scripture, even though that account omits everything about satisfying divine justice, and thereby reconciling us to God. But then it did not suit the tendency and genius of the Socinian system to ascribe to Him much work in the way of revealing to men new truths or doctrines. According to their views of things, very little doctrine is needed, except what men can easily and readily acquire; for though, as I have explained, they have their own positive opinions upon most theological points, there are very few doctrines which they reckon fundamental. Certain notions about the divine character, and some certainty about a future state of happiness for good men, constitute all, in the way of doctrine, that is necessary or very important. And hence, the old Socinians laid the main stress, in expounding the prophetic office of Christ, and unfolding the object of His mission, upon His making important additions to the precepts of the moral law, and imposing upon men moral obligations which were not previously binding. They were accustomed to draw out, in detail, the instances of the additions He made to the moral law, and the reasons on account of which they held that the particular cases alleged were instances of the general position they maintained upon this point; and the discussion of all this occupies one-fourth part of the Racovian Catechism. The general position, of course, can be proved only, if at all,

by an induction of particulars; and these they ranked under two heads: first, the additions Christ made to precepts which had formerly been given in the Old Testament, but which, in many instances, they allege, he rendered more strict and extensive; and, secondly, in the precepts He introduced which were wholly new. Under the first head they <:o over the ten commandments, and endeavour to show that, in regard to every one of them, the New Testament imposes some additional obligation which was not binding, and might have been disregarded or violated without sin, under the law as given by Moses from Mount Sinai, —making use for this purpose chiefly of some of the statements contained in our Saviour's sermon upon the Mount. And so, in like manner, under the second head, they select a number of New Testament precepts, and endeavour to show that they impose duties which were not binding under the Old Testament economy.

These views are utterly rejected by orthodox divines, who, in the discussion of this subject, have fully shown that Socinians need to employ as much straining and perverting of Scripture, in order to make out that Christ added new precepts to the moral law, as is required to show that he was not made under the law, being made a curse for us, that He might redeem those who were tinder the law. In this way, however, Socinians make out a full and complete rule of moral duty, communicated to men by Christ; and as men have, in the exercise of their own natural capacities, full power to obey it, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, without needing renovation and sanctification from the Spirit, there is no difficulty in their securing their own eternal happiness.

The old Socinians inculcated, —and, so far as outward conduct is concerned, usually acted upon, —a high standard of morality, putting commonly the strictest interpretation upon the moral precepts of the New Testament. Their general system, upon the grounds already explained, naturally led to the adoption of these views, and zeal for the system naturally induced them to attempt to follow them out in practice; just as other false views in religion have often led men to submit to the severest hardships and mortifications. But experience abundantly proves, that, constituted as human nature is, no attempt to carry out a high standard of morality will ever succeed, for any (treat length of time, or

among any considerable number of men, which is not based upon the scriptural system of doctrine; upon right views of the moral nature of man, and of the provision made, under the Christian scheme, by the work of Christ and the operation of the Spirit, for renovating and sanctifying it. And, accordingly, modern Socinians have wholly abandoned the strict and austere morality of the founders of their system. They commonly exhibit the character and the conduct of mere irreligious and ungodly men of the world; and while they still profess to open up heaven to men as the reward of their own good deeds, wrought in their own unaided strength, —that is, without any aid except the ordinary assistance of God in providence, as He upholds and sustains all things, —they seem to have discovered, by some means with which the old Socinians were unacquainted, that a very scanty supply of good works, and especially very little of anything done from a regard to God, to the promotion of His glory and honour, is amply sufficient to accomplish the important end, and to secure men's everlasting happiness.

Under this same general head of the prophetic office of Christ, the Racovian Catechism has a chapter on the subject of His death, —the place which that great event occupies in the Christian scheme, and the purposes it was intended to serve. As it was a fundamental principle of the old Socinians, that Christ did not execute the office of a priest upon earth, —though they admitted that he did so, in some vague and indefinite sense, after His ascension to heaven, —His suffering of death, of course, did not belong to the execution of the priestly, but of the prophetic, office; in other words, its sole object and design were confined within the general range of serving to declare and confirm to men the will of God, —that is, the revelation of an immortality beyond death, of which no certainty had been given to men before Christ's death, not even to the most highly favoured servants of God under the ancient economy. Accordingly, the exposition of the death of Christ in the Racovian Catechism is mainly devoted to the object, first, of proving that it was not, as Christians have commonly believed, a satisfaction to divine justice for men's sins, though it is admitted that Christ might, in some vague and indefinite sense, be described as a sort of peculiar victim, — and, secondly, of showing how it served to declare and confirm the revelation which God thought proper then to make to men of immortality

and a future life of blessedness for the righteous, —the special importance which seems to be assigned to it in Scripture, in its bearing upon the eternal welfare of men, being ascribed to, and explained by, not any peculiar or specific bearing it had upon the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, and the enjoyment of His favour; but simply this, —that it was a necessary preliminary to Christ’s resurrection, by which chiefly He made known and established the doctrine of immortality, and thereby presented to men such views and motive as might induce them, in the exercise of their own natural powers, to lead such a life as that they would secure for themselves the forgiveness of any sins which they might have committed, and the enjoyment of eternal life. This, and this alone, according to the Socinians, is the place which the death of Christ holds in the Christian scheme; and this indirect and circuitous process is the only way in which it bears upon or affects men’s relation to God and their everlasting destinies. Some modern Socinians have seriously proposed, that the established phraseology of Christ being the Saviour of sinners should be wholly abandoned, as being fitted only to delude and deceive men, by conveying to them the idea that Christ had done, for the promotion of their spiritual welfare, far more than he ever did, and far more than their natural condition required or admitted of.

With respect to eschatology, or the head “De novissimis”— the last things, —the general spirit and tendency of Socinians are also manifested in some important deviations from the doctrines which have been generally received among Christians as being plainly taught in Scripture. They have always denied the scriptural doctrine of the resurrection, —that is, of the resurrection of the same body, —as a thing absurd and impossible; thus faithfully following their true progenitors, the infidel Sadducees, and erring, like them, because, as our Saviour said, they know not the Scriptures nor the power of God. They admitted, indeed, that there will be what they call a resurrection, at least of the righteous; for many of the old Socinians maintained that the wicked who had died before the end of the world would not be raised again, but would continue for ever in a state of insensibility or annihilation, —though this doctrine is repudiated in the later editions of the Racovian Catechism;— but then it was not a resurrection of the same body, but the formation and the union to the soul— which they generally held to have been, during the intervening

period, in a state of insensibility- of a different body. Eternal punishment, of course, was inconsistent with all their notions of the divine character and government, of the nature and demerit of sin, and the design and end of punishment. But they have been a good deal divided among themselves between the two theories of the entire destruction or final annihilation of the wicked, and the ultimate restoration of all men to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness after a period, more or less protracted, of penal suffering. The older Socinians generally adopted the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked, though they sought somewhat to conceal this, by confining themselves very much to the use of the scriptural language, of their being subjected to eternal death while modern Socinians, with very few exceptions, advocate the doctrine of universal restoration, or the final and eternal happiness of all intelligent creatures, and hold this to be necessarily involved in, and certainly deducible from, right views of the Divine perfections.

I need not dwell upon the views of Socinians, in regard to the nature of the Christian church, and the object and efficacy of the sacraments. As the sole object of the appearance of Christ upon earth, and of the whole Christian scheme, was merely to communicate to men instruction or information, and not to procure for them, and bestow upon them, the forgiveness of their sins, —the enjoyment of God's favour, —and the renovation of their natures, —of course the objects of the church and the sacraments, viewed as means or instruments, must be wholly restricted within the same narrow range. The church is not, in any proper sense, a divine institution; and does not consist of men called by the almighty grace of God out of the world, and formed by Him into a peculiar society, the constitution of which He has established, and which He specially governs and superintends. It is a mere voluntary association of men, who are naturally drawn together, because they happen to have adopted somewhat similar views upon religious subjects, and who seek to promote one another's welfare, in the way that may seem best to their own wisdom; while the sacraments are intended to teach men, and to impress divine truth upon their minds, and are in no way whatever connected with any act on God's part in the communication of spiritual blessings.

I have thus given a brief sketch of the Socinian system of theology, and I

would now make one or two reflections obviously suggested by the survey of it. It is manifestly, as I formerly explained, a full scheme or system, extending over all the leading topics of theology. It is plainly characterized throughout by perfect unity and harmony, by the consistency of all its parts with each other, and by the pervading influence of certain leading features and objects. It might, we think, be shown that the Socinian system of theology is the only consistent rival to the Calvinistic one; and that when men abandon the great features of the scriptural system of Calvinism, they have no firm and steady resting-place on which they can take their stand, until they sink down to Socinianism. It is very evident that the Socinian system presents a striking contrast, not only to the views of doctrine which have been generally professed and maintained by Christian churches, but to what seems *prima facie* to be plainly and palpably taught in Scripture. It must present itself to the minds of men, who have become at all familiar with scriptural statements, in the light of an opposition scheme, fitted and intended to counteract and neutralize all that Christianity seems calculated to teach and to effect; and a thorough investigation of the grounds of the attempts which Socinians have made to show that their system of theology is consistent with Scripture and sanctioned by it, will only confirm this impression. Socinianism has been openly and avowedly maintained only by an inconsiderable number of professing Christians, — many of those who held the leading principles of the Socinian scheme of theology having thought it more honest and straightforward to deny at once the truth of Christianity, than to pretend to receive it, and then to spend their time, and waste their ingenuity, in labouring to show that the scheme of scriptural doctrine was, in almost every important particular, the very reverse of what the first promulgators of the system plainly understood and intended it to be. The churches of Christ, in general, have held themselves fully warranted in denying to Socinians the name and character of Christians; and the ground of this denial is quite sufficient and satisfactory, —namely this, that Socinianism is a deliberate and determined rejection of the whole substance of the message which Christ and His apostles conveyed from God to men. The Racovian Catechism asserts that those who refuse to invoke and worship Christ are not to be reckoned Christians, though they assume His name, and profess to adhere to His doctrine, —thus excluding from the pale of Christianity the

great body of those who, in modern times, have adopted the leading features of that scheme of theology which the old Socinians advanced. And if the denial of worship to Christ was, as the old Socinians believed, a sufficient ground for denying to men the name of Christians, it must surely be thoroughly warrantable to deny the name to men who refuse not only to pay religious worship to Christ, but to receive and submit to anything that is really important and vital in the revelations which He communicated to men.

Mr Belsham, the leader of the English Socinians in the last generation, has distinctly stated that the only thing peculiar in Christianity, or the Christian revelation, —the only point in which it differs from, or goes beyond, the natural religion that maybe discovered and established by men in the exercise of their own unaided powers, —is simply the fact of the resurrection of a dead man, and the confirmation thereby given to the doctrine of a future immortality. Now, perhaps we are not entitled to deny that Socinians are really persuaded of the sufficiency of the evidence by which it is proved that Christ rose from the dead, and that they hold the doctrine of a future immortality more firmly and steadily than it was held by Plato or Cicero. But if, professing to receive Christ as a divine messenger on the ground of the proof of His resurrection, they yet reject the whole substance of the message which he professed to bring from God to men, we cannot concede to them the character or designation of disciples or followers of Christ. A Christian must, at least, mean one who believes Christ to have been a divine messenger, and who receives as true the substance of the message which He bore; and in whatever way we explain the entire dissolution and breaking up, in the case of the Socinians, of the right and legitimate connection that ought to subsist between the admission of the authority of the messenger and the reception of His message, we cannot recognise as Christians men who refuse to believe almost everything which Christ and His apostles taught, and whose whole system of theology, —whose leading views of the character and government of God, the condition and capacities of men, and the way in which they may attain to final happiness, —are just the same as they would be if they openly denied Christ's divine commission, —not only uninfluenced by the revelation he communicated, but directly opposed to it.

But while Socinianism has not been, to any very considerable extent, openly avowed and formally defended in the Christian church, and while those who have avowed and defended it have commonly and justly been regarded as not entitled to the designation of Christians, yet it is important to observe, that there has always been a great deal of latent and undeveloped Socinianism among men who have professed to believe in the truth of Christianity; and the cause of this, of course, is, that Socinianism, in its germs or radical principles, is the system of theology that is natural to fallen and depraved man, —that which springs up spontaneously in the human heart, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, and unrenewed by divine grace. It has been often said that men are born Papists; and this is true in the sense that there are natural and spontaneous tendencies in men, out of which the Popish system readily grows, and which make it an easy matter to lead unrenewed men to embrace it. Still it does require some care and culture to make a natural man, who has not been subjected to the system from his infancy, a Papist, though the process in ordinary cases is not a very difficult or a very elaborate one. But it requires no care or culture whatever to make natural men Socinians, —nothing but the mere throwing off of the traditional or consuetudinary respect in which, in Christian countries, they may have been bred for the manifest sense of Scripture. The more intelligent and enlightened Pagans, and the followers of Mahomet, agree in substance with the whole leading features of the Socinian theology; and if we could bring out and estimate the notions that float in the minds of the great body of irreligious and ungodly men among professing Christians, who have never thought seriously upon religious subjects, we would find that they just constitute the germs, or radical principles, of Socinianism. Take any one of the mass of irreligious men, who abound in professedly Christian society around us, —a man, it may be, who has never entertained any doubts of the truth of Christianity, who has never thought seriously upon any religious subject, or attempted to form a clear and definite conception upon any theological topic, —try to probe a little the vague notions which he undeveloped in his mind about the divine character, the natural state and condition of man, and the way of attaining to ultimate happiness; and if you can get materials for forming any sort of estimate or conjecture as to the notions or impressions upon these points that may have spontaneously, and without effort, grown up

in his mind, you will certainly find, that, without being aware of it, he is practically and substantially a Socinian. The notions and impressions of such men upon all religious subjects are, of course, very vague and confused; but it will commonly be found that, in their inmost thoughts, — in the ordinary and spontaneous current of their impressions, in so far as they have any, in regard to religion, — Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, and the atonement as the basis or ground of salvation, are virtually shut out, or reduced to mere names or unmeaning formula; that the Christian scheme, in so far as it is taken into account, is viewed merely as a revelation or communication of some information about God and duty; and that their hopes of ultimate happiness, in so far as they can be said to have any, are practically based upon what they themselves have done, or can do, viewed in connection with defective and erroneous conceptions of the character and moral government of God, while a definite conviction of the certainty of future punishment has no place in their minds. Now, this is in substance, just the Socinian system of theology; and if these men were drawn out, so as to be led to attempt to explain and defend the vague and confused notions upon these subjects which had hitherto lurked undeveloped in their minds, it would plainly appear, — provided they had intelligence enough to trace somewhat the logical relation of ideas, and courage enough to disregard the vague deference for the obvious sense of Scripture, and for the general belief of Christian churches, to which they had become habituated, — that they were obliged to have recourse to Socinian arguments as the only means of defence; unless, indeed, they should reach the higher intelligence, or the greater courage, of openly rejecting Christianity altogether, as teaching a system of doctrine irrational and absurd.

This is, I am persuaded, a correct account of the general state of feeling and impression, in regard to religious subjects, existing in the minds of the great body of the ignorant, unreflecting, and irreligious men around us, in professedly Christian society; and if so, it goes far to prove that, while there is not a great deal of open and avowed Socinianism maintained and defended among us, yet that it exists to a large extent in a latent and undeveloped form, and that it is the natural and spontaneous product of the depraved, unrenewed heart of man, exhibiting its natural tendencies in the formation of notions and impressions about God and

divine things, and the way of attaining to ultimate happiness, which are not only unsanctioned by the revelation which God Himself has given us in regard to these matters, but are flatly opposed to it.

In these circumstances, it is perhaps rather a subject for surprise that there should be so little of open and avowed Socinianism among us; and the explanation of it is probably to be found in these considerations: — that in the existing condition of society there are many strong influences and motives to restrain men from throwing off a profession of a belief in Christianity: —that there obtains a strong sense of the impossibility, or great difficulty, of effecting anything like an adjustment between the Socinian system of theology, and the obvious meaning and general tenor of Scripture; —and that an attempt of this sort, which should possess anything like plausibility, requires an amount of ingenuity and information, as well as courage, which few comparatively possess. It is in entire accordance with these general observations, that the strain of preaching which prevailed in the Established Churches of this country during the last century, —in the Church of England during the whole century, and in the Church of Scotland during the latter half of it, —was in its whole scope and tendency Socinian. It is admitted, indeed, that the great mass of the clergy of both churches, during the period referred to, were guiltless of any knowledge of theology, or of theological speculations and controversies; and that their preaching, in general, was marked rather by the entire omission, than by the formal and explicit denial, of the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Christian system. Still this is quite sufficient to entitle us to call their system of preaching Socinian, as it left out the doctrines of the natural guilt and depravity of man, —the divinity and atonement of Christ, —justification by His righteousness, —and regeneration and sanctification by His Spirit; and addressed men as if they were quite able, —without any satisfaction for their sins, —without any renovation of their moral natures, —without any special supernatural assistance, to do all that was necessary for securing their eternal happiness, and needed only to be reminded of what their duty was, and of the considerations that should induce them to give some attention to the performance of it. And we find likewise, as we might have expected, if the preceding observations are well founded, that whenever any man arose among them who combined superior intelligence, information, and

courage, and who was led to attempt to explain and defend his views upon religious subjects, he certainly, and as a matter of course, took Socinian ground, and employed Socinian arguments.

IV. Original and Recent Socinianism

Before concluding this brief sketch of the Socinian system in general, viewed as a whole, it may be proper to advert to the differences, in point of theological sentiment, between the original and the modern Socinians. Those who, in modern times, have adopted and maintained the great leading principles of the theological system taught by Socinus, commonly refuse to be called by his name, and assume and claim to themselves the designation of Unitarians, —a name which should no more be conceded to them, than that of Catholic should be conceded to Papists, as it implies, and is intended to imply, that they alone hold the doctrine of the unity of God; while, at the same time, it does not in the least characterize their peculiar opinions as distinguished from those of the Arians, and others who concur with them, in denying the doctrine of the Trinity. They hold all the leading characteristic principles of the system of theology originally developed and compacted by Socinus; and therefore there is nothing unfair, nothing inconsistent with the well understood and reasonable enough practice that ordinarily regulates the application of such designations, in calling them Socinians. They are fond, however, of pointing out the differences, in some respects, between their views and those of the original Socinians, that they may thus lay a plausible foundation for repudiating the name; and it may be useful briefly to notice the most important of these differences.

Socinus and his immediate followers displayed a great deal of ingenuity and courage in devising and publishing a series of plausible perversions of Scripture statements, for the purpose of excluding from the Bible the divinity and the satisfaction of Christ; but there were some of the views commonly entertained by the orthodox, connected with these matters, which, —though tending rather to enhance our conceptions of the importance of Christ and His work, viewed in relation to the salvation of sinners, —they had not sufficient ingenuity and courage to explain away

and reject. These were chiefly His miraculous conception; His having been literally in heaven before He commenced His public ministry; His being invested after His resurrection with great power and dignity, for the government of the world, —for the accomplishment of the objects of His mission, and the final judgment of men; and His being entitled, on this (round, to adoration and worship. Socinus and his immediate followers, though certainly they were not lacking in ingenuity and boldness, and though they could not but feel the inconsistency, at least, of the adoration of Christ with the general scope and tendency of their system, were unable to devise any plausible contrivance for excluding these doctrines from Scripture. The miraculous conception of Christ they admitted, but contended, and truly enough, that this of itself did not necessarily imply either His pre-existence, or any properly superhuman dignity of nature. The texts which so plainly assert or imply that He had been in heaven before He entered upon His public ministry on earth, they could explain only by fabricating the supposition that He was taken up to heaven to receive instruction during the period of His forty days' fast in the wilderness. And they were unable to comprehend how man could profess to believe in the divine authority of the New Testament, and yet deny that Christ is now invested with the government of the world; that he is exercising His power and authority for promoting man's spiritual welfare; that He is one day to determine and judge their final destiny; and that He is entitled to their homage and adoration.

But modern Socinians have found out pretences for evading or denying all these positions. They deny Christ's miraculous conception, and maintain that He was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, mainly upon the ground of some frivolous pretences for doubting the genuineness of the first two chapters both of Matthew and Luke. Dr Priestley admitted that he was not quite satisfied with any interpretation of the texts that seem to assert that Christ had been in heaven before He taught on earth; but he gravely assures us that, rather than admit His pre-existence, he would adopt the exploded interpretation of the old Socinians, or make any other supposition that might be necessary, however absurd or offensive. Mr Belsham, while he admits that "Christ is now alive, and employed in offices the most honourable and benevolent," yet considers himself warranted in believing that "we are totally ignorant of the place

where He resides, and of the occupations in which He is engaged and that, therefore, “there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to Him, nor of gratitude for favours now received, nor yet of confidence in His future interposition in our behalf;” while he contends that all that is implied in the scriptural account of His judging the world, is simply this, —that men’s ultimate destiny is to be determined by the application of the instructions and precepts which he delivered when on earth. This was the state of completeness or perfection to which Socinianism had attained in the last generation, or in the early part of this century. There was but one step more which they could take in their descent, and this was the entire adoption of the infidel anti-supernaturalism of the German neologians; and this step most of them, within these few years, have taken, both in the United States and in this country. Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, in his Letters to Dr Channing,— a very valuable little work on the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, though not to be implicitly followed, —expressed, in 1819, his apprehension that the Socinians, as soon as they became acquainted with the writings of the German neologians, would embrace their principles, would abandon their elaborate efforts to pervert scriptural statements into an apparent accordance with their views, and adopt the bolder course of openly rejecting the doctrines taught by the apostles as erroneous, while still pretending, in some sense, to believe in the Christian revelation. This apprehension was speedily realized to a large extent in the United States, and is now being realized in this country; so that there seems to be ground to expect that Socinianism proper, as a public profession, will soon be wholly extinguished, and the pantheistic infidelity of Germany, though under a sort of profession of Christianity, be substituted in its place. Perhaps it would be more correct to say

that this has already taken place; for we are not aware that any of those amongst us who used to assume the designation of Unitarians, now openly reject or oppose the pantheistic infidelity which is being so largely circulated in this country.

When this change began to show itself among the American Socinians, it was avowedly advocated by themselves on the ground of the necessity of having some system of religion more spiritual and transcendental, —

more suited to the temperament and the aspirings of an earnest age, — than the dry, uninteresting intellectualism of the old Socinians. It was with this view that they had recourse to the pantheism and neology of Germany, which, combining easily with a sort of mystical supersensualism, was fitted to interest the feelings, and to bring into exercise the emotional department of our nature. This is the sort of religion that is now obtruded upon the more literary portion of our community instead of the old Socinianism, which was addressed exclusively to the understanding, and was fitted to exercise and gratify the pride of human reason. It is well to know something of the peculiar form and dress which error in religious matters assumes in our own age and country; but it may tend to guard us against the deluding influence of transcendentalism in religion, if we are satisfied, —as a very little reflection may convince us, —that, with a considerable difference in its dress and garnishing, with a larger infusion of Scripture phraseology, and with much more of an apparent sense and feeling of the unseen and the infinite, it is just, in its substance, the old Socinianism, both with respect to the way and manner of knowing divine things, and with respect to the actual knowledge of them obtained in this way. It does not constitute an essential difference, that, instead of giving to reason, or the understanding, a supremacy over revelation, and making it the final immediate judge of all truth, the new system extends this controlling power to man's whole nature, to his susceptibilities as well as his faculties, and assigns a large influence in judging of divine things to his intuitions and emotions; and the vague and mystic style of contemplation in which it indulges about God, and Christ, and eternity, does not prevent its actual theological system from being fairly described as involving a denial of the guilt and depravity of man, the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and an assertion of man's full capacity to work out for himself, without any satisfaction for his sins, or any renovation of his moral nature, the full enjoyment of God's favour, and the highest happiness of which he is capable; while the only point in which it does differ essentially from the old Socinianism, —namely, the denial of a supernatural revelation, attested by real miracles, which are established by satisfactory historical evidence, —should remove at once every feeling of doubt or difficulty about the propriety of denouncing it as a system of open infidelity.

V. Distinction of Persons in the Godhead

Though I have thought it of some importance to give a brief sketch of Socinian theology in general, viewed as a system, and embodying positive doctrines and not mere negations, in regard to all the leading topics which are usually discussed in theological systems, yet I do not mean to enter into anything like a detailed examination and refutation of all the different doctrines of which it is composed, but to confine myself to those with which, in popular apprehension, the name of Socinianism is usually associated, —namely, the Trinity, and the person and atonement of Christ. Their doctrines upon these points may be said to form the chief peculiarities of the Socinians; and their whole system of doctrine is intimately connected with their views upon these subjects. Besides, I have already had occasion to consider most of the other branches of the Socinian system of theology under other heads, —as in examining the Pelagian controversy, where we met with errors and heresies, substantially the same as those taught by modern Socinians, in regard to the natural character and capacities of man, and the operation and influence of divine grace in preparing men for the enjoyment of happiness;— and still more fully in examining the Popish system of doctrine as contrasted with the theology of the Reformation. The Church of Rome teaches defective and erroneous doctrines concerning the natural guilt and depravity of man, his natural power or ability to do the will of God, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and everything connected with his justification, or the way and manner in which men individually obtain or receive the forgiveness of sin and admission to the enjoyment of God's favour, —although the formal Popish doctrine upon most of these subjects is not so flatly and plainly opposed to the word of God as that held upon the same points by Socinians, and even by many who have passed under the name of Arminians. But as we then endeavoured not only to point out the errors of the Church of Rome upon these topics, but also to explain and illustrate the true doctrines of Scripture respecting them, as taught by the Reformers and laid down in our Confession of Faith, we have said as much as is necessary for the purpose of exposing Pelagian and Socinian errors regarding them. The subject of the Trinity and the person of Christ we have also had occasion to consider, in

adverting to the Arian, Nestorian, and Eutychian controversies in the fourth and fifth centuries. We have not, however, discussed these doctrines so fully as their importance demands in some of their general aspects; and we propose now to devote some space to an explanation of the way and manner in which these important doctrines have been discussed in more modern times.

We proceed, then, to consider the doctrine of the distinction of persons in the Godhead. This is commonly discussed in systems of theology under the head “De Deo” as it is a portion of the information given us in Scripture with respect to the Godhead, or the divine nature; and the knowledge of it is necessary, if the commonly received doctrine be true, in order to our being acquainted with the whole of what Scripture teaches us concerning God. If there be such a distinction in the Godhead or divine nature, as the received doctrine of the Trinity asserts, then this distinction, as a reality, ought to enter into our conceptions of God. We ought to be aware of its existence, —to understand it, as far as we have the capacity and the means of doing so; and we ought to take it into account in forming our conception of God, even independently of its connection with the arrangements of the scheme of redemption, though it is' in these that it is most fully unfolded, and that its nature and importance most clearly appear.

There are one or two obvious reflections, suggested by the general nature and character of the subject, to which it may be proper to advert, though it is not necessary to enlarge upon them. The subject, from its very nature, not only relates immediately to the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead, but concerns what may be regarded as the penetralia or innermost recesses of the divine nature, —the most recondite and inaccessible department of all that we have ever learned or heard concerning God. It is a subject about which reason or natural theology, — in others words, the works of nature and providence, with the exercise of our faculties upon them, —give us no information, and about which we know, and can know nothing, except in so far as God Himself may have been pleased to give us a direct and immediate revelation concerning it. These considerations are surely well fitted to repress any tendency to indulge in presumptuous speculations with respect to what may be true,

or possible, or probable, in regard to this profoundly mysterious subject; and to constrain us to preserve an attitude of profound humility, while we give ourselves to the only process by which we can learn anything with certainty regarding it, —namely, the careful study of God’s word, —anxious only to know what God has said about it, what conceptions he intended to convey to us regarding it, —and ready to receive with implicit submission whatever it shall appear that he has declared or indicated upon the subject.

The way in which this question ought to be studied is by collecting together all the statements in Scripture that seem to be in any way connected with it, —that seem, or have been alleged, to assert or to indicate some distinction in the Godhead or divine nature, —to investigate carefully and accurately the precise meaning of all these statements by the diligent and faithful application of all the appropriate rules and materials, —to compare them with each other, —to collect their joint or aggregate results, —and to embody these results in propositions which may set forth accurately the substance of all that Scripture really makes known to us regarding it. It is only when we have gone through such a process as this, that we can be said to have done full justice to the question, —that we have really formed our views of it from the word of God, the only source of knowledge respecting it, —and that we can be regarded as fully qualified to defend the opinions we may profess to entertain upon it.

The first point which we are naturally called upon to advert to is the status questionis, or what it is precisely that is respectively asserted and maintained by the contending parties. And here we may, in the first instance, view it simply as a question between Trinitarians on the one side, and anti-Trinitarians on the other, without any reference to the differences subsisting among the various sections of the anti-Trinitarians, such as the Arians and the Socinians, about the person of Christ. The substance of what the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity contend for is, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, who all possess the divine nature or essence, and that these three persons are not three Gods, but are the one God; while the doctrine maintained on the other side is, that the Scripture does not reveal any such

distinction in the divine nature, but that God is one in person as well as in essence or substance; and that the divine nature, or true and proper divinity, is really possessed by no person except by Him who is styled in Scripture the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now here, before going further, it is to be observed that there is brought out an intelligible difference of opinion, even though the subject treated of be in its nature and bearings incomprehensible, and though we may not be able to give a precise and exact definition of all the terms employed in the statement of the proposition, —such as the word person in the application here made of it. These two opposite propositions are at least intelligible thus far, that we can form a pretty definite conception of what is the general import of the affirmation and the negation respectively, and can intelligently bring them both into contact and comparison with the evidence adduced, so as to form a judgment as to whether the affirmation or the negation ought to be received as true. But the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are accustomed to press us with the question, What do you mean by persons, when you assert that there are three persons in the unity of the Godhead? Now, the answer commonly given to this question by the most judicious divines is this: First, they maintain that they are not bound to give a precise and exact definition of the word persons as here employed, —namely, in its application to the divine nature, —since this is not necessary to make the proposition so far intelligible as to admit of its being made the subject of distinct argumentation, and having its truth or falsehood determined by the examination of the appropriate evidence, —a position this, which, though denied in words, is practically conceded by our opponents, when they assert that they can prove from Scripture that no such personal distinction as Trinitarians contend for attaches to the divine nature. Secondly, they admit that they cannot give a full and exact definition of the import of the word persons, or of the idea of distinct personality, as predicated of the divine nature; and can say little more about it than that it expresses a distinction not identical with, but in some respects analogous to.

Many of the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, following the example of the schoolmen, have indulged to a very great and

unwarrantable extent in definitions, explanations, and speculations upon this mysterious and incomprehensible subject; and these attempts at definition and explanation have furnished great advantages to the opponents of the doctrine, —both because their mere variety and inconsistency with each other, threw an air of uncertainty and insecurity around the whole doctrine with which they were connected, and because many of them, taken singly, afforded plausible, and sometimes even solid, grounds for objection. Anti-Trinitarians, in consequence, have usually manifested some annoyance and irritation when the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity took care to confine themselves, in their definitions and explanations upon the subject, within the limits of what strict logic required of them, and of what the Scriptures seemed to indicate as the real state of the case— the whole amount of what was revealed regarding it. They have laboured to draw them out into explanations and speculations upon points not revealed; and with this view have not scrupled to ridicule their caution, and to ascribe it— as, indeed, Mr Belsham does expressly— to “an unworthy fear of the result of these inquiries, and a secret suspicion that the question will not bear examination.” This allegation, however, is really an unfair and unworthy artifice on his part. It is indeed true, that one or two defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, in their just disapprobation of the extent to which some friends of truth have carried their definitions and explanations upon the subject, have leant somewhat to the opposite extreme, and manifested an unnecessary and unreasonable shrinking even from the use of terms and statements commonly employed and generally sanctioned upon this point, as if afraid to speak about it in any other terms than the *theigsissima verba* of Scripture. But nothing of this sort applies to the great body of the more cautious defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not pretend to know anything upon this subject but what they find asserted or indicated in Scripture. They aim at no other or higher object than just to embody, in the most appropriate and accurate words which human language furnishes, the substance of what Scripture teaches; and they are under no obligation to explain or defend anything but what they themselves profess to have found in Scripture, and only in so far as they profess to find in Scripture materials for doing so. They find the doctrine of the divine unity clearly taught in Scripture, and therefore they receive this as a great truth which they are bound and determined to

maintain, resolved at the same time to admit no doctrine which can be clearly demonstrated to be necessarily contradictory to, or inconsistent with, the position that God, the Creator and Governor of the world, the object of religious worship, is one. But then they profess to find also in Scripture, evidence that Christ is truly and properly God, a possessor of the divine nature; and that the Holy Ghost is also God in the highest sense, and not a mere quality or attribute of God. These two positions about Jesus Christ the Son of God, and about the Holy Ghost, constitute the main and proper field of controversial discussion, in so far as the investigation of the precise meaning of scriptural statements is concerned; but at present, in considering the state of the question, we must assume that the Trinitarian doctrines upon these two points have been established from Scripture; for the discussion as to the state of the question really turns substantially on this— Supposing these positions about the Son and the Holy Ghost proved, as we believe them to be, in what way should the teaching of Scripture upon these points be expressed and embodied, so as, when conjoined with the Scripture doctrine of the divine unity (if they can be combined), to bring out the whole doctrine which the Scripture teaches concerning the Godhead, or the divine nature? God is one; and therefore if Christ be God, and if the Holy Ghost be God, they must be, with the Father, in some sense, the one God, and not separate or additional Gods.

This general consideration seems naturally to indicate or imply, and of course to warrant, the position that, while there is unity in the Godhead or divine nature, there is also in it, or attaching to it, some distinction. But Scripture, by affording materials for establishing these positions about the Son and the Holy Ghost, enables us to go somewhat further in explaining or developing this distinction. There is no indication in the Scriptures that proper divinity, or the divine nature or essence, belongs to, or is possessed by, any except the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and therefore we say, in setting forth the substance of what Scripture teaches, that the distinction in the Godhead is a threefold distinction, or that there are three, and neither more nor fewer, who are represented to us as having the divine nature, or as possessed of proper divinity. Assuming it to be proved that Christ is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, it seems necessary, and therefore warrantable, if any expression is

to be given in human language to the doctrine thus revealed, to say that there are three which possess the divine nature, and are the one God.

It may, indeed, be contended that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, though divinity is ascribed to them, are merely three different names of one and the same object, and do not designate three realities which are in any respect different, except merely in name or in verbal representation. And this is the doctrine which commonly passes under the name of Sabellianism. But then it is contended, on the other hand, that this does not come up to, or correspond with, the representation which the Scripture gives us of the nature and amount of the distinction subsisting in the Godhead or divine nature. It seems very manifest that, if we are to submit our minds to the fair impressions of the scriptural representations upon this subject, the distinction subsisting among the three of whom proper divinity is predicated, is something more than a nominal or verbal distinction, —that it is a reality, and not a mere name, —and that it is set before us as analogous to the distinction subsisting among three men, or three human beings, to whom we usually ascribe distinct personality; and as there is nothing else within the sphere of our knowledge to which it is represented as analogous or similar, we are constrained to say, —if we are to attempt to give any expression in language of the idea or impression which the scriptural representations upon the subject seem plainly intended to make upon our minds, —that in the unity of the Godhead there is a personal distinction, —there are three persons. And this, accordingly, is the form in which the doctrine of the Trinity has been usually expressed. It is not intended by this form of expression to indicate that the distinction represented as subsisting among the three who are described as possessing the divine nature, is the same as that subsisting among three persons among men. On the contrary, the identity of the distinction in the two cases is denied, as not being suitable to the divine nature, and more especially as this would be inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity; for as three distinct persons among men are three men, so, were the distinction in the Godhead held to be identical with this, the three persons in the Godhead must be three Gods. It is merely contended that the threefold distinction in the Godhead is analogous or similar in some respects to the distinction between three human persons; and the ground of this assertion is, that

the scriptural representations upon the subject convey to us such an idea or impression of this distinction subsisting in the Godhead or divine nature, —that this language we cannot but regard as making the nearest approach to expressing it correctly, —that, in fact, from the nature and necessities of the case, we have not the capacity or the means of expressing or describing it in any other way.

We cannot define or describe positively or particularly the nature of the distinction subsisting among the three who are represented as all possessing the divine nature, because, from the necessity of the case, the nature of this distinction must be incomprehensible by us, and because God in His word has not given us any materials for doing so. We just embody in human language the substance of what the word of God indicates to us upon the subject, —we profess to do nothing more, —and we are not called upon to attempt more; to do so would be unwarrantable and sinful presumption. We are called upon to conform our statements as much as possible to what Scripture indicates, neither asserting what Scripture does not teach, nor refusing to assert what it does teach, —though ready not only to admit, but to point out precisely, as far as Scripture affords us materials for doing so, the imperfection or defectiveness of the language which we may be obliged to employ because we have no other; and to apply, as far as our powers of thought and the capacities of the language, which we must employ in expressing our conceptions, admit of it, any limitations or qualifications which Scripture may suggest in the explanation of our statement. It is not from cowardice or timidity, then, or in order to secure an unfair advantage in argument, as our opponents allege, that we refuse to attempt definitions or explanations in regard to the distinction which Scripture makes known to us as subsisting, in combination with unity, in the divine nature. We assert all that Scripture seems to us to sanction or to indicate; and we not only are not bound, but we are not warranted, to do more. We assert the unity of the Godhead. We assert the existence of a threefold distinction in the Godhead, or the possession of the divine nature and essence by three, —the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are represented to us in Scripture as distinguished from each other in a manner analogous to the distinction subsisting among three different persons among men. We express all this, as it is expressed in our

Confession of Faith, by saying that, “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, —God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.” This is the whole of what our Confession sets forth as the doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the Trinity in general, —for I omit at present any reference to the personal properties by which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinguished from each other, —and this is all which any judicious supporter of the doctrine of the Trinity will consider himself called upon to maintain or defend. All that he has to do is just to show that Scripture, fairly and correctly interpreted, warrants and requires him to assent to these positions; and that there is nothing in the clear deductions of reason, or in the teaching of Scripture, either in its particular statements or in its general assertion of the divine unity, which require him to reject any of them.

The reason why the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are so anxious to draw its defenders into definitions and explanations in regard to the precise nature of the distinction alleged to subsist in the Godhead, is because they hope in this way to get materials for involving them in difficulties and contradictions, —for showing that the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily leads either to Tritheism on the one hand, or to Sabellianism on the other, —or, more generally, that it necessarily involves contradiction, or is inconsistent with the divine unity; while the unwarrantable and injudicious extent to which the friends of the doctrine have often carried their attempts to define the nature of the distinction, and to propound theories for the purpose of explaining the consistency of the distinction with the unity, have afforded too good grounds for the expectations which its opponents have cherished. Anti-Trinitarians are fond of alleging that there is no intermediate position between Tritheism and Sabellianism, —that is, between the view which would introduce three Gods, and thereby flatly contradict the doctrine of the divine unity, —and that which, in order to preserve the unity unimpaired, would virtually explain away the distinction of persons, and make it merely nominal. And it cannot be disputed, that some who have propounded theories in explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, have exhibited symptoms of leaning to one or other of these sides— have afforded some plausible grounds for charging them with one or other of these errors.

Tritheism is, of course, a deadly and fundamental error, as it contradicts the doctrine of the divine unity, and accordingly it has scarcely ever been openly and formally taught; but there have been men who, entering into presumptuous speculations about the nature of the distinction subsisting in the Godhead, and being anxious to make this distinction clear and palpable, have been led to lay down positions which could scarcely be said to come short of asserting practically, to all intents and purposes, the existence of three Gods. And as the enemies of the doctrine of the Trinity usually allege that it involves or leads to Tritheism, they catch at such representations as confirm this allegation. And when other divines, leaning to the other extreme, and being more careful to preserve the unity than the distinction, have so explained and refined the distinction as to make it little if anything more than a merely verbal or nominal one, —a tendency observable in the present day in some of the best and soundest of the German divines, such as Neander and Tholuck, and of which there are also to be found not obscure indications among ourselves, —then anti-Trinitarians allege, with some plausibility, that this is just abandoning the doctrine of the Trinity, because, as they say, it cannot be maintained. Indeed, Sabellianism, when it is really held, is consistent enough both with Arianism and Socinianism; for neither the Arians, who believe Christ to be a superangelic creature, nor the Socinians, who believe Him to be a mere man, need contend much against an alleged nominal distinction in the divine nature, as this does not necessarily exclude anything which their peculiar opinions lead them to maintain; and, accordingly, Mr Belsham says, that Sabellianism “differs only in words from proper Unitarianism.” Unitarians, indeed, are accustomed to distort and misrepresent the views of Trinitarian divines, in order to have more plausible grounds for charging them with a leaning either to Tritheism or Sabellianism; and Mr Belsham formally classes the great body of the Trinitarians under the two heads of Realists and Nominalists, insinuating that the doctrine of the first class is virtually Tritheistic, and that of the second virtually Sabellian; while it would be no difficult matter to show, in regard to some of the most eminent divines whom he has put into those opposite classes, that they did not really differ from each other substantially in the views which they held upon this subject.

A good deal of controversy took place in England, in the end of the

seventeenth century, upon this particular aspect of the question, —Dr Wallis, an eminent mathematician, having propounded a theory or mode of explanation upon the subject, which had somewhat the appearance of making the distinction of persons merely nominal; and Dean Sherlock, in opposing it, having appeared to countenance such a distinction or division in the Godhead, as seemed to infringe upon the divine unity, and having been, in consequence, censured by a decree of the University of Oxford. Unitarians have ever since continued to represent this decree as deciding in favour of Sabellianism, and thereby virtually sanctioning Unitarianism, or being a denial of a real personal distinction in the divine nature; while the truth is, that, though both parties went into an extreme, by carrying their attempts at explanation much too far, in different directions, —and were thus led to make unwarrantable and dangerous statements, —they did not differ from each other nearly so much as Unitarians commonly allege, and did not afford any sufficient ground for a charge either of Tritheism or of Sabellianism. Neither party, certainly, intended to assert anything different from, or inconsistent with, the scriptural doctrine laid down in the first of the Thirty-nine Articles, that “in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, —the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” though it would have been much better had they confined themselves to an exposition of the scriptural evidence in support of the specific positions which make up, or are involved in, this general statement, and restricted their more abstract speculations to the one precise and definite object of merely bringing out what was indispensable to show that none of the positions taught in Scripture, and embodied in this general statement, could be proved necessarily to involve a contradiction or a denial of the divine unity. The controversy to which I have referred engaged the attention and called forth the energies of some very eminent men, —South supporting Wallis, and Bingham, the author of the great work on Christian Antiquities, defending Sherlock; while two greater men than any of these, —namely, Stillingfleet and Howe, —may be said to have moderated between the parties. This discussion afforded a handle to the enemies of the doctrine of the Trinity at the time, who made it the subject of a plausible pamphlet, entitled “Considerations on the different explications of the doctrine of the Trinity,” and it is still occasionally referred to by them with some triumph; but it seems, in its ultimate

results, to have exerted a wholesome influence upon the mode of conducting this controversy, leading to more caution, wisdom, and judgment on the part of the defenders of the truth, —a more careful abstinence from baseless and presumptuous theories and explanations, — and a more uniform regard to the great principles and objects which have just been stated, as those that ought to regulate the exposition and investigation of this important subject.

VI. Trinity and Unity

The importance of attending carefully to the true and exact state of the question in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, is fully evinced by this consideration, that the opponents of the doctrine, base, directly and immediately upon the state of the question, a charge of its involving a contradiction, and of its being inconsistent with the admitted truth of the unity of God.

The duty of Trinitarians, in regard to this subject of settling, so far as they are concerned, the state of the question, ought to be regulated by far higher considerations than those which originate in a regard to the advantages that may result from it in controversial discussion. The positions which we undertake to maintain and defend in the matter, — and this, of course, settles the state of the question in so far as we are concerned, —should be those only, and neither more nor less, which we believe to be truly contained in, or certainly deducible from, the statements of Scripture, —those only which the word of God seems to require us to maintain and defend, without any intermixture of mere human speculations or attempts, however ingenious and plausible, at definitions, explanations, or theories, beyond what the Scripture clearly sanctions or demands. The defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity have often neglected or violated this rule, by indulging in unwarranted explanations and theories upon the subject, and have thereby afforded great advantages to its opponents, of which they have not been slow to avail themselves. And when, warned of their error by the difficulties in which they found themselves involved, and the advantages which their opponents, who have generally been careful to act simply as defenders or

respondents, seemed in consequence to enjoy, they curtailed their speculations within narrower limits, and adhered more closely to the maintenance of scriptural positions, their opponents have represented this as the effect of conscious weakness or of controversial artifice. The truth, however, is, that this mode of procedure is the intrinsically right course, which ought never to have been departed from, —which they were bound to return to, from a sense of imperative duty, and not merely from a regard to safety or advantage, whenever, by any means, their deviation from it was brought home to them, —and which it is not the less incumbent upon us to adhere to, because the errors and excesses of former defenders of the truth, and the advantages furnished by these means to opponents, may have been, in some measure, the occasion of leading theologians to see more clearly, and to pursue more steadily, what was in itself, and on the ground of its own intrinsic excellence, the undoubted path of duty in the matter.

But though anti-Trinitarians are much fonder of dealing with the particular definitions, explanations, and theories of individual theologians upon this subject, than with those general and well-weighed statements which we have quoted both from the English Articles and our own Confession of Faith, —and which certainly contain the substance of all that Scripture teaches, and consequently of all that we should undertake to maintain and defend; yet it must be acknowledged that they commonly allege that the doctrine of the Trinity, even when most cautiously and carefully stated, involves a contradiction in itself, and is inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity; and to this we would now advert.

It will be understood, from the exposition of the principles formerly given, that we do not deny that such allegations are relevant, and that they must in some way or other be disposed of; and it will also be remembered, that sufficient grounds have been adduced for maintaining the two following positions upon this point: First, that when the Scripture is admitted in any fair sense to be the rule of faith, the first step should be simply to ascertain, in the faithful and honest use of all appropriate means, what it teaches, or was intended to teach, upon the subject, —that this investigation should be prosecuted fairly to its conclusion, without

being disturbed by the introduction of collateral considerations derived from other sources, until a clear result is reached, —that an allegation of intrinsic contradiction or of contrariety to known truth, if adduced against the result as brought out in this way, should be kept in its proper place as an objection, and dealt with as such, —that, if established, it should be fairly and honestly applied, not to the effect of reversing the judgment, already adopted upon competent and appropriate grounds, as to what it is that Scripture teaches (for that is irrational and illogical), but to the effect of rejecting the divine authority of the Scriptures. Secondly, that in conducting the latter part of the process of investigation above described, we are entitled to argue upon the assumption that the doctrine of the Trinity has been really established by scriptural authority, —we are under no obligation to do more than simply to show that the allegation of contradiction, or of inconsistency, with other truths, has not been proved; and we should attempt nothing more than what is thus logically incumbent upon us. As we are not called upon to enter into an exposition of the scriptural evidence, we have no opportunity of applying the principles laid down under the former of these two heads, though it is very important that they should be remembered. It is chiefly by the positions laid down in the second head, that we must be guided in considering this allegation of our opponents.

We assume, then, —as we are entitled, upon the principles explained, to do, in discussing this point, —that it has been established, by satisfactory evidence, as a doctrine taught in Scripture, that true and proper divinity is possessed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that the divine nature and perfections are possessed by three; and that, while there is only one God, and while these three, therefore, are the one God, there is yet such a distinction among them, as is, in some respects, analogous to the distinction subsisting between three persons among men, —such a distinction as lays a foundation for attributing to each of them some things which are not attributable to the others, and for applying to them the distinct personal pronouns, I, Thou, and he. This is the substance of what Scripture seems plainly to teach upon the subject; and we embody it in such statements as these, just because we cannot possibly represent or express it in any other way. Now, it is alleged that this doctrine, —which, in the meantime, we are entitled to assume, is taught in Scripture, —

involves a contradiction in itself, and is inconsistent with the divine unity; and upon the principles which have been explained, we have merely to show that this allegation is not substantiated— is not proved.

The first part of the allegation, —namely, that the doctrine directly and in itself involves a contradiction, —is very easily disposed of, as it is manifestly destitute of any solid foundation. In order to constitute a contradiction, it is necessary that there be both an affirmation and a negation, not only concerning the same thing, but concerning the same thing in the same respect. To say that one God is three Gods, or that three persons are one person, is, of course, an express contradiction, or, as it is commonly called, a contradiction in terms. To affirm, directly or by plain implication, that God is one in the same respect in which he is three, would also amount to a plain contradiction, and, of course, could not be rationally believed. But to assert that God is in one respect one, and in another and different respect three, —that he is one in nature, essence, or substance, —and that He is three with respect to personality, or personal distinction (and this is all that the received doctrine of the Trinity requires or implies), —can never be shown to contain or involve a contradiction. It certainly does not contain a contradiction in terms; for we not only do not assert, but expressly deny, that God is one and three in the same respect, that He is one in the same respect in which He is three, or that He is three in the same respect in which He is one: and when the defenders of the doctrine adhere, as they ought to do, to a simple assertion of what they believe to be taught or indicated in Scripture, and of what is declared in our symbolical books, without indulging in unwarranted explanations and baseless theories, it is impossible to show that the doctrine involves, by necessary implication, any appearance of a contradiction.

Accordingly, the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are more disposed to dwell upon the other part of the allegation, —namely, that it is inconsistent with the known and admitted truth of the divine unity; and it is chiefly by pressing this position that they have succeeded in drawing the supporters of the doctrine into the field of explanations and theories, directed to the object of making, in some measure, intelligible how it is that unity and personal distinction, —unity in one respect and

trinity in another, —are consistent with each other. The temptation to attempt this is, to ingenious men, somewhat strong; but the results of the attempts which have been made have always, in consequence of the limited amount of the information which God has been pleased to reveal to us upon the subject, and the imperfection of the human faculties and of human language, proved wholly unsuccessful in effecting anything really substantial and valuable; and have commonly been attended only with mischief, as serving to furnish plausible grounds to opponents to allege, either that, to adopt the language of the Athanasian creed, we confound the persons, or divide the substance, —that is, fall, or seem to fall, into the opposite extremes of Sabellianism or Tritheism.

Of course very different measures of wisdom and caution have been exhibited by different defenders of the Trinity in the exposition and application of these explanations and theories, illustrations and analogies, which they have brought to bear upon this subject.

They have been propounded with some diversity of spirit, and they have been applied to different purposes. Sometimes they have been put forth boldly, dogmatically, and recklessly; and at other times with much more modesty, diffidence, and circumspection. Sometimes they have been urged as if they afforded positive proofs, or at least strong presumptions, of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the combination of unity and distinction which it implies, and sometimes they have been adduced merely as affording proofs or presumptions of its possibility; while at other times, again, they have been brought forward, not as proofs or presumptions of anything, but merely as illustrations of what it was that was meant to be asserted. When applied to the last of these purposes, and used merely as illustrations of what is meant, there is no great harm done, provided they are restricted carefully to this purpose. When adduced for the first of these purposes, —namely, as presumptions or proofs of the truth of the doctrine, —this, from the nature of the case, can lead only to baseless and presumptuous speculation.

But even when applied only to the second of these purposes, —namely, to afford proofs or presumptions of possibility, —they ought to be regarded as unnecessary, unsafe, and inexpedient. Strictly speaking, we are not bound to produce positive proof even of the possibility of such a

combination of unity and distinction as the doctrine of the Trinity predicates of the divine nature, but merely to show negatively that the impossibility of it, alleged upon the other side, has not been established; and the whole history of the controversy shows the great practical importance of our restricting ourselves within the limits beyond which the rules of strict reasoning do not require us to advance. The only question which we will ever consent to discuss with our opponents upon this point, —apart, of course, from the investigation of the meaning of Scripture, —is this: Has it been clearly proved that the received doctrine of the Trinity, as set forth in our symbolical books, necessarily involves anything inconsistent with the unity of the God-head? And there need be no hesitation in answering this question in the negative. No proof of the allegation has been produced resting upon a firm and solid basis, —no argument that can be shown to be logically connected with any principles of which we have clear and adequate ideas. It is the divine nature, —the nature of the infinite and incomprehensible God, —which the question respects; and on this ground there is the strongest presumption against the warrantableness of positive assertions on the part of men as to what is possible or impossible in the matter. The substance of the allegation of our opponents is, that it is impossible that there can be such a distinction in the divine nature as the doctrine of the Trinity asserts, because God is one: and they must establish this position by making out a clear and certain bond of connection between the admitted unity of God and the impossibility of the distinction asserted. The substance of what we maintain upon the point is this, —that every attempt to establish this logical bond of connection, involves the use of positions which cannot be proved; and which cannot be proved, just because they assume a larger amount of clear and certain knowledge, both with respect to the unity and the distinction, than men possess, or have the capacity and the means of attaining.

The unity of the Godhead or divine nature being universally admitted, men are very apt to suppose that they understand it fully, —that they know more of what it means and implies than they do. But the unity of the Godhead is really as incomprehensible by men as any of His other attributes, —a position confirmed and illustrated by the fact, that it is doubtful whether the proper nature and ground of the divine unity can, in

any strict and proper sense, be ascertained and established by natural reason. There has been a very general sense, among the greatest men who have discussed this subject, of the difficulty of establishing the strict and proper unity of the Godhead on mere rational grounds, apart from revelation. It has generally been regarded, indeed, as easy enough to establish that there is one Being (and not more) who is the actual Creator and Governor of the world; but it has commonly been felt to be somewhat difficult to deduce certainly, from anything cognisable by the natural faculties of man, a proposition asserting unity, in any definite sense, of the Godhead, or divine nature, intrinsically, and as such. And this fact is fitted to show us that it is not so easy to comprehend what the divine unity is, or implies, as it might at first sight appear to be. The Scriptures plainly declare the divine unity by informing us, not merely that the world was created, and has ever been governed, by one Being, but that the Godhead, or divine nature, is essentially one. But they give us no detailed or specific information as to the nature and grounds of this unity, —as to what it consists in: and of course they afford us no definite materials for determining what is, and what is not, consistent with it. And if it be true, as we are entitled at present to assume, that the same revelation which alone certainly makes known to us the strict and proper unity of the divine nature, does also reveal to us a certain distinction existing in that nature, the fair inference is, —that the unity and the distinction are quite consistent with each other, though we may not be able to make this consistency palpable either to ourselves or others.

It is scarcely alleged, though it is sometimes insinuated, by our opponents, that the admitted unity of the divine nature necessarily excludes all distinctions of every kind anti degree. It is very manifest, in general, from the nature of the case, —the exalted and incomprehensible character of the subject, and the scanty amount of information which God has been pleased to communicate to us regarding it, or which, perhaps, we were capable of receiving, —that we have no very adequate or certain materials for determining positively, in any case, that any particular alleged distinction is inconsistent with the divine unity; and, in these circumstances, and under these conditions, the position of our opponents is, and must be, that they undertake to prove, that the particular distinction implied in the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with the

unity of God. Now, if the scriptural doctrine were to be identified with the explanations and theories about it which have been sometimes propounded by its friends, it might be admitted that considerations have been adduced, in support of the alleged inconsistency, that were possessed not only of plausibility but of weight; but against the doctrine itself, as taught in Scripture and as set forth in our standards, nothing of real weight has been, or can be, adduced, —nothing but arguments *ab ignorantia* and *ad ignorantiam*. We profess to give no further explanation of the nature of the distinction, except this, that it is set before us in Scripture as a real, and not a merely nominal distinction, —a distinction of existences and objects, and not of mere names and manifestations, — and as analogous in some respects, though not in all, to the distinction subsisting between three persons among men; and there is nothing in any one of these ideas to which a definite argument, clearly inferring incompatibility with unity, can be shown to be logically attachable. It would be no difficult matter to show, —but it is not worth while, —that the attempts which have been made to establish such a connection, either, in the first place, proceed upon certain conceptions of the precise nature of the distinction of persons, which we disclaim, and are under no sort of obligation to admit; or, secondly, resolve into vague and general assertions on points which are beyond our cognisance and comprehension, and on which it seems equally unwarrantable and presumptuous to affirm or deny anything; or, thirdly and finally, are reducible to the extravagant position, more or less openly asserted and maintained, that the divine unity necessarily excludes all distinction, of every kind, and in every degree.

The steady application of these general considerations to the actual attempts which have been made by anti-Trinitarians to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily involves what is inconsistent with the divine unity, will easily enable us to see that they have not proved their position. And here we should rest, relying for the positive proof of all that we believe and maintain, upon the authority of God in His word, —revealing Himself to us, —making known to us concerning Himself what we could not know in any measure from any other source, or by any other means, but an immediate supernatural revelation. The doctrines above reason; it could not have been discovered by it, and cannot be fully

comprehended by it, even after it has been revealed; but it cannot be proved to be contrary to reason, or to be inconsistent with any other truth which, from any source, we know regarding God. We can, of course, form no definite or adequate conception of this mysterious distinction attaching to the divine nature; but we have no reason to expect that we should, —we have every reason to expect that we should not, since we have no definite or adequate conceptions of many other things about God, even though these things are discoverable, in some measure, by the exercise of our natural faculties. We find great, or rather, insuperable, difficulties in attempting to explain, in words, the nature of this distinction in the Godhead; because, independently of the very inadequate conceptions which alone we could form of such a subject from the nature of the case, it has, of necessity, been made known to us, in so far as we do know it, through the imperfect medium of human language, and by means of representations which are necessarily derived from what takes place or is realized among men, and must therefore very imperfectly apply to the divine nature. In this, as well as in other matters connected with God, we must exclude from our conceptions everything that results from, or savours of, the peculiar qualities of man's finite and dependent nature, and admit nothing into our conceptions inconsistent with the known perfections and properties of God; while, at the same time, we must take care to exclude nothing which He has really made known to us concerning Himself, on the ground of our not being able fully to comprehend how it is, that all the truths which He has made known to us concerning Himself can be combined in Him. he has revealed to us that He is one, but He has also revealed to us that there are three who have true and proper divinity, —who have the divine nature and perfections. We, in consequence, maintain that, in the unity of the Godhead, —in the common possession of the one undivided and indivisible divine nature, — there are three persons; and without meaning to assert, —nay, while expressly denying, —that the idea of distinct personality applies to the divine nature in the same sense as to the human, we use this mode of expression, because it is really the only way in which we can embody the idea, which scriptural statements convey to us of the distinction existing in the Godhead, —namely, as being analogous in some respects to the distinction subsisting among three different persons among men, —an idea, however, to be always regulated and controlled by the principle, that

the three to whom divinity is ascribed, though called persons, because we have no other expressions that would convey any portion of the idea which Scripture sets before us on the subject, are not three Gods— as three persons among men are three men, —but are the one God.

It may perhaps be supposed, that though, upon principles formerly explained, Trinitarians are not obliged to give any full or exact definition of what they mean by persons, or by distinct personality, as predicated of the divine nature, when they merely lay down the general position, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, yet that they are bound to attempt something more precise or specific in defining or describing personality, when they lay down the position that the Holy Ghost is a person, since the idea of personality is in this position more distinctly held up, as the precise point to be established. Now it is true, that the proof that the Holy Ghost is a person, is a fundamental point in the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is scarcely disputed that the Holy Ghost is God, is divine; the main controversy turns upon the question of His personality, which is usually denied by anti-Trinitarians. But the personality of the Spirit can be proved satisfactorily by appropriate evidence, without our being under the necessity of giving any exact definition of what personality means, as applied to the divine nature. It is to be observed, that the discussion about the personality of the Spirit necessarily involves the maintenance of one or other of two alternative, which really exhaust the subject. The Holy Spirit either is a man attribute or power of God, or is a distinct person from the Father and the Son. Now, we can form a pretty definite conception of the general import of these two opposite or alternative propositions, without needing or being able to define precisely and positively wherein the idea of distinct personality, as applied to the divine nature, differs from the same idea as applied to the human nature, —so far, at least, as to be able intelligently to estimate the bearing and the weight of the evidence adduced for, and against, them respectively. Upon this state of the question, without any exact or adequate idea of personality, we are able to adduce satisfactory evidence from Scripture, that the Holy Ghost is not a mere power or attribute of God, or to disprove one of the alternative positions. And this of itself is warrant enough for maintaining the truth of the other, which is the only alternative, especially as it holds generally of a large portion of

our knowledge of God, that we approximate to an accurate statement of what we know of Him chiefly by negatives; while, at the same time, the scriptural evidence, which proves that the Spirit is not a men power or attribute, manifestly brings Him before our minds, viewed in His relations to the Father and the Son, in an aspect analogous in some respect. to the idea we entertain of the relation subsisting between distinct persons among men; and this warrants tin application of the idea, —of course with the necessary modification, —and also of the phraseology of distinct personality.

VII. Evidence for the Divinity of Christ

I have endeavoured, in what has been said upon the subject of the Trinity, to guard against the tendency to indulge in unwarranted definitions, explanations, and theories upon this topic, —a tendency which too many of the defenders of the truth have exhibited, —by pointing out not only its inexpediency and danger, so far as mere controversial objects are concerned, but its unwarrantableness and impropriety, on higher grounds, as a matter of duty. I have attempted to mark out precisely the extent to which the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity are called upon, in strict reasoning, to go, in the discussion of abstract points connected with this matter; and have, I think, rigidly confined my own observations upon it within the limits thus defined. But still I have some apprehension that, since I am not to enter into a detailed examination of the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine, the prominence which has been given to abstract discussions regarding it, may convey an erroneous impression of the comparative importance of the different departments of inquiry that constitute a full investigation of the subject, and may lead some to overlook the paramount, the supreme importance of making themselves acquainted with the scriptural evidence of the different positions, which may be said to constitute the doctrine, as it is generally received amongst us. On this account, I wish again to advert to the considerations, that this doctrine is one of pure revelation; that we know, and can know, nothing about the distinction in the divine nature which it asserts, except what is taught us in the sacred Scriptures; and that the first step that ought to be taken in a full investigation of the

subject, should be to collect the scriptural statements which bear upon it, —to examine carefully their meaning and import, —and then to embody the substance of the different positions thus ascertained, as constituting the doctrine which we believe and maintain upon the subject. The doctrine which we believe and maintain should be reached or got at in this way; and the materials by which we defend it should be all derived from this source. We should hold nothing upon the subject which is not taught in Scripture; and we should be so familiar with the scriptural grounds of all that we profess to believe regarding it, as to be able to defend, from the word of God, the whole of what we believe, against all who may assail it. I have already made some general observations upon the Socinian method of interpreting Scripture, and given a warning against some of the general plausibilities by which they usually endeavour to defend their system against the force of scriptural arguments, and to obscure or diminish the strength of the support which Scripture gives to the scheme of doctrine that has been generally maintained in the Christian church; and on the subject of the Scripture evidence, I can now only make a few observations of a similar kind, bearing more immediately upon the doctrine of the Trinity, and directed, not to the object of stating, illustrating, and enforcing the evidence itself, but merely suggesting some considerations that may be useful in the study of it.

The great fundamental position which we assert and undertake to prove from Scripture is this, —that true and proper divinity is ascribed to, that the divine nature is possessed by, three, —the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the basis or foundation, or rather, it is the sum and substance, of the doctrine of the Trinity; and everything, of course, depends upon the establishment of this position. The deity of the Father is not a matter of controversy; it is universally admitted. The question, so far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, turns, as I have already explained, more upon His personality than upon His divinity; for that the Spirit is God, in the highest sense, or is truly divine, is scarcely disputed. For these and other reasons, the main field of controversial discussion on this whole subject of the Trinity, has been the true and proper divinity of the Son, —that is, of Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners. Of course, all the general objections usually adduced against the doctrine of the Trinity,

apply in all their force to the ascription of proper Godhead, or of the divine nature, to any person but the Father; so that, when the divinity of the Son is proved, all further controversy about the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, so far as these general topics are concerned, is practically at an end. When a plurality of divine persons has been established, all the leading general points on which anti-Trinitarians insist are virtually negated, and excluded from the field. If it be proved that there is more than one person in the Godhead, there can be no general reason why there should not be a third; and it is on this account that the investigation of the proper scriptural evidence in regard to the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit has been usually somewhat less disturbed by extraneous and collateral considerations, by allegations of the impossibility of the doctrine contended for being true, and by violent efforts at perversion which these allegations were thought to justify, than the investigation into the scriptural evidence for the divinity of the Son.

But while the divinity of Jesus Christ has thus become, perhaps, the principal battle-field on this whole question, and while, therefore, the evidence bearing upon it ought to be examined with peculiar care, it is right to remark that Trinitarians profess to find evidence in Scripture bearing directly upon the doctrine of the Trinity in general, —that is, bearing generally upon a plurality, and, more particularly, upon a trinity of persons in the Godhead, independently of the specific evidence for the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is common in writers who enter fully into the discussion of this subject, to divide the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine of the Trinity into two heads: first, that derived from passages which appear to intimate a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and from those which seem to speak of the three persons together, or in conjunction; and, secondly, that derived from passages which are alleged to assert or imply the divinity of Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, —the second of these heads comprising much the larger amount of scriptural materials. The principal thing in the Bible which has been regarded by many as intimating a plurality of persons in the Godhead in general, without conveying to us any further or more definite information upon the subject, is the frequent use in the Old Testament of the plural appellation, as it is called, Elohim, or Aleim, the ordinary name of God,

used in the plural form, and joined with nouns and verbs in the singular. Some Trinitarians have disclaimed any assistance from this branch of evidence, explaining the peculiarity by what they call the plural of majesty or excellence; while others, and among the rest Dr John Pye Smith, —who commonly leans to the extreme of caution, and is very careful to put no more weight upon a proof than it is clearly and certainly able to bear, — have, with apparently better reason, been of opinion that this singular construction has some real weight in the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; or, as Dr Smith says, that “this peculiarity of idiom originated in a design to intimate a plurality in the nature of the One God; and that thus, in connection with other circumstances calculated to suggest the same conception, it was intended to excite and prepare the minds of men for the more full declaration of this unsearchable mystery, which should in proper time be granted.” The chief proofs which are usually adduced in support of three distinct persons, or in which the three persons of the Godhead appear to be spoken of together, or in conjunction, and yet are distinguished from each other, are the formula of baptism and the apostolic benediction, as they are commonly called (for most Trinitarians now admit that there is a decided preponderance of critical evidence against the genuineness of 1 John v. 7, usually spoken of as the three heavenly witnesses). And here, too, there has been some difference of opinion among Trinitarians as to the weight of the evidence furnished by the passages referred to, —some thinking that these passages by themselves do not furnish what can be properly called a proof, a distinct and independent proof, of the doctrine, but only a presumption; anti that, after it has been proved by a clearer and more conclusive evidence that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is possessed of divinity and personality, these passages may be regarded as corroborating the conclusion, and confirming the general mass of evidence; while others are of opinion, —and, I think, upon sufficient grounds, —that the language employed upon these occasions, —the manner and circumstances in which the Father, the Son, anti the Holy Spirit are there conjoined, —are plainly fitted, and should therefore be held as having been intended, to convey to us the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, and that they are possessed of equal power and dignity, or, in other words, that they equally possess the same divine nature.

Still, the difference of opinion that has been exhibited by Trinitarians as to the validity and sufficiency of these proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity in general, has concurred with other causes formerly mentioned, in bringing about the result that the controversy has usually turned mainly upon the passages of Scripture classed under the second head, as those which are regarded as establishing the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and especially of Jesus Christ. All the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity of course profess, and undertake to prove from Scripture, that «Jesus Christ is truly and properly divine, — that He is God, not in any secondary or subordinate, but in the proper and highest, sense; and is thus, equally with the Father, a possessor of the one divine nature or substance; and they have agreed harmoniously, in the main, in selecting, classifying, and applying the varied and abundant scriptural evidence by which this great truth is established. They have been in the habit of classifying the evidence under four heads, and there is probably no better mode of classifying it.

First, The proof from Scripture that divine names and titles are applied to Christ; and under this head the points to be established are these two: first, that names and titles are ascribed to Christ which are exclusively appropriated to the one true God; and, secondly, that names and titles are applied to Christ which, though not exclusively appropriated to the one true God, and sometimes applied to creatures in a secondary and subordinate sense, are yet applied to Christ in such circumstances, in such a manner, and with such accompanying adjuncts, as to furnish evidence that the Scriptures were fitted, and, of course, intended, to impress upon us the conviction that they apply to Christ in a sense in which they do not, and cannot, apply to any creature, —in the same sense in which they are applied to the Father.

Secondly, The proof that divine qualities and attributes, such as omnipotence and omniscience, are ascribed to Christ; attributes which manifestly cannot belong to any finite or created being, and must be exclusively appropriated to the divine nature, —to the one true God.

Thirdly, The proof that acts, or works, are ascribed to Christ, which are not competent to any finite or created being; and which require or imply the possession and exercise of divine perfections and prerogatives, —such

as the creation and government of the world, and the determining the everlasting destinies of men.

Fourthly, The proof that Christ is entitled to divine worship and homage, to the adoration and the confidence, the submission and the obedience, which creatures ought to give to their Creator, and to none else, and which are claimed in Scripture as due exclusively to the one true God.

Any one of these departments of proof, when really established by a careful investigation of the precise meaning and import of particular statements, would be sufficient to settle the question of the true and proper divinity of Christ; but when each and all of these positions can be established, as has been often proved, by various and abundant scriptural evidence, —formal and incidental, palpable and recondite, —by many passages of all different degrees of clearness and explicitness, —by many proofs, corroborated by innumerable presumptions, there is presented a mass of evidence, which, it is not to be wondered at, has satisfied the great body of those who, in any age, have investigated the subject, and have assumed the name of Jesus, —that he whom they call their Lord and Master is indeed God over all, blessed for evermore.

Of course, the establishment of each of these four leading positions concerning Christ, depends wholly upon the particular scriptural evidence adduced in support of it, —upon the result of a careful examination of the precise meaning and import of particular statements contained in Scripture, —upon the proof that can be adduced that there are statements contained in Scripture which, when investigated in the fair and honest application of all the principles and rules of sound interpretation, bring out, as the general result, that if the Scriptures were fitted and designed to be our rule of faith, it was then wished, intended, and expected, that we should believe all this concerning Jesus Christ.

All the various scriptural statements which have been adduced in support of these positions concerning Christ, have been made the subjects of controversial discussion. It has been contended by Socinians, that there is nothing in Scripture which, rightly interpreted, furnishes sufficient or satisfactory evidence that Jesus Christ had any existence until he was born in Bethlehem, —that he had any other nature than the human, —

that he was anything more than a mere man; and it has been contended by Arians, that while Christ existed in a higher nature than the human before the creation of the world, He still belonged to the class of creatures, —that He is called God only in a secondary or subordinate sense, —and is not possessed of true and proper divinity, —is not a possessor of the one divine nature; and both these parties have exerted themselves to clear away the scriptural evidence adduced in support of Christ's proper divinity. The Arians, indeed, join with the Trinitarians in proving, against the Socinians, that there are scriptural statements which clearly and certainly prove that Jesus Christ existed before the creation of the world, and was possessed of a nature higher and more exalted than the human. And, in giving a detailed and digested exposition of the Scripture evidence concerning Christ, it is perhaps best and most expedient to begin with establishing those positions which Arians concur with us in holding in opposition to the Socinians, by proving Christ's pre-existence and superhuman dignity; and then, abandoning the Arians, to proceed to the proof that He had a nature not only superhuman, but truly and properly divine, by adducing and expounding the evidence of the four leading positions regarding Him formerly stated. But, of course, the proof of His true and proper divinity shuts out at once not only Socinianism, but all the various gradations of Arianism, as it necessarily implies that He was, as our Confession of Faith says, "of one substance, power, and eternity with the Father." And the general features of the method of disposing of the Scripture evidence for the divinity of Christ, to which alone we can here advert, are substantially the same, in the case of all the different classes of anti-Trinitarians.

I need not add anything to the general observations formerly made, about the Socinian practice, usually followed also by the Arians, of mixing up the general objections to the doctrine upon abstract grounds, with the investigation of the proper meaning of scriptural statements, —of insisting that the doctrine, if true, would have been more frequently mentioned, and more clearly asserted, —and of demanding that we shall prove, in regard to the scriptural passages we adduce, not only that they may, but that they must, bear the meaning we assign to them, and cannot possibly admit of any other. All these different features of the method they employ, which they lay down beforehand as general principles, are

directed to one single object, —namely, to diminish a little the amount of torture which it may be necessary to apply to particular scriptural statements, with the view of showing that they do not furnish any satisfactory evidence for Christ's divinity. It is evident that, if these general principles were conceded to them in all the latitude of construction which they commonly put upon them, a smaller amount of perverting power would be necessary to make out a plausible case in support of the positions they maintain. They are pretty distinctly conscious that it is necessary for them to subject scriptural statements to a considerable amount of pressure, in order to distort and pervert them to such an extent, as that they shall appear to give no very certain sound in support of Christ's divinity; and as they are aware that this is rather apt to disgust honest men, they are naturally solicitous to do with as little of it as they can. It was evidently with this view that they devised those principles of interpretation to which we have referred; for if these be well founded, a smaller amount of distortion and perversion will be necessary for accomplishing their object. It is enough to remember, upon the other side, that all that we are called upon to do in order to establish the doctrine of Christ's divinity, is just to show that Scripture, fairly and honestly explained, according to the recognised principles and rules of sound interpretation, does teach, and was intended to teach, it.

The opponents of Christ's divinity, after having attempted by these general considerations to make provision for effecting their object with the minimum of perversion, proceed to the work of showing, minutely and in detail, that the scriptural statements we adduce do not teach, or at least do not necessarily teach, the doctrine of Christ's divinity. They are not unfrequently somewhat skilled in the technicalities and minutia of biblical criticism; and some of them have manifested very considerable ingenuity in applying all these to the object they have in view, which may be said to be, in general, to involve the meaning of scriptural statements in obscurity, —to show that no certain meaning can be brought out of them, —and, more particularly, that it is not by any means clear or certain that they bear the meaning which Trinitarians assign to them. I cannot enter into any detail of the various methods they have employed for this purpose. I may merely mention a specimen.

One very common course they adopt is, to break down a statement into its separate words, phrases, and clauses, and then to try to get up some evidence that the particular words, phrases, or clauses, or some of them, have been employed in some other passages of Scripture in a somewhat different sense from that in which Trinitarians understand them in the passage under consideration; and then they usually reckon this, —aided, of course, by an insinuation of the impossibility or incredibility of the doctrine of their opponents, —as sufficient ground for maintaining that there is nothing in the passage to support it; while, in such cases, Trinitarians have undertaken to prove, and have proved, either that the words, phrases, or clauses are never used in Scripture in the sense which Socinians and Arians would ascribe to them; or that, even though this sense might be, in certain circumstances, admissible, yet that it is precluded, in the passage under consideration, by a fair application to it of the acknowledged rules of grammar, philology, and exegesis; and that these rules, fairly applied to the whole passage, viewed in connection with the context, establish that the Trinitarian interpretation brings out its true meaning and import. The great leading impression which the Socinian mode of dealing with the Scripture evidence for the divinity of Christ, is fitted to produce in the minds of those who may be somewhat influenced by it, and may thus have become disposed to regard it with favour, is this, —that most of the passages which they may have been accustomed to regard as evidences of Christ's divinity, have been so dealt with singly and separately as to be neutralized or withdrawn, to be thrown into the background, or taken out of the way; so that, while there is much in Scripture, as Socinians admit, which would no doubt concur and harmonize with the Trinitarian view, if that view were once established, yet that there are few, if any, passages which seem to afford a clear and positive proof of it, and that thus the foundation is taken away, and the whole superstructure of course must fall to the ground. This is the impression which is sometimes apt to be produced when we read a plausible Socinian commentary upon the scriptural statements adduced in support of Christ's divinity, and find that every one of them has been tampered with, with more or less plausibility, and that a great variety of considerations have been suggested, wearing a critical aspect, and all tending to render the Trinitarian interpretation of them uncertain or precarious. Now, the considerations that ought to be applied to

counteract this impression, are chiefly these two: —

First, There are some passages of Scripture under each of the four leading divisions of the proof which cannot be explained away without a manifest violation of the recognised principles of interpretation; and these constitute a firm and stable foundation, on which the whole mass of cumulative and corroborating evidence may securely rest. Trinitarians, of course, do not maintain that all the Scripture passages usually adduced in support of Christ's divinity are equally clear and explicit, —are equally unassailable by objections and presumptions; and they do not deny that there are some which, taken by themselves and apart from the rest, might admit of being explained away, or understood in a different sense. All the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity do not attach the same weight to all the different passages commonly adduced as proofs of it; and some discrimination and knowledge of the subject are necessary in fixing, amid the huge mass of evidence, upon the true dicta probantia, the real proof passages, —those which, after all the arts and appliances of Socinian criticism have been brought to bear upon them, can be really shown to have successfully resisted all their attempts, and to stand, after the most searching application of the principles of sound interpretation, as impregnable bulwarks of Christ's divinity, —as manifestly intended to teach us that he is indeed the true God, the mighty God, Jehovah of hosts. There is a considerable number of such passages both in the Old and the New Testaments. They must necessarily constitute the main strength of the case; and no man can consider himself thoroughly versant in this subject, until, after having surveyed the whole evidence commonly adduced in the discussion, he has made up his own mind, as the result of careful study and meditation, as to what the passages are which of themselves afford clear and conclusive proof of Christ's divinity, as distinguished from those which are rather corroborative than probative; and has made himself familiar with those exegetical principles and materials, by the application of which the true meaning of these passages may be brought out and established, and all the common Socinian glosses and attempts at perverting or neutralizing them may be exposed.

Secondly, the full and complete evidence for Christ's divinity is brought out only by a survey of the whole of the scriptural materials which bear

upon this subject. Socinians are in the habit of assailing each text singly and separately, and labour to convey the impression that they have succeeded conclusively in disposing of all the proofs one by one; while they usually strive to keep in the background, and to conceal from view, the evidence in its entirety and completeness. It is, of course, quite right and necessary that every Scripture text adduced should be subjected to a careful and deliberate examination, and that its real meaning and import should be correctly ascertained. It is also necessary, as we have explained under the last head, that we should be prepared, in maintaining our doctrine, with particular texts, which, taken singly and of themselves, afford conclusive proofs of the truth. But it is not right that the entire discussion should be restricted to the examination of particular texts, without this being accompanied and followed by a general survey of the whole evidence, taken complexly and in the mass. When the Socinians have only a single text to deal with, they can usually get up something more or less plausible to involve its meaning in obscurity or uncertainty; but when their denial of Christ's divinity is brought into contact with the full blaze of the whole word of God, as it bears upon this subject, it then appears in all its gross deformity and palpable falsehood. There is, perhaps, no more conclusive and satisfactory way of bringing out and establishing the divinity of Christ, than just to collect together, and to read over in combination, a considerable number of the passages of Scripture which speak of Him, and then to call on men to submit their understandings, honestly and unreservedly, to the fair impression of the views of Christ which are thus brought before them, and to put to themselves the simple question, —Is it possible that the Bible could really have been fitted and designed to be our rule of faith, if these statements about Christ, taken in combination, were not intended to teach us, and to constrain us to believe, that He is the one true and supreme God, possessed of the divine nature, and of all divine perfections? A minute and careful examination of the precise import and bearing of scriptural statements, will bring out a great deal of evidence in support of Christ's divinity that is not very obvious at first sight, —will show that this great doctrine is interwoven with the whole texture of revelation, and that the more direct and palpable proof is corroborated by evidence, possessed, indeed, of different degrees of strength in the different portions of which it is composed, but all combining to place this great doctrine upon an

immoveable foundation; but there is nothing better fitted to assure the mind, to impress the understanding and the heart, to satisfy us that we are not following a cunningly-devised fable, when we rely upon Him as an almighty Saviour, and confide in the infinity of His perfections, than just to peruse the plain statements of God's word regarding Him, and to submit our minds honestly and unreservedly to the impressions which they are manifestly fitted and intended to produce. We should take care, then, while giving a due measure of time and attention to the exact and critical investigation of the precise meaning of particular texts, to contemplate also the evidence of Christ's divinity in its fulness and completeness, that we may see the more clearly, and feel the more deeply, the whole of what God has revealed to us concerning His Son.

There is one other general observation which I wish to make in regard to the study of this subject. It will be found occasionally, in perusing works written in vindication of Christ's divinity, that some texts which are founded on by one author as proofs of the doctrine, are regarded by another as affording only a presumption of its truth, and perhaps by a third as having no bearing upon the question; and this fact suggests the consideration, that there are two different and opposite tendencies upon this subject, both of which ought to be guarded against. The one is, that of pertinacity in adhering to everything that has ever been adduced as a proof or argument, though it may not be able to stand a searching critical investigation; and the other is, that of undue facility in giving up, as inconclusive or irrelevant, arguments that really are possessed of some weight and relevancy. Both of these tendencies have been manifested by the defenders of the truth, and both of them operate injuriously. Some men seem to think that it is nothing less than treachery to the doctrine itself, to doubt the validity of any arguments that have ever at any time been brought forward in support of it; while others, again, seem to think that they manifest a more than ordinary skill in biblical criticism, and a larger measure of candour and liberality, in abandoning some posts which Trinitarians have commonly defended. Of course no general rule can be laid down for the regulation of this subject; for the only rule applicable to the matter is, that every man is bound, by the most solemn obligations, to use the utmost impartiality, care, and diligence, to ascertain the true and correct meaning and import of everything

contained in the word of God. It is enough to point out these tendencies and dangers, and exhort men to guard carefully against being misled or perverted by either of them; while they should judge charitably of those who may seem not to have escaped wholly uninjured by them, provided they have given no sufficient reason to doubt (for, in some instances, the second of these tendencies has been carried so far as to afford reasonable ground for suspicion on this point) that they are honest and cordial friends of the great doctrine itself. There is enough of scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the supreme divinity of our blessed Saviour, —evidence that has ever stood, and will ever stand, the most searching critical investigation, —to satisfy all its supporters that there is no temptation whatever to deviate from the strictest impartiality in the investigation of the meaning of scriptural statements, —no reason why they should pertinaciously contend for the validity of every atom of proof that has ever been adduced in support of it, or hesitate about abandoning any argument that cannot be shown to stand the test of a searching application of all the sound principles both of criticism and exegesis.

The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is a peculiarly interesting topic of investigation, both from the intrinsic importance of the subject and its intimate connection with the whole scheme of revealed truth, and from the way and manner in which the investigation has been, and, of course, must be, conducted. There is perhaps no doctrine of Scripture which has called forth a larger amount of discussion, —the whole evidence about which has been more thoroughly sifted; there is none which has been more vigorously and perseveringly attacked, —none which has been more triumphantly defended and more conclusively established. Viewed simply as a subject of theological discussion, apart from its practical importance, this doctrine perhaps presents fully as much to interest and attract as any other that has been made a subject of controversy.

The evidence bearing upon it extends nearly over the whole Bible, —the Old Testament as well as the New; for a great deal of evidence has been produced from the Old Testament that the Messiah promised to the fathers was a possessor of the divine nature, of divine perfections and prerogatives, and fully entitled to have applied to Him the incommunicable name of Jehovah. A great deal of learning and ability

have been brought to bear upon the discussion of this question, both in establishing the truth, and in labouring to undermine and overthrow it. All the resources of minute criticism have been applied to the subject, and to everything that seemed to bear upon it; materials of all different kinds, and from all various sources, have been heaped up in the investigation of it. The discussion thus presents a sort of compendium of the whole science and art of biblical criticism, in the widest sense of the word, —the settling of the true text, in some important passages, by an examination of various readings, —the philological investigation of the true meaning of a considerable number of important words, —the application of grammatical and exegetical principles and rules to a great number of phrases, clauses, and sentences. All this is comprehended in a full discussion of the subject of our Lord's proper divinity. And there is, perhaps, no one doctrine to the disproof or overthrow of which materials of these different kinds, and from these various sources, have been more skilfully and perseveringly applied, —none in regard to which, by a better, and sounder, and more effective application of the same materials, a more certain and decisive victory has been gained for the cause of truth. Every point has been contested, and contested with some skill and vigour: but this has only made the establishment of the truth, in the ultimate result, the more palpable and the more undoubted.

For these reasons I have always been inclined to think, in opposition to some views put forth by Dr Chalmers, that it is very desirable that a pretty full investigation of the subject of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ should come in at an early period in the study of the system of Christian theology. The study of this subject leads to the consideration and application of many important principles, both of a more general and comprehensive, and of a more minute and special kind, intimately connected with the investigation of divine truth, and the critical interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, and is thus fitted to teach important lessons that bear upon the whole field of theological discussion. To the humble and honest reader of God's word, the divinity of the Saviour seems to be very plainly and fully taught there; and when men are first brought into contact with Socinian perversions, they are apt, if they have not previously studied the subject critically, to be startled with the plausibility attaching to some of their attempts to involve the

evidences of the doctrine, or at least the precise meaning of some particular passages of Scripture, in doubt and uncertainty. On this account, it is all the more satisfactory in itself, and all the better fitted to suggest useful lessons of general application, to find, as the result of a more thorough and searching investigation, and of the most stringent application of the recognised rules of critical inquiry, that our first and most natural impressions of the meaning and import of scriptural statements are fully confirmed and conclusively established, —that the criticism, the learning, and the ingenuity of opponents are met and overborne, on the part of the advocates of the truth, by all these qualities in a much superior degree, —and thus to be brought deliberately and rationally to the conclusion, that what has been in all ages the faith of the humbly devout, though not learned and critical, readers of God's word, is indeed its true meaning, and can be satisfactorily established in all its parts by the highest learning, and the most accomplished and searching criticism.

One leading consideration that ought to be kept in view in the investigation of the scriptural evidence bearing on this subject is this, — that the object to be aimed at is to find out, from an examination of the whole word of God, what it is that He wished and intended us to believe regarding it. The Scriptures are manifestly not constructed upon the principle of giving us, in formal, general statements, or in single passages, the substance of what they are designed to teach us upon any particular topic. It was manifestly God's design, in the construction of His word, that men, in using it for the purpose which it was intended to serve, should be called upon to exercise diligence and research in collecting and combining the scattered rays of light, possessed of different degrees of intensity, that bear upon any particular point, and in estimating from the combination of the whole the real character, complexion, and position of the object presented. This consideration is fitted to impress upon our minds the unreasonableness and unfairness of selecting a few particular statements, —laying them down as a basis or foundation, —and then setting ourselves to pervert or explain away all other statements which, at first view, it may not seem very easy to reconcile with those we may have thought proper to select as our favourites, in place of investigating all fairly and impartially, —ascertaining the combined result of all that the

Bible has stated or indicated upon the subject, —and then dealing with this result in one or other of the only two ways which can be regarded as in any sense rational in such a case, namely, either submitting implicitly to the doctrine as revealed by God, or else rejecting wholly the revelation which contains it.

In accordance with this view, it is proper to give prominence to this general consideration, which ought ever to be remembered and applied, —namely, that Socinian and Arian doctrines, in regard to the Trinity and the person of Christ, are founded only upon a partial selection of scriptural statements to the neglect and disregard, or rather, what is much worse, to the perversion and distortion, of many others; while the orthodox doctrine exhibits accurately and fully the combined result of all, giving to every class of scriptural statements its true and fair meaning and its right place; and by this very quality or circumstance is proved to be the true key for interpreting Scripture, and solving all the difficulties that may occur in the investigation of its various statements. That Jesus Christ is a man, a true and real man, —that he had a true body, and a reasonable or rational soul, —is a doctrine clearly taught in Scripture, because it is manifestly implied in, and absolutely indispensable to, a fair and honest interpretation of many of its statements; and it is accordingly held by all who call themselves Christians, by Trinitarians as well as by Socinians and Arians. But there are also passages which, when fairly interpreted, afford satisfactory evidence that Jesus Christ existed, and was in heaven, before He was born at Bethlehem, and before the creation of the world; and that in this state of pre-existence He possessed a superhuman nature, —a nature higher and more exalted than that in which He presented Himself to men while upon earth. now, all such statements the Socinians refuse to take into account, in forming their conceptions, or in settling their general doctrines about Christ; and they labour to vindicate their conduct in doing so, by exerting their utmost ingenuity in distorting and perverting their meaning, in order to make out some plausible grounds for alleging that they convey no such ideas as have been commonly deduced from them, and as they seem very evidently fitted to convey.

The Arians agree with us in holding, in opposition to the Socinians, that

those passages do prove the pre-existence and superhuman dignity of Christ; and accordingly they admit these additional ideas;— additional, I mean, to that of His mere humanity, —into their doctrine concerning Him. But here they stop; and this is stopping short, —far short, —of the whole of what Scripture teaches us regarding Him, for it still leaves Him in the class of creatures. And we assert, and undertake to prove, that, in addition to those passages which prove His pre-existence and superhuman dignity, —and which, perhaps, taken by themselves, prove nothing more, —there are many passages which cannot be fairly and impartially investigated according to the strictest principles of criticism, without constraining men to believe that they were intended to represent to us Christ as possessed of true and proper divinity, —a possessor of the one divine nature, with all divine perfections and prerogatives. Of course, upon this ground, we insist that the Arian account of Christ, though fuller and more accurate than the Socinian, is yet fundamentally defective; and we maintain that, in order to express and embody the substance of all that Scripture teaches us concerning Him, we must hold that He existed not merely before the creation of the world, but from eternity, —not only in the possession of a superhuman, but of the one properly divine nature. This doctrine, and this alone, comes up to the full import of what is taught or indicated in Scripture concerning Him. When any part of it is left out or denied, then there are some scriptural statements— more or less few, of course, according to the extent of the omission or negation, — to which torture must be applied, in order to show that they do not express the ideas which they seem plainly fitted and intended to convey; whereas, when this great doctrine is admitted in all its extent, the whole demands of Scripture are satisfied, —no distortion or perversion is required,—and there is the full satisfaction of having investigated fairly and honestly everything that God has said to us upon the subject, and of having implicitly submitted our understandings to His authority. What a mass of confusion and inconsistency the Bible presents,—how thoroughly unfitted is it to be the standard or directory of our faith,—if it be indeed true that Christ was a mere man, and that the Bible was intended to teach us this; whereas, if we admit and apply the orthodox doctrine that He was God and man in one person, then order and consistency at once appear, —difficulties are solved, otherwise insoluble,—apparent contradictions are removed,—and the whole body of the scriptural statements

concerning Him are seen to be in entire harmony with each other, and to concur, all without force or straining, in forming one consistent and harmonious whole.

The same general consideration may be applied to other points comprehended in the doctrine commonly received upon this subject. Take, for instance, the personality of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be disputed that there are passages of Scripture which speak of the Spirit of God, and which contain, taken by themselves, no sufficient evidence of distinct personality. But if men rest here, and upon this ground deny that the Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead, then they are refusing to take into account, and to receive in their fair and legitimate import, other passages in which the idea of distinct personality is clearly indicated, and which cannot, without great and unwarrantable straining, be interpreted so as to exclude or omit it. The same principle applies to the denial of Christ's eternal Sonship by those who admit His true and proper divinity. By admitting His true and proper divinity, they interpret rightly a large number of the scriptural statements regarding Him, which Socinians and Arians distort and pervert; and they receive what must be admitted to be most essential and fundamental truth in the scriptural views of Christ. But still, as we believe, they come short of what Scripture teaches concerning Him, by refusing to admit that, even as God, He is the Son of the Father,—that there existed from eternity a relation between the first and second persons of the Godhead, analogous in some respects to that subsisting between a father and a son among men; and we are persuaded that there are passages in Scripture to which a considerable amount of straining must be applied in order to exclude this idea.

The Scripture, however, was evidently constructed upon the principle not only of requiring, and thereby testing, men's diligence and impartiality in collecting and examining, in taking into account and applying, the whole of the materials which it furnishes, for regulating our judgment upon any particular point; but likewise upon the principle of requiring, and thereby testing, their real candour and love of truth, by providing only reasonable and satisfactory, and not overwhelming, evidence of the doctrines it was designed to teach. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are not set forth in Scripture in such a way as to constrain the immediate assent of all who

read its words, and are in some sense capable of understanding them; they are not there set forth in such a way as at once to preclude all difference of opinion and all cavilling, or to bid defiance to all attempts at distorting and perverting its statements. In short, startling as the position may at first sight appear, there is not one of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system which is set forth in Scripture with such an amount of explicitness, and with such overwhelming evidence, as it was abstractly possible to have given to the statement and the proof of it, or in such a way as to deprive men who are averse to the reception of its doctrines, of all plausible pretences for explaining away and perverting its statements, even while admitting their divine authority. No sane man ever doubted that the Nicene Creed and the Westminster Confession teach, and were intended to teach, by those who framed them, the true and proper divinity of the Son. But many men, to whom we cannot deny the possession of mental sanity, while we cannot but regard them as labouring under some ruinously perverting influences, have denied that the Scripture teaches this doctrine; they have argued strenuously in support of this denial, and have been able to produce some considerations in favour of their views, which are not altogether destitute of plausibility.

The explanation of this is, that Scripture was constructed upon the principle of testing our candour and love of truth, by leaving some opening for men who had little or no candour or love of truth rejecting the doctrines it was designed to teach, without either formally denying its authority, or openly renouncing all claim to sense or rationality, by advocating views in support of which nothing that was possessed even of plausibility could be alleged. The doctrine of the divinity of the Son, in common with all the other peculiar doctrines of the Christian system, is set forth in Scripture with a force of evidence amply sufficient to satisfy every candid man, —every man who really desires to know the truth, to know what God has revealed regarding it, —with such evidence as that the rejection of it, of itself proves the existence and operation of a sinful state of mind, of a hatred of truth, and imposes a fearful responsibility; but not with such evidence as at once to secure and compel the assent of all who look at it, and to cut off the possibility of the assignation of some plausible grounds for rejecting it when men are led, by their dislike of the

doctrine, and what it implies, to reject it. God is fully warranted in requiring us to believe whatever he has revealed, and accompanied with sufficient evidence of its truth, and to punish us for refusing our assent in these circumstances; and it is in accordance with the general principles of His moral administration, to test or try men by giving them evidence of what He wishes and requires them to believe, that is amply sufficient, without being necessarily overwhelming, —that shall certainly satisfy all who examine it with candour and a real desire to know the truth, —and that may leave in ignorance and error those who do not bring these qualities to the investigation.

The Socinians would demand for the proof of Christ's divinity a kind and amount of evidence that is altogether unreasonable. We formerly had occasion, in considering the general principles on which Socinians proceed in the interpretation of Scripture, to expose the unreasonableness of their demand, that we must show that the scriptural statements which we produce in support of our doctrines, not only may, but must, bear the meaning we ascribe to them, and cannot possibly admit of any other. AYe acknowledge, indeed, that it is not enough for us to show that Scripture statements may bear the meaning we attach to them; and we contend that there are statements about Christ of which it might be fairly said that they must bear our sense, and cannot possibly— that is, consistently with the principles of sound criticism and the dictates of common sense— admit of any other. But we do not acknowledge that the establishment of this second position is indispensable to making out our case, for there is a medium between the two extremes, —of proving merely, on the one hand, that certain statements may possibly admit of the meaning we ascribe to them; and, on the other hand, proving that they cannot possibly admit of any other meaning. This intermediate position is this, —that upon a fair examination of the statements, and an impartial application to them of the recognised principles and rules of interpretation, we have sufficient materials for satisfying ourselves, and for convincing others, that this, and not anything different from it, is their true meaning, —the meaning which it is right and proper, if we would act uprightly and impartially, to ascribe to them. This is enough. This should satisfy reasonable and candid men. This fully warrants us to maintain, as it affords us sufficient materials to prove, that this is the meaning which

they were intended to bear, —that these are the ideas which they were intended to convey to us. It must of course be assumed, in all such investigations, that the one object to be aimed at is to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture, —the meaning which the words bear, and were intended to bear. When this is once ascertained, we have what we are bound to regard as the doctrine which the author of Scripture wished, intended, and expected us to adopt upon His authority. It must further be assumed that the words were intended to convey to us the meaning which they are fitted to convey; so that the inquiry is virtually limited to this, What is the meaning which these words, in themselves, and in their connection, are fitted to convey to us, when fairly and impartially investigated by the recognised rules of philology, grammar, and criticism, as they apply to this matter?

The results brought out in this way we are bound to receive as exhibiting the true, real, and intended meaning of Scripture, and to deal with them accordingly. Cases may occur in which we may not be able to reach any very certain conclusion as to the true meaning of a particular statement, —in which, of several senses that may be suggested, we may, after examining the matter, be at a loss to decide which is the true meaning, — that is, we may not be able to attain to more than probability upon the point. There are such statements in Scripture, and of course they must be dealt with honestly, according to their true character, and the real evidence of the case, as it fairly applies to them. But these statements are very few, and comparatively unimportant. We can, in general, in the fair, diligent, and persevering use of appropriate materials, attain to a clear conviction as to what the true meaning of scriptural statements is, —what is the sense which they are fitted, and of course intended, to convey to us; and this we should regard as settling the question, and satisfying our judgment, even though there may remain some ground for cavilling, — something not altogether destitute of plausibility that might be alleged in favour of the possibility of their bearing a different sense. In regard to the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, the evidence is full, complete, and conclusive, that the Scriptures are fitted to teach us these doctrines, —to convey to us, to impress upon us, the ideas that constitute them; and, of course, that the Author of the Scriptures intended and expected, nay, demands at our peril, that we shall believe upon His authority, that “in

the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, —God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and that God the Son became man.”

We conclude with a few remarks upon the importance of this doctrine, and the responsibility connected with the admission or denial of it. When we reflect upon the fulness and clearness with which the divinity of Christ — which, as we formerly explained, may be said practically to carry with it the whole doctrine of the Trinity— is revealed to us in Scripture, we cannot regard those who refuse to receive it in any other light than as men who have determined that they will not submit, their understandings to the revelation which God has given us. They are refusing to receive the record which He has given us concerning Himself and concerning His Son, in its substance and fundamental features; and they are doing so under the influence of motives and tendencies which manifestly imply determined rebellion against God’s authority, and which would effectually lead them to reject any revelation He might give that did not harmonize with their fancies and inclinations. It is evident from the nature of the case, and from the statements of Scripture, that the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ are of essential and fundamental importance in the Christian scheme. Whether we view the gospel theoretically, as a system of doctrines intended to enlighten our understandings in the knowledge of God and of divine things?, or more practically, as intended to bear upon the formation of the character, and the regulation of the motives of men, the admission or denial of the doctrine of three distinct persons in the unity of the Godhead, and of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, must evidently affect fundamentally its whole character and influence. To the second person in the Godhead is assigned the work of satisfying divine justice, and of reconciling us to God; and to the third person is assigned the work of renewing our moral natures, and preparing us for the enjoyment of happiness. And God has made our enjoyment of the blessings of salvation dependent upon our knowing something of the nature of these blessings, and of the way and manner in which they have been procured and are bestowed.

If the Son and the Holy Ghost are not truly divine, —partakers of the one

divine nature, —we are guilty of idolatry in bestowing upon them divine honours; and if they are divine, we are, in refusing to pay them divine honours, robbing God of what is due to Him, and of what he is demanding of us. Christ has Himself uttered this most solemn and impressive declaration, “that God hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that (in order that, or with a view to secure that) all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;” where we are plainly enjoined to give the same honour to the Son as to the Father, and where the injunction is sanctioned by an express assertion of the certainty of its bearing upon the proceedings of the day of judgment, and the decision then to be pronounced upon our eternal destinies. What, indeed, is Christianity, without a divine Saviour? In what essential respect does it differ, if Christ was a mere man, or even a creature, from Mahomedanism, or from the mere light of nature? How can two systems of doctrine, or two provisions for accomplishing any moral object, have the same influence and result, which are, and must be, so different, so opposite in their fundamental views and arrangements, as the doctrines maintained by the advocates and opponents of Christ’s proper Godhead. Accordingly, it has held universally, that according as men admitted or denied the divinity of Christ, have their whole notions about the gospel method of salvation been affected. On the divinity of Christ are evidently suspended the doctrine of atonement, or satisfaction for sin, and the whole method of justification; in short, everything that bears most vitally upon men’s eternal welfare. Our Saviour Himself has expressly declared, “It is eternal life to know Thee (addressing His Father), the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent,” —a statement which does not prove, as anti-Trinitarians allege, that the Father is the only true God, to the exclusion of the Son, because this is not necessarily involved in it, and because to interpret it in this way would make Scripture contradict itself, as in another passage it expressly calls Jesus Christ the true God and eternal life, and affords us most abundant materials for believing that he is so; but which does prove that a knowledge of Jesus Christ must consist in the perception, the maintenance, and the application of the real views regarding Him, which are actually taught in the sacred Scriptures, —in knowing Him as He is there revealed, —and in cherishing towards Him all those feelings, and discharging towards Him all those duties, which the scriptural

representations of His nature and person are fitted to produce or to impose. This is eternal life; and the men who, having in their hands the record which God has given concerning His Son, refuse to honour Him, even as they honour the Father, —to pay Him divine honour, as being a possessor of the divine nature, —and to confide in Him, as a divine and almighty Saviour, —must be regarded as judging themselves unworthy of this eternal life, as deliberately casting it away from them.

XXIV. Doctrine of the Atonement

The incarnation of the second person of the Godhead, —the assumption of human nature by One who from eternity had possessed the divine nature, so that He was God and man in one person, —is, as a subject of contemplation, well fitted to call forth the profoundest reverence, and to excite the strongest emotions; and if it was indeed a reality, must have been intended to accomplish most important results. If Christ really was God and man in one person, we may expect to find, in the object thus presented to our contemplation, much that is mysterious— much that we cannot fully comprehend; while we should also be stirred up to examine with the utmost care everything that has been revealed to us regarding it, assured that it must possess no ordinary interest and importance. He who is represented to us in Scripture as being God and man in one person, is also described as the only Mediator between God and man— as the only Saviour of sinners. If it be indeed true, as the Scripture plainly teaches, that the divine and human natures were united in His one person, it is undeniable that this union must have been formed in order to the salvation of sinners, and that the plan which God devised and executed for saving sinners, must just consist in, or be based upon, what Christ, as God and man in one person, did, in order to effect this object. This was the work which the Father gave Him to do; and by doing it He has secured the deliverance from everlasting misery, and the eternal blessedness, of as many as the Father has given Him, —“an innumerable company, which no man can number, out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue.”

I. Connection between the Person and Work of Christ

In systematic expositions of the scheme of divine truth, the subject of the person of the Mediator, or the scriptural account of who and what Christ was, is usually followed by the subject of the work of Christ, or the account of what he did for the salvation of sinners. The terms commonly

employed by theologians to describe in general the work of Christ as Mediator, are *munus* and *officium*; and divines of almost all classes have admitted, that the leading features of the scriptural representations of what Christ did for the salvation of sinners, might be fully brought out, by ascribing to Him the three offices of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, and by unfolding what it was he did in the execution of these three offices.

It is plain, from the nature of the case, that the subjects of the person and the work of Christ must be, in fact and in doctrine, intimately connected with each other. If the Mediator was God and man in one person, then we might confidently expect that He would do, and that it would be necessary for Him to do, in order to the salvation of sinners, what no man, what no creature, was competent to do. And when we survey what Scripture seems to hold up to us as the work which He wrought for our salvation, we can scarcely fail to be impressed with the conviction, that, from its very nature, it required one who was possessed of infinite perfection and excellence to accomplish it. Accordingly, we find that the admission or denial of Christ's divinity has always affected fundamentally the whole of men's views in regard to almost everything in the scheme of salvation, and especially in regard to Christ's mediatorial work.

Socinians, holding that Christ was a mere man, teach, in perfect consistency with this, that He did nothing for the salvation of men except what may be comprehended under the general head or description of revealing, confirming, and illustrating truth or doctrine, and of setting us an example, —a work to which any creature, even a mere man, of course employed and qualified by God for the purpose, was perfectly competent. Arians, —holding Christ to be a superhuman, but still a created, and not a divine or infinite being, —are accustomed, in accordance with this view of the person of the Mediator, to introduce an additional and somewhat higher notion into their representation of the nature of His work. It is, in substance, that of influence exerted by Him with God, in order to prevail upon Him to pardon sinners and admit them into the enjoyment of His favour. Christ, as a highly exalted creature, who took a deep interest in the salvation of sinners, and was willing to endure, and did endure, humiliation and suffering on their account, did what was very meritorious in itself and very acceptable to God; and thus acquired such

influence with God, as that He consented, at Christ's request, and from a regard to Him, and to what he had done, to forgive sinners, and to bestow upon them spiritual blessings. This is, in substance, the view entertained of the general nature of Christ's work by those who regard Him as an exalted, superangelic creature; and I fear that a vague impression of something similar to this, and not going much beyond it, floats in the minds of many amongst us, who have never thought or speculated on religious subjects. Almost all who have held the doctrine of Christ's proper divinity, have also believed that His sufferings and death were vicarious, —that is, that they were endured in the room and stead of sinners, —and have regarded the most important, peculiar, and essential features of His mediatorial work to be His substitution in our room and stead, —the satisfaction which He rendered to divine justice, —though it must be admitted, that there have been differences of opinion, of no small importance, among those who have concurred in maintaining these general scriptural truths with respect both to the person and the work of Christ.

It is one of the peculiar features of the theology of the present day, that this remarkable and important connection of great principles is overlooked or denied. There are many in the present day, who make a profession of believing in the proper divinity, and even in the eternal Sonship, of the Saviour, who yet deny the doctrine that has been generally held in the Christian church concerning the atonement, and put forth, upon this point, notions substantially the same as those of the Socinians and Arians. They give prominence to the mere incarnation of Christ, without connecting and combining it with His sufferings and death, and with His fulfilment of all righteousness in their room and stead, resolving it into a mere manifestation of the divine character and purposes, intended to make an impression upon our minds. But they have not succeeded in bringing out anything like an adequate cause for so remarkable a peculiarity as the assumption of human nature by the second person of the Godhead; while a confirmation of the great principles we have laid down about the connection of doctrine is to be found in the fact, that the views of these men, even about the divinity of the Son, however plausibly they may sometimes be put forth, turn out, when carefully examined, to be materially different from those which

have been usually held in the Christian church, as taught in Scripture; and resolve very much into a kind of Platonic Sabellianism, which explains-away any really personal distinction in the Godhead, and thus becomes virtually identified with the ordinary view of Socinians or Unitarians. The fact that influential writers in the present day make a profession of believing in the divinity and incarnation of the Saviour, while denying His vicarious and satisfactory atonement, is a reason why we should make it an object to understand and develop fully the connection between these two great departments of scriptural truth; to perceive and to explain, —so far as Scripture affords any materials for doing so, —how the one leads to and supports the other, —how the incarnation and atonement of our Lord are closely and indissolubly connected together, —and how, in combination, they form the ground and basis of all our hopes.

There is a manifest enough congruity between the three distinctive schemes of doctrine, as to the person of the Mediator, and the corresponding opinions with respect to His work; and there would, of course, be nothing strange in this, if the whole subject were one of mere intellectual speculation, in regard to which men were warranted and called upon to follow out their own views to all their legitimate logical results. But since all parties profess to derive their views upon this subject from the statements of Scripture, exactly and critically interpreted, it is somewhat singular that they should all find in Scripture a line of different opinions in regard to Christ's work running parallel to a corresponding series in regard to His person. The fact affords too good reasons for the conclusion, that it is very common for men, even when professing to be simply investigating the meaning of scriptural statements, to be greatly, if not chiefly, influenced by certain previous notions of a general kind, which, whether upon good grounds or not, they have been led to form, as to what Scripture does say, or should say; and is thus fitted to impress upon us the important lesson, that if we would escape the guilt of distorting and perverting the whole word of God, and of misunderstanding the whole scheme of salvation, we must be very careful to derive all our views, upon matters of religious doctrine, from the sacred Scripture, in place of getting them from some other source, and then bringing them to it, and virtually employing them, more or less

openly and palpably, to overrule its authority, and to pervert its meaning.

I have said that it has been the general practice of theologians since the Reformation, to expound the scriptural doctrine concerning the work of Christ as Mediator, in the way of ascribing to Him the three distinct offices of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and then classifying and illustrating, under these three heads, the different departments of the work which He wrought for the salvation of sinners. This division, if represented and applied as one which certainly comprehends and exhausts the subject, cannot be said to have direct scriptural authority; and yet there is enough in Scripture to suggest and warrant the adoption of it, as a useful and convenient arrangement, though nothing to warrant us in drawing inferences or conclusions from it, as if it were both accurate and complete. The ground or warrant for it is this: —that it is very easy to prove from Scripture that Christ, as Mediator, is a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; that He executed the functions of these three different offices; and that all the leading departments of His work, —of what He did for the salvation of sinners, as it is set before us in Scripture, —fall naturally and easily under the ordinary and appropriate functions of these different offices. The propriety and utility of this division have been a good deal discussed by some continental writers. Ernesti— who was, however, much more eminent as a critic than as a theologian— laboured to show, in a dissertation, “*De officio Christi triplici*,” published in his *Opuscula Theologica*, that the division has no sanction from Scripture, and is fitted only to introduce confusion and error; and his views and arguments have been adopted by Doederlein, Morus, and Knapp, There is, however, very little force in their objections, and the division continues still to be generally adopted by the most eminent continental theologians of the present day. The leading point which the opponents of this division labour to establish is, that in Scripture the functions of these different offices are not always exactly discriminated from each other. But this position, even though proved, is very little to the purpose: for it can scarcely be disputed that Scripture docs afford us sufficient materials for forming pretty definite conceptions of the respective natures and functions of these three offices, as distinct from each other; and that, in point of fact, the leading departments of Christ’s work admit easily and naturally of being classed under the heads of the appropriate functions of

these three offices, as the Scripture ordinarily discriminates them. This is quite sufficient to sanction the distinction as unobjectionable, useful, and convenient; while, of course, as it proves nothing of itself, all must admit the obligation lying upon those who make use of it to produce distinct and satisfactory scriptural proof of every position they maintain, as to the nature, object, and effects of anything that Christ is alleged to have done in the execution of these different offices.

It may be described in general, as the characteristic of the Socinian system of theology upon this subject, that it regards Christ merely as a Prophet, —that is, merely as revealing and establishing truths or doctrines concerning God and divine things, —while it denies that He executed the office of a Priest or of a King. But while this is true in substance there are one or two explanations that may assist us in understanding the discussions which occur upon this subject among the older theologians. The original Socinians, as I have already had occasion to mention, usually admitted that Christ executed the office of a King, and they did not altogether, and in every sense, deny that he executed the office of a Priest; while they conjoined or confounded the priestly and the kingly offices. I then explained, that though very far from being deficient either in ingenuity or in courage, they were unable to evade the evidence that Christ, after His resurrection, was raised to a station of exalted power, which in some way or other he employed for promoting the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. Their leading position, in regard to Christ's priestly office, was, that he did not execute it at all upon earth, but only after His ascension to heaven; and that, of course, His sufferings and death formed no part of it, —these being intended merely to afford us an example of virtue, and to confirm and establish the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The execution of His priestly office did not commence till after His ascension, and was only an aspect or modification of the kingly office, or of the exercise of the powers with which He had been invested; while everything connected with the objects to which this power was directed, or the way and manner in which it was exercised, was left wholly unexplained. Modern Socinians, having discovered that Scripture gives us no definite information as to the place which Christ now occupies, and the manner in which he is now engaged; and being satisfied that all that is said in Scripture about His priesthood

is wholly figurative, —and, moreover, that the figure means nothing, real or true, being taken from mere Jewish notions, —have altogether discarded both the priestly and the kingly offices, and have thus brought out somewhat more plainly and openly, what the old Socinians held in substance, though they conveyed it in a more scriptural phraseology.

It is under the head of the priestly office of Christ that the great and infinitely important subject of His satisfaction or atonement is discussed; and this may be regarded as the most peculiar and essential feature of the work which he wrought, as Mediator, for the salvation of sinners, —that which stands in most immediate and necessary connection with the divinity of His person. We can conceive it possible that God might have given us a very full revelation of His will, and abundantly confirmed the certainty of the information which He communicated, as well as have set before us a complete pattern of every virtue for our imitation, through the instrumentality of a creature, or even of a mere man. We can conceive a creature exalted by God to a very high pitch of power and dignity, and made the instrument, in the exercise of this power, of accomplishing very important results bearing upon the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. But when the ideas of satisfying the divine justice and the divine law, in the room and stead of sinners, —and thereby reconciling men to God, whose law they had broken, —are presented to our minds, and in some measure realized, here we cannot but be impressed with the conviction, that if these ideas describe actual realities, we have got into a region in which there is no scope for the agency or operation of a mere creature, and in which infinite power and perfection are called for. We are not, indeed, to imagine that we fully and rightly understand the prophetic office of the Mediator, unless we regard the great Revealer of God as one who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, —as having been from eternity in the bosom of the Father. And it is proper also to remember, that we can scarcely conceive it to be possible that the actual power and dominion which the Scriptures ascribe to Christ as Mediator, and which He is ever exercising in the execution of His kingly office, —including, as it does, the entire government of the universe, and the absolute disposal of the everlasting destinies of all men, —could be delegated to, and exercised by, any creature, however exalted. We only wish to remark, that the general ideas of revealing God's will,

and exercising power or dominion, —which may be said to constitute the essence of the doctrine concerning the prophetic and kingly offices of Christ, —are more within the range of our ordinary conceptions; and that though, in point of fact, applicable to Christ in a way in which they could not apply to any creature, yet they do not of themselves suggest so readily the idea of the necessity of a divine Mediator as those which are commonly associated with the priestly office. The priestly office, accordingly, has been the principal subject of controversial discussion, both from its more immediate connection with the proper divinity of Christ's person, and from its more extensive and influential bearing upon all the provisions and arrangements of the scheme of salvation.

It is very manifest, on the most cursory survey of the sacred Scriptures, that the salvation of sinners is ascribed to the sufferings and death of Christ, —that His sufferings and death are represented as intimately connected with, and influentially bearing upon, this infinitely important result. Indeed, the whole subject which is now under consideration may be regarded, in one aspect of it, as virtually resolving into the investigation of this question, —What is the relation subsisting between the sufferings and death of Christ and the salvation of sinners'? In what precise way do they bear upon men's obtaining or receiving the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour? And in further considering this subject, it will be convenient, for the sake both of distinctness and brevity, to advert only to the death of Christ; for though most of the advocates of the generally received doctrine of the atonement regard the whole of Christ's humiliation and sufferings, from His incarnation to His crucifixion, as invested with a priestly, sacrificial, and piacular character, —as constituting His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice, —as all propitiatory of God, and expiatory of men's sins, —yet, in accordance with the general representations of Scripture, they regard His oblation or sacrifice of Himself, as a piacular victim, as principally manifested, and as concentrated in His pouring out His soul unto death, —His bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. And we may also, for the same reasons, —and because we do not intend at present to discuss the whole subject of justification, and the bearing of Christ's work upon all that is implied in that word, —speak generally, and in the first instance, in adverting to the object to be effected, of the pardon or

forgiveness of men's sins, —an expression sometimes used in Scripture as virtually including or implying the whole of our salvation, because it is a fundamental part of it, and because it may be justly regarded as, in some respects, the primary thing to be attended to in considering our relation to God and our everlasting destinies.

We have already stated generally the different doctrines or theories which have been propounded, —all professing to rest upon scriptural authority, —in regard to the connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of men's sins, taking these two expressions in the sense now explained. The Socinian doctrine is, that the death of Christ bears upon this result merely by confirming and illustrating truths, and by setting an example of virtue; and thus affording motives and encouragements to the exercise of repentance and the performance of good actions, by which we ourselves procure or obtain for ourselves the forgiveness of sin and the enjoyment of God's favour, —its whole power and efficacy being thus placed in the confirmation of truth and in the exhibition of exemplary virtue. The doctrine commonly held by Arians is, that Christ, by submitting to suffering and to death, on men's account, and with a view to their benefit, has done what was very acceptable to God, and has thus obtained a position of influence with God, which He exercises by interceding in some way or other for the purpose of procuring for men forgiveness and favour. Now, it may be said to be true, that the Scripture does ascribe these effects to the death of Christ, and that, of course, that event is fitted, and was intended, to produce them. The death of Christ was a testimony to truths, and is well adapted to establish and illustrate them, though what these truths are must depend essentially upon what that event was in its whole character and bearing.

It is fitted, and of course was intended, to afford us motives and encouragements to repentance and holiness. This is true, but it is very far from being the whole of the truth upon the subject. It is likewise true that Scripture sanctions the general idea of Christ— by suffering and dying for the sake of men— doing what was pleasing and acceptable to God, —of His being in consequence rewarded, and raised to a position of high power and dignity, —and of His interceding with God, or using influence with Him, to procure for men spiritual blessings. All this is true, and it is

held by those who maintain the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. But neither is this the whole of the truth which Scripture teaches upon the subject. And what in it is true, as ' thus generally expressed, is not brought out so fully and explicitly, as the Scripture affords us ample materials for doing, by connecting it with the doctrine of the atonement.

Some men would fain persuade us that the substance of all that Scripture teaches us concerning the way of salvation is this, —that an exalted and glorious Being interposed on behalf of sinners, —mediated between them and an offended God; and by this interposition and influence procured for them the forgiveness of their sins, and the enjoyment of God's favour. Now, all this is true. There is nothing in this general statement which contradicts or opposes anything that is taught us in Scripture. But, just as the Scripture affords us, as we have seen, abundant materials for defining much more fully and explicitly the real nature, dignity, and position of this exalted Being, and leaves us not to mere vague generalities upon this point, but warrants and requires us to believe and maintain that He was of the same nature and substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory; so, in like manner, in regard to what He did for men's salvation, the Scripture does not leave us to the vague generalities of His mediating or interposing, interceding or using influence, on our behalf, but affords us abundant materials for explaining much more precisely and definitely the nature or kind of His mediation or interposition, —the foundation of His intercession, —the ground or source of His influence. The commonly received doctrine of the satisfaction or atonement of Christ just professes to bring out this more full and specific information; and the substance of it is this, —that the way and manner in which He mediated or interposed in behalf of sinners, and in order to effect their deliverance or salvation, was by putting Himself in their place, —by substituting Himself in their room and stead, —suffering, as their substitute or surety, the penalty of the law which they had broken, the punishment which they had deserved by their sins, —and thereby satisfying the claims of divine justice, and thus reconciling them to God. This great scriptural doctrine is thus expressed in our Confession of Faith: "The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully

satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him;” or, in the words of the Shorter Catechism, “Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.”

Here I may remark, as illustrating some preceding observations, —though this is not a topic which I mean to dwell upon, —that His intercession succeeds, and is based upon, His sacrifice and satisfaction; and that thus distinctness and definiteness are given to the idea which it expresses. When men’s deliverance, or their possession of spiritual blessings, is ascribed, in general, to the intercession of Christ, without being accompanied with an exposition of His vicarious sacrifice and satisfaction, as the ground or basis on which it rests, no more definite meaning can be attached to it than merely that of rising some influence, in order to procure for men what they need from God. But when His vicarious sacrifice and satisfaction are first asserted as the great leading department of the work which He wrought for the salvation of sinners, and His intercession is then introduced as following this, and based upon it, we escape from this vague generality, and are warranted and enabled to represent His intercession as implying that He pleads with God, in behalf of men, and in order to obtain for them the forgiveness of their sins, this most relevant and weighty consideration, —viz., that he has suffered in their room, that He has endured in their stead the whole penalty which their sins had deserved.

The great doctrine, that Christ offered Himself as a vicarious sacrifice, — that is, a sacrifice in the room and stead of sinners, as their surety and substitute; that He did so, in order to satisfy divine justice and reconcile them to God; and that, of course, by doing so, He has satisfied divine justice and reconciled them to God, —has been always held and maintained by the great body of the Christian church. It was not, indeed, like the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ, subjected, at an early period in the history of the church, to a thorough and searching controversial discussion; and, in consequence of this, men’s views in regard to it continued always to partake somewhat of the character of

vagueness and indistinctness. It can scarcely be said to have been fully expounded and discussed, in such a way as to bring out thoroughly its true nature and its scriptural grounds, until after the publication of the works of Socinus; for Anselm's contributions to the right exposition of this doctrine, important as they are, scarcely come up to this description. It formed no part of the controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists; for the Church of Rome has always continued to profess the substance of scriptural truth on this subject, as well as on that of the Trinity, though, according to her usual practice, she has grievously corrupted, and almost wholly neutralized, the truth which she professedly holds. Socinus was the first who made a full and elaborate effort to overturn the doctrine which the church had always held upon this subject, and which, though not very fully or explicitly developed as a topic of speculation, had constituted the source at once of the hopes and the motives of God's people from the beginning. This he did chiefly in his Treatise, "De Jesu Christo Servatore," and in his "Praelectiones Theologicae;" and it certainly required no ordinary ingenuity for one man, and without the benefit of much previous discussion upon the point, to devise a whole system of plausible evasions and perversions, for the purpose of showing that the doctrine which the whole church had hitherto believed upon the subject was not taught in Scripture. Ever since that period the doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ has been very fully discussed in all its bearings and aspects, affecting as it does, and must do, the whole scheme of Christian truth; and the result has been, that the Socinian evasions and perversions of Scripture have been triumphantly exposed, and that the generally received doctrine of the church has been conclusively established, and placed upon an immovable basis, by the most exact and searching investigation, conducted upon the soundest and strictest critical principles, into the meaning of the numerous and varied scriptural statements that bear upon this subject.

In considering this subject, I propose to advert, in the first place, to the doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ in general, as held by the universal church, —by Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians, —in opposition to the Socinians and other deniers of our Lord's divinity; in the second place, to the peculiarities of the Arminian doctrine upon

this subject, as affected and determined by its relation to the general system of Arminian theology; and in the third place, to the doctrine which has been propounded, upon this subject, by those who profess Calvinistic principles upon other points, but who, upon this, hold views identical with, or closely resembling those of, the Arminians, especially in regard to the extent of the atonement.

II. Necessity of the Atonement

In considering the subject of the atonement, it may be proper to advert, in the first place, to a topic which has given rise to a good deal of discussion, —namely, the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, in order to the forgiveness of men's sins. The Socinians allege that a vicarious atonement or satisfaction for sin is altogether unnecessary, and adduce this consideration as a proof, or at least a presumption, against its truth or reality; while the advocates of an atonement have not been contented with showing that its non-necessity could not be proved, but have, in general, further averred positively that it was necessary, —have undertaken to prove this, —and have made the evidence of its necessity at once an argument in favour of its truth and reality, and a means of illustrating its real nature and operation. The assertion, as well as the denial, of the necessity of an atonement, must, from the nature of the case, be based upon certain ideas of the attributes and moral government of God, viewed in connection with the actual state and condition of man as a transgressor of His law; and the subject thus leads to discussions in which there is a great danger of indulging in presumptuous speculations on points of which we can know nothing, except in so far as God has been pleased to convey to us information in His word. It can scarcely be said that the Scripture gives us any direct or explicit information upon the precise question, whether or not the salvation of sinners could possibly have been effected in any other way than through an atonement or satisfaction; and it is not indispensable for any important purpose that this question should be determined. The only point of vital importance is that of the truth or reality of an atonement, and then the consideration of its true nature and bearing. We have just to ascertain from Scripture what was the true character and object of Christ's death, and the way and

manner in which, in point of fact, it bears upon the forgiveness of men's sins, and their relation to God and to His law; and when we have ascertained this, it cannot be of fundamental importance that we should investigate and determine the question, whether or not it was possible for God to have forgiven men without satisfaction.

Had the materials for determining the question of the truth and reality of an atonement been scanty or obscure, then the presumption arising from anything we might be able to know or ascertain as to its necessity or non-necessity, might be of some avail in turning the scale upon the question of its truth or reality. But when we have in Scripture such explicit and abundant materials for establishing the great doctrine that, in point of fact, Christ did offer up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, we are entitled to feel, and we ought to feel, that, in stating and arguing this question, we are wholly independent of the alleged necessity or non-necessity of an atonement; and having ascertained what God has done, — what provision He has made, — what scheme He has adopted, — we need not be very anxious about settling the question, whether or not He could have accomplished the result in any other way or by any other means. But while it is proper that we should understand that this question about the necessity of an atonement is not one of vital importance in defending our cause against the Socinians, as we have full and abundant evidence of its truth and reality; yet, since the subject has been largely discussed among theologians, — since almost all who have held the truth and reality of an atonement have also maintained its necessity, — and since the consideration of the subject brings out some views which, though not indispensable to the proof of its truth or reality, are yet true and important in themselves, and very useful in illustrating its nature and bearings, — it may be proper to give a brief notice of the points that are usually introduced into the discussion of this question.

Let us first advert to the ground taken by the Socinians upon this department of the subject. They deny the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction for sin, upon the ground that the essential benevolence and compassion of God must have prompted, and that His supreme dominion must have enabled, Him to forgive men's sins without any atonement or satisfaction; and that there was nothing in His nature, government, or

law, which threw any obstacle in the way of His at once exercising His sovereign dominion in accordance with the promptings of His compassion, and extending forgiveness to all upon the condition of repentance and reformation.

Now, in the first place, an allegation of this sort is sufficiently met by the scriptural proof, that, in point of fact, an atonement was offered, —that satisfaction was made, and that forgiveness and salvation are held out to men, and bestowed upon them, only on the footing of this atonement. And then, in the second place, if we should, *ex abundanti*, examine the Socinian position more directly, it is no difficult matter to show that they have not proved, and cannot prove, any one of the positions on which they rest the alleged non-necessity of an atonement. As they commonly allege that the doctrine of the Trinity is a denial of the divine unity, so they usually maintain that the doctrine of the atonement involves a denial of the divine placability. That placability is an attribute or quality of God, is unquestionable. This general position can be fully established from revelation, however doubtful or uncertain may be the proof of it derived from reason or nature. Independently altogether of general scriptural declarations, it is established by the facts, that, as all admit, God desired and determined to forgive and to save sinners who had broken His law, and made provision for carrying this gracious purpose into effect. But there is no particular statement in Scripture, and no general principle clearly sanctioned by it, which warrants us to assert that God's placability required of Him that He should forgive men's sins without an atonement, and upon the mere condition of repentance. Placability is not the only attribute or quality of God. There are other features of His character, established both by His works and His word, which, viewed by themselves, are manifestly fitted to lead us to draw an opposite conclusion as to the way in which he would, in point of fact, deal with sin and sinners, —well fitted to excite the apprehension that he will inflict upon them the punishment which, by their sins, they have merited. In these circumstances, it is utterly unwarrantable for us, without clear authority from Scripture, to indulge in dogmatic assertions as to what God certainly will, or will not, do in certain circumstances.

Neither Scripture nor reason warrant the position that repentance is, in

its own nature, an adequate reason or ground, ordinarily and in general, and still less in all cases, for pardoning those who have transgressed a law to which they were subject. It is in entire accordance with the dictates of reason, and with the ordinary practice of men, to inflict the full penalty of the law upon repentant criminals; and there is no ground on which we are warranted to assert that God cannot, or certainly will not, follow a similar course in regard to those who have transgressed His law. The Socinians are accustomed, in discussing this point, to dwell upon the scriptural statements with respect to repentance, its necessity and importance, and the connection subsisting between it and forgiveness. But there is nothing in these statements which establishes the position they undertake to maintain upon this subject. Those statements prove, indeed, that sinners are under an imperative obligation to repent; and they prove further, that, according to the arrangements which God has actually made, an invariable connection subsists between forgiveness and repentance, so that it is true that without repentance there is no forgiveness, and that wherever there is real repentance, forgiveness is bestowed; and that thus men are commanded and bound to repent in order to their being forgiven, and are warranted to infer their forgiveness from their repentance. The scriptural statements prove all this, but they prove nothing more; and this is not enough to give support to the Socinian argument. All this may be true, while it may still be false that repentance is the sole cause or condition of the forgiveness, —the sole, or even the principal, reason on account of which it is bestowed; and if so, then there is abundant room left for the admission of the principle, that a vicarious atonement or satisfaction was also necessary in order to the forgiveness of sin, and was indeed the true ground on which the forgiveness was conferred.

But while it is thus shown that this may be true, in entire consistency with all that Scripture says about forgiveness, and the connection between it and repentance, and while this is amply sufficient to refute the Socinian argument; we undertake further to prove from Scripture, that the atonement or satisfaction of Christ is indeed the ground on which forgiveness rests, and that this principle must be taken in, and must have its proper place assigned to it, if we would receive and maintain the whole doctrine which the word of God plainly teaches us in regard to this most

momentous subject. But, more than this, the advocates of the generally received doctrine of the atonement not only deny and disprove the Socinian allegation of its non-necessity, —not only show that Socinians cannot prove that it was not necessary, —they themselves, in general, positively aver that it was necessary, and think they can produce satisfactory evidence of the truth of this position. There is, at first view, something repulsive— as having the appearance of unwarranted presumption— in asserting the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, as it really amounts in substance to this, that God could not have pardoned men unless an atonement had been made, —unless a satisfaction had been rendered for their sins; and it may appear more suited to the modesty and reverence with which we ought to speak on such a subject, to say, that, for aught we know, God might have saved men in other ways, or through other means, but that he has adopted that method or scheme which was the wisest and the best, —best fitted to promote His own glory, and secure the great ends of His moral government. We find, however, upon further consideration, that the case is altogether so peculiar, and that the grounds of the assertion are so clear and strong, as to warrant it, even though an explicit deliverance upon this precise point is not given us in Scripture.

As to the general position, that an atonement or satisfaction was necessary, —or rather, that God could not have made provision for pardoning and saving sinners in any other way than that which he has actually adopted, —this seems fully warranted, independently of any other consideration, by the Scripture doctrine of the proper divinity of the Saviour. The incarnation of the eternal Son of God, —the assumption of human nature by One who was at the same time possessor of the divine, —the fact that this Being, who is God and man in one person, spent a life on earth of obscurity and humiliation, —that he endured many sufferings and indignities, and was at last subjected to a cruel and ignominious death; — all this, if it be true, —if it be an actual reality, —as Scripture requires us to believe, is so peculiar and extraordinary in its whole character and aspects, that whenever we are led to realize it, we feel ourselves at once irresistibly constrained to say, that this would not have taken place if it had been possible that the result to which it was directed, —namely, the forgiveness and salvation of sinners, —could have been

effected in any other way, or by any other means. We feel, and we cannot but feel, that there is no unwarranted presumption in saying, that if it had been possible that the salvation of guilty men could have been otherwise accomplished, the only-begotten Son of God would not have left the glory which He had with His Father from eternity, assumed human nature, and suffered and died on earth. This ground, were there nothing more revealed regarding it, would warrant us to make the general assertion, that the incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ were necessary to the salvation of sinners, —that this result could not have been effected without them. This consideration, indeed, has no weight with Socinians, as they do not admit the grand peculiarity on which it is based, —namely, the divinity and the incarnation of Him who came to save sinners. Still it is an ample warrant for our general assertion, as being clearly implied in, and certainly deducible from, a doctrine which we undertake to prove to be plainly revealed in Scripture.

It ought, however, to be noticed, that the precise position which this general consideration warrants us to assert, is not directly and immediately the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, but only the necessity of the sufferings and death of Christ, whatever may have been the character attaching to them, or the precise effect immediately resulting from them, in connection with the salvation of sinners; and that, accordingly, it was only the warrantableness of introducing the idea, and the expression of necessity, as applicable to the subject in general, that we had in view in bringing it forward; and we have now to advert to the indications supposed to be given us in Scripture, of the grounds or reasons of this necessity. Scripture fully warrants us in saying that there are things which God cannot do. It says expressly that he cannot deny Himself; that he cannot lie; that he cannot repent (though there is an improper sense in which repentance is ascribed to Him); and he cannot do these things, just because He is God, and not man, —because He is possessed of divine and infinite perfection. And if it be in any sense true that an atonement or satisfaction was necessary, —or, what is in substance the same thing, that God could not have pardoned sinners without it, —this must be because the attributes of His nature, or the principles of His government, —in other words, His excellence or perfection, —prevented or opposed it, or threw obstacles in the way,

which could not otherwise be removed. Accordingly, this is the general position which the advocates of the necessity of an atonement maintain.

The most obvious and palpable consideration usually adduced in support of the necessity of an atonement, is that derived from the law of God, especially the threatenings which, in the law, he has denounced against transgressors. The law which God has promulgated is this, "The soul which sinneth shall die." If God has indeed said this, —if he has uttered this threatening, —this would seem to render it certain and necessary, that wherever sin has been committed, death, with all that it includes or implies, should be inflicted, unless God were to repent, or to deny Himself, or to be, —all which the Scripture assures us He cannot do, because of the perfection of His nature. And it is a remarkable coincidence, that the only cases in which Scripture says explicitly that God cannot do certain things, all bear upon and confirm the position, that he cannot pardon sin without an atonement; inasmuch as to say, that he could pardon sin without an atonement, would, in the circumstances, amount to a virtual declaration that He could he, that He could repent, that He could deny Himself. Upon this ground, the possibility of men who had sinned escaping death, —that is, everlasting misery, —would seem to be precluded. If such a being as God is has threatened sin with the punishment of death, there must be a serious difficulty in the way of sinners escaping. His veracity seems to prevent this, and to present an insuperable obstacle. In pardoning sinners, or in exempting them from the death which they have incurred, it would seem that He must trample upon His own law, and disregard His own threatening; and this the very perfection of His nature manifestly forbids.

Socinians, indeed, have been accustomed to allege, that though God is obliged by His veracity to perform His promises, —because by promising He has conferred upon His creatures a right to the fulfilment of the promise, —yet that His veracity does not oblige Him to fulfil His threatenings, because the party to whose case they apply has no right, and puts forth no claim, to their infliction. But this is a mere evasion of the difficulty. God is a law unto Himself. His own inherent perfection obliges Him always to do what is right and just, and that irrespective of any rights which His creatures may have acquired, or any claims which

they may prefer. On this ground, His veracity seems equally to require that He should execute threatenings, as that He should fulfil promises. If He does not owe this to sinners, He owes it to Himself. When he threatened sin with the punishment of death, He was not merely giving an abstract declaration as to what sin merited, and might justly bring upon those who committed it; He was declaring the way and manner in which He would, in fact, treat it when it occurred. The law denouncing death as the punishment of sin was thus a virtual prediction of what God would do in certain circumstances; and when these circumstances occurred, His veracity required that he should act as He had foretold.

We can conceive of no way in which it is possible that the honour and integrity of the divine law could be maintained, or the divine veracity be preserved pure and unstained, if sinners were not subjected to death, except by an adequate atonement or satisfaction being rendered in their room and stead. No depth of reflection, no extent of experience, could suggest anything but this, which could render the sinner's exemption from death possible. There is much in the history of the world to suggest this, but nothing whatever to suggest anything else. We are not entitled, indeed, apart from the discoveries of revelation, to assert that even this would render the pardon of the sinner possible, consistently with the full exercise of the divine veracity, and full maintenance of the honour of the divine law; and still less are we entitled to assert that, even if an adequate atonement or satisfaction might render the escape of the sinner possible, it was further possible that such an atonement or satisfaction could in fact be rendered. We are not warranted to assert these things independently of revelation; but we have strong grounds for asserting that, if God did threaten death as the punishment of sin, nothing could have prevented the infliction of the threatening, and rendered the escape of the sinner possible, except an adequate atonement or satisfaction, — that this at least was indispensable, if even this could have been of any avail.

But those who hold the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction in order to the pardon of the sin, and the escape of the sinner, usually rest it, not merely upon the law of God as revealed, and upon His veracity as concerned in the execution of the threatenings which He has publicly

denounced, but also upon the inherent perfection of His nature, independently of any declaration He may have made, or any prediction He may have uttered, —and more especially upon His justice. The discussion of this point leads us into some more abstruse and difficult inquiries than the former; and it must be confessed that here we have not such clear and certain materials for our conclusions, and that we should feel deeply the necessity of following closely the guidance and direction of Scripture. The representations given us in Scripture of the justice of God, are fitted to impress upon us the conviction that it requires Him to give to every one his due, —what he has merited by his conduct, —and, of course, to give to the sinner the punishment which he has deserved. What God has threatened, His veracity requires Him to inflict, because He has threatened it. But the threatening itself must have originated in the inherent perfection of His own nature prompting Him to punish sin as it deserves; and to threaten to punish, because it is already and antecedently right to do so. God's law, or His revealed will, declaring what His creatures should do, and what He Himself will do, is the transcript or expression of the inherent perfections of His own nature. The acts of the divine government, and the obligations of intelligent creatures, result from, and are determined by, the divine law, as their immediate or approximate cause and standard; but they all, as well as the divine law itself, are traceable to the divine nature, —to the essential perfections of God, —as their ultimate source or foundation. When, then, God issued the law denouncing death as the punishment of transgression, and thereby became pledged to inflict death on account of sin, because He had threatened, to do so, He was merely indicating or expressing a principle or purpose which was founded on, and resulted from, that inherent perfection which, in a sense, makes it necessary for Him, —although, at the same time, He acts most freely, —to give to all their due, and of course to inflict merited punishment upon sin. This is the substance of what is taught by orthodox divines when they lay down the position that punitive justice— or, as they usually call it, *justitia vindicatrix*— is essential to God. It is a real perfection of His nature, of which he cannot denude Himself, and which must necessarily regulate or determine the free acts of His will.

All this is in accordance with the statements of Scripture and the dictates

of right reason; and these various considerations combined, fully warrant the general conclusion, that, since death has been denounced as the punishment of sin, there must be formidable obstacles in the way of sinners being pardoned and escaping from death, —that, if God should pardon sinners, some provision would be necessary for vindicating His justice and veracity, and maintaining the honour of His law;— and that the only conceivable way in which these objects could be secured, is by an adequate atonement or satisfaction rendered in the room and stead of those who had incurred the penalty of the law. Socinians have very inadequate and erroneous views of the guilt or demerit of sin, and are thus led to look upon the pardon or remission of it as a light or easy matter. But it is our duty to form our conceptions of this subject from what God has made known to us, and especially from what He has revealed to us as to the way and manner in which He must and will treat it, or deal with it. And all that Clod's word tells us upon this point, viewed by itself, and apart from the revelation made of an actual provision for pardoning sin and saving sinners, is fitted to impress upon us the conviction that sin fully merits, and will certainly receive, everlasting destruction from God's presence and from the glory of His power.

Another topic intimately connected with this one of the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, —or rather, forming a part of it, —has been largely discussed in the course of this controversy, —that, namely, of the character or aspect in which God is to be regarded in dealing with sinners, with the view either of punishing them for their sins, or saving them from the punishment they have merited. Socinians, in order to show that there is no difficulty in the way of God's pardoning sin, and no necessity for an atonement or satisfaction for sin, usually represent God as acting, in this matter, either as a creditor to whom men have become debtors by sinning, or as a party who has been injured and offended by their transgressions: and then infer that, as a creditor may remit a debt if he chooses, without exacting payment, and as an injured party may forgive an injury if he chooses, without requiring any satisfaction, so, in like manner, there is no reason why God may not forgive men's sins by a mere act of His good pleasure, without any payment or compensation, either personal or vicarious. There certainly is a foundation in scriptural statements for representing sins as debts incurred to God and to His law,

and also as injuries inflicted upon Him. These representations, though figurative, are, of course, intended to convey to us some ideas concerning the true state of the case; and they suggest considerations which, in some other departments of the controversy in regard to the great doctrine of the atonement, afford strong arguments against the Socinian views. But the application they make of them to disprove the necessity of an atonement, is utterly unwarranted. It is manifestly absurd to press far the resemblance or analogy between sins on the one hand, and debts or injuries on the other; or to draw inferences merely from this resemblance. These are not the only or the principal aspects in which sins are represented in Scripture.

The primary or fundamental idea of sin is, that it is a transgression of God's law, —a violation of a rule which He has commanded us to observe; and this, therefore, should be the leading aspect in which it should be contemplated, when we are considering how God will deal with it. We exclude none of the scriptural representations of sin, and none of the scriptural representations of God in His dealing with it; but, while we take them all in, we must give prominence in our conceptions to the most important and fundamental. And as the essential idea of sin is not, that it is merely a debt or an injury, but that it is a violation of God's law, the leading character or aspect in which God ought to be contemplated when we regard Him as dealing with it, is not that of a creditor, or an injured party, who may remit the debt, or forgive the injury, as he chooses, but that of a lawgiver and a judge who has promulgated a just and righteous law, prohibiting sin under pain of death, and who is bound, by a regard to His own perfections, and the interests of holiness throughout the universe, to take care that His own character be fully vindicated, that the honour of His law be maintained, and that His moral government be firmly established; and who, therefore, cannot pardon sin, unless, in some way or other, full and adequate provision be made for securing all these objects. The pardon of sin, the forgiveness of men who have broken the law and incurred its penalty, who have done that against which God has denounced death, seems to have a strong and manifest tendency to frustrate or counteract all these objects, to stain the glory of the divine perfections, to bring dishonour upon the divine law, to shake the stability of God's moral government, and to endanger the interests of

righteousness and holiness throughout the universe. And when, therefore, we contemplate God not merely as a creditor or as an injured party, but as the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, dealing with the deliberate violation, by His intelligent and responsible creatures, of a just, and holy, and good law which he had prescribed to them, and which He had sanctioned with the threatened penalty of death, we cannot conceive it to be possible that He should pardon them without an adequate atonement or satisfaction; and we are constrained to conclude, that, if forgiveness be possible at all, it can be only on the footing of the threatened penalty being endured by another party acting in their room and stead, and of this vicarious atonement being accepted by God as satisfying His justice, and answering the claims of His law.

Whatever evidence there is for the necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, in order to the pardon of sin, of course confirms the proof of its truth or reality. It is admitted on all hands, that God does pardon sinners, —that He exempts them from punishment, receives them into His favour, and admits them to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, notwithstanding that they have sinned and broken His law. If all that we know concerning God, His government, and law, would lead us to conclude that He could not do this without an adequate atonement or satisfaction, then we may confidently expect to find that such an atonement has been made, —that such a satisfaction has been rendered. And, on the other hand, if we have sufficient evidence of the truth and reality of an atonement as a matter of fact, —and find, moreover, that this atonement consisted of a provision so very peculiar and extraordinary as the sufferings and death, in human nature, of One who was God over all, blessed for evermore, —we are fully warranted in arguing back from such a fact to its indispensable and absolute necessity, in order to the production of the intended result; and then, from an examination of the grounds and reasons of this established necessity, we may learn much as to the true nature of this wonderful provision, and the way and manner in which it is fitted, and was designed, to accomplish its intended object.

III. The Necessity and Nature of the Atonement

The subject of the necessity of an atonement, in order to the pardon of sin, needs to be stated and discussed with considerable care and caution, as it is one on which there is danger of men being tempted to indulge in presumptuous speculations, and of their landing, when they follow out their speculations, in conclusions of too absolute and unqualified a kind. Some of its advocates have adopted a line of argument of which the natural result would seem to be, absolutely and universally, that sin cannot be forgiven, and, of course, that sinners cannot be saved. A mode of representation and argument about the divine justice, the principles of the divine moral government, and the divine law and veracity, which fairly leads to this conclusion, must, of course, be erroneous, since it is admitted on all hands, as a matter of fact, that sin is forgiven, that sinners are pardoned and saved. This, therefore, is an extreme to be avoided, — this is a danger to be guarded against. The considerations on which the advocates of the necessity of an atonement usually found, derived from the scriptural representations of the divine justice, law, and veracity, manifestly, and beyond all question, warrant this position, that there are very serious and formidable obstacles to the pardon of men who have broken the law, and incurred its penalty; and thus, likewise, point out what is the nature and ground of these obstacles. The difficulty lies here, that God's justice and veracity seem to impose upon Him an obligation to punish sin, and to execute His threatenings; and if this position can really be established, —and it is the foundation of the alleged necessity of an atonement or satisfaction, —the practical result would seem to be, that the law must take its course, and that the penalty must be inflicted. The argument would thus seem to prove too much, and, of course, prove nothing; a consideration well fitted to impress upon us the necessity of care and caution in stating and arguing the question, though certainly not sufficient to warrant the conclusion which some have deduced from it, — namely, that the whole argument commonly brought forward in support of the necessity of an atonement is unsatisfactory.

I have no doubt that there is truth and soundness in the argument, when rightly stated and applied. The law which God has promulgated, threatening death as the punishment of sin, manifestly throws a very serious obstacle in the way of sin being pardoned, both because it seems to indicate that God's perfections require that it be punished, and because

the non-infliction of the penalty threatened seems plainly fitted to lead men to regard the law and its threatenings with indifference and contempt, —or at least to foster the conviction, that some imperfection attached to it as originally promulgated, since it had been found necessary, in the long run, to change or abrogate it, or at least to abstain from following it out, and thereby virtually to set it aside. Had God made no further revelation to men than that of the original moral law, demanding perfect obedience, with the threatened penalty of death in the event of transgression; and were the only conjecture they could form about their future destiny derived from the knowledge that they had been placed under this law, and had exposed themselves to its penalty by sinning, the conclusion which alone it would be reasonable for them to adopt, would be, that they must and would suffer the full penalty they had incurred by transgression. This is an important position, and runs directly counter to the whole substance and spirit of the Socinian views upon this subject. If, in these circumstances, —and with this position impressed upon their minds, as the only practical result of all that they then knew upon the subject, —they were further informed, upon unquestionable authority, that many sinners, —many men who had incurred the penalty of the law, —would, in point of fact, be pardoned and saved; then the conclusion which, in right reason, must be deducible from this information would be, not that the law had been abrogated or thrown aside, as imperfect or defective, but that some very peculiar and extraordinary provision had been found out and carried into effect, by which the law might be satisfied and its honour maintained, while yet those who had incurred its penalty were forgiven. And if, assuming this to be true or probable, the question were asked, What this provision could be? it would either appear to be an insoluble problem: or the only thing that could commend itself to men's reason, although reason might not itself suggest it, would be something of the nature of an atonement or satisfaction, by the substitution of another party in the room of those who had transgressed. The principles of human jurisprudence, and various incidents in the history of the world, might justify this as not unreasonable in itself, and fitted to serve some such purposes as the exigencies of the case seemed to require.

In this way, a certain train of thought, if once suggested, might be

followed out, and shown to be reasonable, —to be invested, at least, with a high degree of probability; and this is just, in substance, what is commonly advocated by theologians under the head of the necessity of an atonement. There is, first, the necessity of maintaining the honour of the law, by the execution of its threatenings against transgressors; then there is the necessity of some provision for maintaining the honour of the law, if these threatenings are not, in fact, to be executed upon those who have incurred them; and then, lastly, there is the investigation of the question, —of what nature should this provision be; and what are the principles by which it must be regulated? And it is here that the investigation of the subject of the necessity of an atonement comes in, to throw some light upon its true nature and bearings.

The examination of the topics usually discussed under the head of the necessity of an atonement, viewed in connection with the undoubted truth, that many sinners are, in point of fact, pardoned and saved, leads us to expect to find some extraordinary provision made for effecting this result, and thereby gives a certain measure of antecedent probability to the allegation that such a provision has been made, and thus tends to confirm somewhat the actual evidence we may have of its truth and reality; while the same considerations which lead us to the conclusion that some such provision was necessary, guide us also to some inferences as to what it must consist in, and what immediate purposes it must be fitted to serve. The general substance of what is thus indicated as necessary, or as to be expected, in the nature and bearings of the provision, is this, —it must consist with, and must fully manifest all the perfections of God, and especially His justice and His hatred of sin; and it must be fitted to impress right conceptions of the perfection and unchangeableness of the divine law, and of the danger of transgressing it. God, of course, cannot do, or even permit, anything which is fitted, in its own nature, or has an inherent tendency, to convey erroneous conceptions of His character or law, of His moral government, or of the principles which regulate His dealings with His intelligent creatures; and assuredly no sinner will ever be saved, except in a way, and through a provision, in which God's justice, His hatred of sin, and His determination to maintain the honour of His law, are as fully exercised and manifested, as they would have been by the actual infliction of the

full penalty which He had threatened. These perfections and qualities of God must be exercised as well as manifested, and they must be manifested as well as exercised. God must always act or regulate His volitions and procedure in accordance with the perfections and attributes of His nature, independently of any regard to His creatures, or to the impressions which they may, in point of fact, entertain with respect to Him; while it is also true that He must ever act in a way which accurately manifests His perfections, or is fitted, in its own nature, to convey to His creatures correct conceptions of what he is, and of what are the principles which regulate His dealings with them. In accordance with these principles, He must, in any provision for pardoning and saving sinners, both exercise and manifest His justice and His hatred of sin, —that is, He must act in the way which these qualities naturally and necessarily lead Him to adopt; and He must follow a course which is fitted to manifest Him to His creatures as really doing all this.

The practical result of these considerations is this, that if a provision is to be made for removing the obstacles to the pardon of sinners, —for accomplishing the objects just described, while yet sinners are saved, — there is no way in which we can conceive this to be done, except by some other suitable party taking their place, and suffering in their room and stead, the penalty they had merited. Could any such party be found, were he able and willing to do this, and were he actually to do it, then we can conceive that in this way God's justice might be satisfied, and the honour of His law maintained, because in this way the same views of the divine character, law, and government, and of the danger and demerit of sin, would be presented, as if sinners themselves had suffered the penalty in their own persons. All this, of course, implies, that the party interposing in behalf of sinners should occupy their place, and act in their room and stead, and that he should bear the penalty which they had incurred; because in this way, but in no other, so far as we can form any conception upon the subject, could the obstacles be removed, and the necessary objects be effected. And thus the general considerations on which the necessity of an atonement is maintained, are fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that there must be a true and real substitution of the party interposing to save sinners, in the room and stead of those whom he purposes to save, and the actual endurance by him of the penalty which

they had incurred, and which they must, but for this interposition, have suffered.

A party qualified to interpose in behalf of sinners, in order to obtain or effect their forgiveness, by suffering in their room and stead the penalty they had deserved, must possess very peculiar qualifications indeed. The sinners to be saved were an innumerable company; the penalty which each of them had incurred was fearful and infinite, even everlasting misery; and men, of course, without revelation, are utterly incompetent to form a conception of any being who might be qualified for this. But the word of God brings before us One so peculiarly constituted and qualified, as at once to suggest the idea, that he might be able to accomplish this, — One who was God and man in one person; One who, being from eternity God, did in time assume human nature into personal union with the divine, —who assumed human nature for the purpose of saving sinners, —who was thus qualified to act as the substitute of sinners, and to endure suffering in their room; while at the same time he was qualified, by His possession of the divine nature, to give to all that he did and suffered a value and efficacy truly infinite, and fully adequate to impart to all He did a power or virtue fitted to accomplish anything, or everything, which He might intend to effect.

We formerly had occasion to show, that in regard to a subject so peculiar and extraordinary as the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God, —of One who was a possessor of the divine nature, —we are warranted in saying that, if these things really took place, they were, strictly speaking, necessary; that is, in other words, that they could not have taken place, if the object to which they were directed could possibly have been effected in any other way, or by any other means. And the mere contemplation of the fact of the sufferings and death of such a Being, independent of the full and specific information given us in Scripture as to the causes, objects, and consequences of His death, goes far to establish the truth and reality of His vicarious atoning sacrifice. When we view Him merely as a man, —but as a man, of course, perfectly free from sin, immaculately pure and holy, —we find it to be impossible to account for His sufferings upon the Socinian theory, or upon any theory but that of His suffering in the room and stead of others, and enduring the penalty

which they had merited.

It is not disputed that sin is, in the case of intelligent and rational beings, the cause of suffering; and we cannot conceive that, under the government of a God of infinite power, and wisdom, and justice, and goodness, any such Being should be subjected to suffering except for sin. The suffering, —the severe and protracted suffering, —and, finally, the cruel and ignominious death of Christ, viewing Him merely as a perfectly holy and just man, are facts, the reality of which is universally admitted, and of which, therefore, all equally are called upon to give some explanation. The Socinians have no explanation to give of them. It is repugnant to all right conceptions of the principles of God's moral government, that He should inflict upon an intelligent and responsible being suffering which is not warranted or sanctioned by sin as the cause or ground of it, as that which truly justifies and explains it, —that He should inflict suffering upon a holy and innocent Being, merely in order that others may be, in some way or other, benefited by His sufferings. It is, indeed, very common, in the administration of God's moral government, that the sin of one being should be the means or occasion of bringing suffering upon others; but then it holds true, either that these others are also themselves sinners, or that they are legally liable to all the suffering that has ever been inflicted upon them, or permitted to befall them. The peculiarity in Christ's case is, that while perfectly free from sin, original as well as actual, He was yet subjected to severe suffering and to a cruel death; and this not merely by the permission, but by the special agency and appointment of God. And this was done, according to the Socinian hypothesis, merely in order that others might, in some way or other, derive benefit from the suffering and death inflicted upon Him. There is here no explanation of the admitted facts of the case, that is at all consistent with the principles of God's moral government. The doctrine of a vicarious atonement alone affords anything like an explanation of these facts; because, by means of it, we can account for them in consistency with the principle, that sin, —that is, either personal or imputed, —is the cause, the warrant, and the explanation of suffering. The Scripture assures us that Christ suffered for sin, —that He died for sin. And even viewing this statement apart from the fuller and more specific information given us in other parts of Scripture, with respect to the

connection between the sin of men and the sufferings of the Saviour, and regarding it only in its relation to the general principles of God's moral government, we are warranted in concluding that sin was the impulsive and meritorious cause of His suffering; and from this we are entitled to draw the inference, that, as He had no sin of His own, he must in some way have become involved in, and responsible for, the sin of others, and that this was the cause or reason why he was subjected to death. On all these various grounds we have a great deal of general argument upon the subject of the atonement, independent of a minute and exact examination of particular scriptural statements, which tends to confirm its truth, and to illustrate its general nature and bearing.

We have seen that some of the attributes of God, and some things we know as to His moral government and law, plainly suggest to us the convictions, that there are serious obstacles to the forgiveness of sin, — that if sin is to be forgiven, some extraordinary provision must be made for the exercise and manifestation of the divine justice and holiness, so that he shall still be, and appear to be, just and holy, even while pardoning sin and admitting sinners into the enjoyment of His favour; for making His creatures see and feel, that, though they are delivered from the curse of the law which they had broken, that law is, notwithstanding, of absolute perfection, of unchangeable obligation, and entitled to all honour and respect. The only thing that has ever been conceived or suggested at all fitted to accomplish this, is, that atonement or satisfaction should be made by the endurance of the penalty of the law in the room and stead of those who should be pardoned. This seems adapted to effect the object, and thereby to remove the obstacles, while in no other way can we conceive it possible that this end can be attained.

And while the holiness, justice, and veracity of God seem to require this, there is nothing in His benevolence or placability that precludes it. The benevolence or placability of God could produce merely a readiness to forgive and to save sinners, provided this could be effected in full consistency with all the other attributes of His nature, all the principles of His moral government, and all the objects he was bound to aim at, as the Lawgiver and Governor of the universe; and these, as we have seen, throw obstacles in the way of the result being effected. The actings of God, — His

actual dealings with His creatures, —must be the result of the combined exercise of all His perfections; and He cannot, in any instance, act inconsistently with any one of them. His benevolence cannot be a mere indiscriminate determination to confer happiness, and His placability cannot be a mere indiscriminate determination to forgive those who have transgressed against Him.

The Scriptures reveal to us a fact of the deepest interest, and one that ought never to be forgotten or lost sight of when we are contemplating the principles that regulate God's dealings with His creatures— namely, that some of the angels kept not their first estate, but fell by transgression; and that no provision has been made for pardoning and saving them, —no atonement or satisfaction provided for their sin, —no opportunity of escape or recovery afforded them. They sinned, or broke God's law; and their doom, in consequence, was unchangeably and eternally fixed. This is a fact, —this was the way in which God dealt with a portion of His intelligent creatures. Of course, He acted in this case in full accordance with the perfections of His nature and the principles of His government. We are bound to employ this fact, which God has revealed to us, as one of the materials which He has given us for enabling us to know Him. We are bound to believe, in regard to Him, whatever this fact implies or establishes, and to refuse to believe whatever it contradicts or precludes. And it manifestly requires us to believe this at least, that there is nothing in the essential perfections of God which affords any sufficient ground for the conclusion that he will certainly pardon transgressors of His laws, or make any provision for saving them from the just and legitimate consequences of their sins. This is abundantly manifest. And this consideration affords good ground to suspect that it was the flat contradiction which the scriptural history of the fall and fate of angels presents to the views of the Socinians, with regard to the principles of God's moral government, that has generally led them, like the Sadducees of old, to maintain that there is neither angel nor spirit, though there is evidently not the slightest appearance of unreasonableness in the general doctrine of the existence of superior spiritual beings, employed by God in accomplishing His purposes.

As, then, there is nothing in God's benevolence or placability which

affords any certain ground for the conclusion that he must and will pardon sinners, so there can be nothing in these qualities inconsistent with His requiring atonement or satisfaction in order to their forgiveness, while other attributes of His nature seem plainly to demand this. God's benevolence and placability are fully manifested in a readiness to bless and to forgive, in so far as this can be done, in consistency with the other attributes of His nature, and the whole principles of His moral government. And while there is nothing in His benevolence or placability inconsistent with His requiring an atonement or satisfaction in order to forgiveness, it is further evident, that if He Himself should provide this atonement or satisfaction to His own justice and law, and be the real author and deviser of all the plans and arrangements connected with the attainment of the blessed result of forgiveness and salvation to sinners, a scheme would be presented to us which would most fully and strikingly manifest the combined glory of all the divine perfections, —in which he would show Himself to be the just God, and the justifier of the ungodly, — in which righteousness and peace should meet together, mercy and truth should embrace each other. And this is the scheme which is plainly and fully revealed to us in the word of God. Provision is made for pardoning men's sins and saving their souls, through the vicarious sufferings and death of One who was God and man in one person, and who voluntarily agreed to take their place, and to suffer in their room and stead; thus satisfying divine justice, complying with the demands of the law by enduring its penalty, and manifesting most fully the sinfulness and the danger of sin. But this was done by God Himself, who desired the salvation of sinners, and determined to effect it; and who, in consequence, sent His Son into the world to die in man's room and stead, —who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. So that here we have a scheme for pardoning and saving sinners which, from its very nature, must be effectual, and which not only is in full accordance with the perfections of God, but most gloriously illustrates them all. The apostle says expressly, "that God set forth His Son to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness," or with a view to the demonstration of His righteousness; and it is true that the shedding of Christ's blood as a propitiation, viewed with reference to its necessity and proper nature, does declare God's righteousness, or justice and holiness; while, viewed in its originating motives and glorious

results, it most fully declares God's marvellous love to the children of men, and His determination to save sinners with an everlasting salvation.

IV. Objections to the Doctrine of Atonement

The proper order to be followed in the investigation of this subject, or indeed of any great scriptural doctrine, is the same as that which I stated and explained in considering the doctrine of the Trinity, —namely, that we should first ascertain, by a full and minute examination of all the scriptural statements bearing upon the subject, what the Bible teaches regarding it; and then consider the general objections that may be adduced against it, taking care to keep them in their proper place, as objections, and to be satisfied with showing that they cannot be proved to have any weight; and if they should appear to be really relevant and well-founded, and not mere sophisms or difficulties, applying them, as sound reason dictates, not in the way of reversing the judgment already formed upon the appropriate evidence as to what it is that the Bible really teaches, but in the way of rejecting a professed revelation that teaches doctrines which can, *ex hypothexi*, be conclusively disproved. But as the objections made by Socinians to the doctrine of the atonement are chiefly connected with some of those general and abstract topics to which we have already had occasion to advert, it may be most useful and convenient to notice them now, especially as the consideration of them is fitted, like that of the necessity of an atonement, already considered, to throw some light upon the general nature and import of the doctrine itself.

Many of the objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of atonement are mere cavils, —mere exhibitions of unwarranted presumption, —and are sufficiently disposed of by the general considerations of the exalted and incomprehensible nature of the subject itself, and of the great mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh, on which it is based. These it is unnecessary to dwell upon, after the exposition of the general principles applicable to the investigation of these subjects which we have already given. Some are founded upon misrepresentations of the real bearing, objects, and effects of the

atonement, especially in its relation to the character and moral government of God. Nothing, for instance, is more common than for Socinians to represent the generally received doctrine of atonement as implying that God the Father is an inexorable tyrant, who insisted upon the rigorous execution of the threatenings of the law until Christ interposed, and by His offering up of Himself satisfied God's demands, and thereby introduced into the divine mind a totally different state of feeling in regard to sinners, —the result of which was, that He pardoned in place of punishing them. This, of course, is not the doctrine of the atonement, but a mere caricature of it. Scripture plainly teaches, —and the advocates of an atonement maintain, not only as being perfectly consistent with their doctrine, but as a constituent part of it, —that love to men, and a desire to save them from ruin, existed eternally in the divine mind, —resulting from the inherent perfections of God's nature, —that this love and compassion led Him to devise and execute a plan of salvation, and to send His Son to save sinners by offering an atonement for their sins. The atonement, then, was the consequence, and not the cause, of God's love to men, and of His desire to save them. It introduced no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before; though it certainly removed obstacles which other principles of His nature and government interposed to the full outflowing of the love and compassion which existed, and opened up a channel by which God, in full accordance with, and in glorious illustration of, all His perfections, might bestow upon men pardon and all other spiritual blessings, and finally eternal life. This is all that can be meant by the scriptural statements about the turning away of God's anger and His reconciliation to men, when these are ascribed to the interposition and atonement of Christ. This is all that the defenders of an atonement understand by these statements. There is nothing in their views upon this, or upon any other subject, that requires them to understand these statements in any other sense; and thus understood, they are fully accordant both with the generally received doctrine of the atonement, and with everything else that Scripture teaches concerning God, and concerning the principles that regulate His dealings with men. This objection, then, though it has been repeated constantly from the time of Socinus till the present day, is founded wholly upon a misrepresentation of the doctrine objected to, —a misrepresentation for which there is no warrant or excuse whatever,

except, perhaps, the declamations of some ignorant and injudicious preachers of the doctrine, who have striven to represent it in the way they thought best fitted to impress the popular mind.

The only objections of a general kind to the doctrine of an atonement that are entitled to any notice are these: First, that it involves injustice, by representing the innocent as punished in the room of the guilty, and the guilty thereby escaping; secondly, that it is inconsistent with the free grace, or gratuitous favour, which the Scriptures ascribe to God in the remission of men's sins; and, thirdly, that it is fitted to injure the interests of holiness, or morality. We shall very briefly advert to these in succession, but without attempting anything like a full discussion of them.

First, It is alleged to be unjust to punish the innocent in the room of the guilty, and on this ground to allow the transgressors to escape. Now, the defenders of the doctrine of atonement admit that it does assume or imply the state of matters which is here described, and represented as unjust, —namely, the punishment of the innocent in the room of the guilty. Some of them, indeed, scruple about the application of the terms punishment and penal to the sufferings and death of Christ. But this scrupulosity appears to me to be frivolous and vexatious, resting upon no sufficient ground, and serving no good purpose. If men, indeed, begin with defining punishment to mean the infliction of suffering upon an offender on account of his offence, —thus including the actual personal demerit of the sufferer in the idea which the word conveys, —they settle the question of the penalty, or penal character, of Christ's suffering by the mere definition. In this sense, of course, Christ's sufferings were not penal. But the definition is purely arbitrary, and is not required by general usage, which warrants us in regarding and describing as penal any suffering inflicted judicially, or in the execution of the provisions of law, on account of sin. And this arbitrary restriction of the meaning of the terms punishment and penal is of no use, although some of those who have recourse to it seem to think so, in warding off Socinian objections;—because, in the first place, there is really nothing in the doctrine of the atonement worth contending for, if

it be not true that Christ endured, in the room and stead of sinners, the

suffering which the law demanded of them on account of their sins, and which, but for His enduring it, as their substitute, they must themselves have endured, —and because, in the second place, the allegation of injustice applies, with all the force it has, to the position just stated, whether Christ's sufferings be called penal or not.

With regard to the objection itself, the following are the chief considerations to be attended to, by the exposition and application of which it is fully disposed of: First, that, as we have already had occasion to state and explain in a different connection, the sufferings and death of an innocent person in this matter are realities which all admit, and which all equally are bound to explain. Christ's sufferings were as great upon the Socinian, as upon the orthodox, theory with regard to their cause and object; while our doctrine of His being subjected to suffering because of the sin of others being imputed to Him, or laid upon Him, brings the facts of the case into accord with some generally recognised principles of God's moral government, which, upon the Socinian scheme, is impossible. The injustice, of course, is not alleged to be in the fact that Christ, an innocent person, was subjected to so much suffering, —for there remains the same fact upon any hypothesis, —but in His suffering in the room and stead of sinners, with the view, and to the effect, of their escaping punishment.

Now, we observe, secondly, that this additional circumstance of His suffering being vicarious and expiatory, —which may be said to constitute our theory as to the grounds, causes, or objects of His suffering, —in place of introducing an additional difficulty into the matter, is the only thing which contributes in any measure to explain it. And it does contribute in some measure to explain it, because it can be shown to accord with the ordinary principles of enlightened reason to maintain, —first, that it is not of the essence of the idea of punishment, that it must necessarily, and in every instance, be inflicted upon the very person who has committed the sin that calls for it; or, as it is expressed by Grotius, who has applied the recognised principles of jurisprudence and law to this subject with great ability: “Notandum est, esse quidem essentielle poenae, ut infligatur ob peccatum, sed non item essentielle ei esse ut infligatur ipsi qui peccavit — and, secondly, that substitution and satisfaction, in the matter of

inflicting punishment, are to some extent recognised in the principles of human jurisprudence, and in the arrangements of human governments; while there is much also, in the analogies of God's providential government of the world, to sanction them, or to afford answers to the allegations of their injustice.

Thirdly, the transference of penal suffering, or suffering judicially inflicted in accordance with the provisions of law, from one party to another, cannot be proved to be universally and in all cases unjust. No doubt, an act of so peculiar a kind, —involving, as it certainly does, a plain deviation from the ordinary regular course of procedure, —requires, in each case, a distinct and specific ground or cause to warrant it. But there are, at least, two cases in which this transference of penal suffering on account of sin from one party to another is generally recognised as just, and in which, at least, it can be easily proved, that all ground is removed for charging it with injustice. These are, —first, when the party who is appointed to suffer on account of the sin of another, has himself become legally liable to a charge of guilt, adequate to account for all the suffering inflicted; and, secondly, when he voluntarily consents to occupy the place of the offender, and to bear, in his room, the punishment which he had merited. In these cases, there is manifestly no injustice in the transference of penal suffering, so far as the parties more immediately affected are concerned; and if the general and public ends of punishment are at the same time fully provided for by the transference, or notwithstanding the transference, then there is, in these cases, no injustice of any kind committed.

The second of these cases is that which applies to the sufferings and death of Christ. He willingly agreed to stand in the room and stead of sinners, and to bear the punishment which they had merited. And if there be no injustice generally in Christ— though perfectly innocent— suffering so much as He endured, and no injustice in this suffering being penally inflicted upon Him on account of the sins of others, —His own free consent to occupy their place and to bear the punishment due to their sins being interposed, —there can be no injustice in the only other additional idea involved in our doctrine, —namely, that this suffering, inflicted upon Him, is appointed and proclaimed as the ground or means

of exempting the offenders from the punishment they had deserved; or, as it is put by Grotius, “Cum per hos modos” (the cases previously mentioned, the consent of the substitute being one of them), “actus factus est licitus, quo minus deinde ordinetur ad poenam peccati alieni, nihil intercedit, modo inter eum qui peccavit et puniendum aliqua sit conjunctio.” The only parties who would be injured or treated unjustly by this last feature in the case, are the lawgiver and the community (to apply the principle to the case of human jurisprudence); and if the honour and authority of the law, and the general interests of the community, are fully provided for by means of, or notwithstanding, the transference of the penal infliction, —as we undertake to prove is the case with respect to the vicarious and expiatory suffering of Christ, —then the whole ground for the charge of injustice is taken away.

The second objection is, that the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction is inconsistent with the scriptural representations of the gratuitousness of forgiveness, —of the freeness of the grace of God in pardoning sinners. It is said that God exercises no grace or free favour in pardoning sin, if He has received full satisfaction for the offences of those whom He pardons. This objection is not confined to Socinians. They adduce it against the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction altogether; while Arminians, and others who hold the doctrine of universal or indefinite atonement, adduce it against those higher, stricter, and more accurate views of substitution and satisfaction with which the doctrine of a definite or limited atonement stands necessarily connected. When they are called to deal with this Socinian objection, they usually admit that the objection is unanswerable, as adduced against the stricter views of substitution and satisfaction held by most Calvinists; while they contend that it is of no force in opposition to their modified and more rational views upon this subject, —an admission by which, as it seems to me, they virtually, in effect though not in intention, betray the whole cause of the atonement into the hands of the Socinians. As this objection has been stated and answered in our Confession of Faith, we shall follow its guidance in making a few observations upon it.

It is there said, “Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real,

and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf." Here the doctrine of substitution and satisfaction is fully and explicitly declared in its highest and strictest sense. But the authors of the Confession were not afraid of being able to defend, in perfect consistency with this, the free grace, the gratuitous mercy of God, in justifying, —that is, in pardoning and accepting sinners. And, accordingly, they go on to say, "Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners." Now, the grounds here laid for maintaining the free grace of God in the forgiveness of sinners, notwithstanding that a full atonement or satisfaction was made for their transgressions, are two: first, that Christ, the atoner or satisfier, was given by the Father for them, —that is, that the Father Himself devised and provided the atonement or satisfaction, — provided it, so to speak, at His own cost.— by not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all. If this be true, —if men had no right whatever to such a provision, —if they had done, and could do, nothing whatever to merit or procure it, —then this consideration must necessarily render the whole of the subsequent process based upon it, in its bearing upon men, purely gratuitous, —altogether of free grace, — unless, indeed, at some subsequent stage, men should be able to do something meritorious and efficacious for themselves in the matter. But then, secondly, God not only freely provided the satisfaction, —He likewise, when it was rendered by Christ, accepted it in the room of all those who are pardoned, and this, too, freely, or without anything in them, —that is, without their having done, or being able to do, anything to merit or procure it, or anything which it involves. Pardon, therefore, and acceptance are freely or gratuitously given to men, though they were purchased by Christ, who paid the price of His precious blood. The scriptural statements about the free grace of God in pardoning and accepting men, on which the objection is founded, assert or imply only the gratuitousness of the blessings in so far as the individuals who ultimately receive them are concerned, and contain nothing whatever that, either directly or by implication, denies that they were purchased by Christ, by the full satisfaction which he rendered in the room and stead of those who finally partake of them; while the gratuitousness of God's grace

in the matter, viewed as an attribute or quality of His, is fully secured and manifested by His providing and accepting the satisfaction.

These considerations are amply sufficient to answer the Socinian objection about free grace and gratuitous remission, even on the concession of the strictest views of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; and without dwelling longer on this subject, I would merely remark in general, that it holds true equally of the grounds of this Socinian objection, and of the concession made to it by Arminians and other defenders of universal atonement, —the concession, namely, that it is unanswerable upon the footing of the stricter views of substitution and satisfaction; and indeed, I may say, it holds true generally of the grounds of the opposition made to the doctrine of definite or limited atonement, —that they are chiefly based upon the unwarrantable practice of taking up the different parts or branches of the scheme of redemption, as unfolded in Scripture, separately, and viewing them in isolation from each other, in place of considering them together, as parts of one great whole, and in their relation to each other and to the entire scheme.

The third and last objection to which we proposed to advert is, that the doctrine of the atonement is fitted to injure the interests of holiness or morality. The general ground on which this allegation is commonly made is, —that the introduction of an atonement or satisfaction by another party is held to release men from the obligations of the moral law; and that the general tendency of the doctrine is to lead men to be careless and indifferent about the regulation of their conduct and their growth in holiness. This is just the common objection usually made to the whole scheme of the doctrines of grace; and in this, as well as in other applications of it, it can be easily shown that the objection proceeds upon an erroneous and defective view of the state of the case, and upon a low and grovelling sense of the motives by which men are, or should be, animated. The whole extent to which the atonement or satisfaction of Christ affects men's relation to the law is this, that men are exempted from paying, in their own persons, the penalty they had incurred, and are saved from its infliction by its being borne by another in their room and stead. Now, there is certainly nothing in this which has any appearance of relaxing the obligation of the law as a rule or standard which they are

bound to follow. There is nothing in this which has any tendency to convey the impression that God is unconcerned about the honour of His law, or that we may trifle with its requirements with impunity. The whole object and tendency of the doctrine of atonement is to convey the very opposite views and impressions with regard to the law, —the obligation which it imposes, and the respect and reverence which are due to it.

In order to form a right conception of the moral tendency of a doctrine, we must conceive of the case of a man who understands and believes it, — who is practically applying it according to its true nature and tendency, and living under its influence, —and then consider how it is fitted to operate upon his character, motives, and actions. And to suppose that the doctrine of the atonement, understood, believed, and applied, can lead men to be careless about regulating their conduct according to God's law, is to regard them as incapable of being influenced by any other motive than a concern about their own safety— to imagine that, having attained to a position of safety, they must thenceforth be utterly uninfluenced by anything they have ever learned or heard about God, and sin, and His law, and eternity, and totally unmoved by any benefits that have been conferred upon them. When men adduce this objection against the doctrine of the atonement, they unconsciously make a manifestation of their own character and motives. In bringing forward the objection, they are virtually saying, "If we believed the doctrine of the atonement, we would certainly lead very careless and immoral lives." And here I have no doubt they are speaking the truth, according to their present views and motives. But this of course implies a virtual confession, —first, that any outward decency which their conduct may at present exhibit, is to be traced solely to the fear of punishment; and, secondly, that if they were only secured against punishment, they would find much greater pleasure in sin than in holiness, much greater satisfaction in serving the devil than in serving God; and that they would never think of showing any gratitude to Him who had conferred the safety and deliverance on which they place so much reliance. Socinians virtually confess all this, with respect to their own present character and motives, when they charge the doctrine of the atonement with a tendency unfavourable to the interests of morality. But if men's character and motives are, as they should be, influenced by the views they have been led to form concerning God and His law; if they are

capable of being affected by the contemplation of noble and exalted objects, by admiration of excellence, and by a sense of thankfulness for benefits, —instead of being animated solely by a mere desire to secure their own safety and comfort, —they must find in the doctrine of the atonement, —and in the conceptions upon all important subjects which it is fitted to form, —motives amply sufficient to lead them to hate sin, to fear and love God, to cherish affection and gratitude towards Him who came in God's name to seek and to save them, and to set their affections on things above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God. These are the elements from which alone— as is proved both by the nature of the case and the experience of the world— anything like high and pure morality will ever proceed; and no position of this nature can be more certain, than that the believers in the doctrine of the atonement have done much more in every way to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, than those who have denied it.

There is, then, no real weight in the objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the atonement. Not that there are not difficulties connected with the subject, which we are unable fully to solve; but there is nothing so formidable as to tempt us to make a very violent effort— and that, certainly, is necessary— in the way of distorting and perverting Scripture, in order to get rid of it; and nothing to warrant us in rejecting the divine authority of the Bible, because it establishes this doctrine with such full and abundant evidence. We have already seen a good deal, in considerations derived from what we know concerning the divine character and moral government, fitted to lead us to believe, by affording at least the strongest probabilities and presumptions, that the method of an atonement or satisfaction might be that which would be adopted for pardoning and saving sinners; and that this method really involves the substitution of the Son of God in the room and stead of those who are saved by Him, and His endurance, as their surety and substitute, of the punishment which they had deserved by their sin. But the full proof of this great doctrine is to be found only in a minute and careful examination of the meaning of scriptural statements; and in the prosecution of this subject, it has been conclusively proved that the generally received doctrine of the atonement is so thoroughly established by Scripture, and so interwoven with its whole texture, that they must

stand or fall together; and that any man who denies the substance of the common doctrine upon this subject, would really act a much more honest and rational part than Socinians generally do, if he would openly deny that the Bible is to be regarded as the rule of faith, or as entitled to reverence or respect as a communication from God.

V. Scriptural Evidence for the Atonement

We cannot enter into anything like an exposition of the Scripture evidence in support of the commonly received doctrine of the atonement, the general nature and import of which we have endeavoured to explain. This evidence is collected from the whole field of Scripture, and comprehends a great extent and variety of materials, every branch of which has, upon both sides, been subjected to a thorough critical investigation. The evidence bearing upon this great doctrine may be said to comprehend all that is contained in Scripture upon the subject of sacrifices, from the commencement of the history of our fallen race; all that is said about the nature, causes, and consequences of the sufferings and death of Christ; and all that is revealed as to the way and manner in which men do, in point of fact, obtain or receive the forgiveness of their sins, or exemption from the penal consequences to which their sins have exposed them. The general observations which we have already made about the Socinian mode of dealing with and interpreting Scripture, and the illustrations we gave of these general observations in their application to the doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ, —the substance of all that we have stated in the way of explaining both how scriptural statements should and should not be dealt with, and what are the principles which, in right reason, though in opposition to self-styled rationalism, ought to regulate this matter, —are equally applicable to the subject of the atonement— are equally illustrative of the way in which the scriptural statements bearing upon this point should, and should not, be treated and applied. I shall therefore say nothing more on these general topics. The few observations which I have to make on the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine of the atonement, must be restricted to the object of giving some hints or suggestions as to the way in which this subject ought to be investigated, pointing out some of the leading

divisions under which the evidences may be classed, and the leading points that must be attended to and kept in view in examining it.

That Christ suffered and died for our good, and in order to benefit us, —in order that thereby sinners might be pardoned and saved, —and that by suffering and dying He has done something or other intended and fitted to contribute to the accomplishment of this object, —is, of course, admitted by all who profess to believe, in any sense, in the divine origin of the Christian revelation. And the main question discussed in the investigation of the subject of the atonement really resolves, as I formerly explained, into this: What is the relation actually subsisting between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of men's sins? In what way does the one bear upon and affect the other? Now, the doctrine which has been generally received in the Christian church upon this all-important question is this: That Christ, in order to save men from sin and its consequences, voluntarily took their place, and suffered and died in their room and stead; that He offered up Himself a sacrifice for them; that His death was a punishment inflicted upon Him because they had deserved death; that it was in a fair and reasonable sense the penalty which they had incurred; that by suffering death as a penal infliction in their room and stead, He has satisfied the claims or demands of the divine justice and the divine law; and by making satisfaction in their room, has expiated or atoned for their sins, and has thus procured for them redemption and reconciliation with God.

The scriptural proof of this position overturns at once both the Socinian theory, —which restricts the efficacy of Christ's sufferings and death to their fitness for confirming and establishing truths, and supplying motives and encouragements to repentance and holiness, which are with them the true grounds or causes of the forgiveness of sinners, —and also the theory commonly held by the Arians, which, without including the ideas of substitution and satisfaction, represents Christ as, in some way or other, acquiring by His suffering and death a certain influence with God, which he employs in obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins. The proof of the generally received doctrine overturns at once both these theories, not by establishing directly and positively that they are false, — for, as I formerly explained in the general statement of this subject, they

are true so far as they go, —but by showing that they do not contain the whole truth; that they embody only the smallest and least important part of what Scripture teaches; and that there are other ideas fully warranted by Scripture, and absolutely necessary in order to anything like a complete and correct representation of the whole Scripture doctrine upon the subject.

One of the first and most obvious considerations that occurs in directing our attention to the testimony of Scripture upon the subject is, that neither the Socinian nor the Arian doctrine is reconcilable with the peculiarity and the immediateness of the connection which the general strain of scriptural language indicates as subsisting between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sinners; while all this is in fullest harmony with the orthodox doctrine. If the death of Christ bears upon the forgiveness of sin only indirectly and remotely through the medium or intervention of the way in which it bears upon men's convictions, motives, and conduct, and if it bears upon this result only in a way in which other causes or influences, and even other things contained in the history of Christ Himself, do or might equally bear upon it, —and all this is implied in the denial of the doctrine of the atonement, —then it seems impossible to explain why in Scripture such special and peculiar importance is ascribed to Christ's death in this matter; why the forgiveness of sin is never ascribed to any other cause or source of right views or good motives, —such, for instance, as Christ's teaching, or His resurrection; and why the death of Christ and the remission of men's sins are so constantly represented as most closely and immediately connected with each other. This constitutes a very strong presumption in favour of the generally received doctrine upon the subject; but in order to establish it thoroughly, it is necessary to examine carefully and minutely the meaning of the specific statements of Scripture which make known to us the nature, objects, and consequences of Christ's death, and the actual connection between it and the forgiveness of sin. And we would now briefly indicate the chief heads under which they may be classed, and some of the principal points to be attended to in the investigation of them.

First, we would notice that there are some important words, on the true

and proper meaning of which the settlement of this controversy essentially depends, and of which, therefore, the meaning must be carefully investigated, and, if possible, fully ascertained. The words to which I refer are such as these: atonement, —used frequently in the Old Testament in connection with the sacrifices, and once (i.e., in our version) in the New Testament; bearing and carrying, as applied to sin; propitiation, reconciliation, redemption, etc. The words which express these ideas in the original Hebrew or Greek, —such as, hattath, asham, kopher, nasa, sabal, in Hebrew; and in Greek, ἰλάω or ἰλάσκομαι, and its derivatives, ἰλάσμος and ἰλάστήριον, καταλλάσσω and καταλλαγή, αγοράζω, λυτρόω, λυτρον, ἀντίλυτρον, φέρω, and αναφέρω, —have all been subjected to a thorough critical investigation in the course of this controversy; and no one can be regarded as well versant in its merits, and able to defend the views which he has been led to adopt, unless he has examined the meaning of these words, and can give some account of the philological grounds on which his conclusions, as to their import, are founded. Under this head may be also comprehended the different Greek prepositions which are commonly translated in our version by the word for, in those statements in which Christ is represented as dying for sins, and dying for sinners, —viz., διὰ, περί, ὑπέρ, and ἀντί, —for much manifestly depends upon their true import.

The object to be aimed at in the investigation of these words is, of course, to ascertain, by a diligent and careful application of the right rules and materials, what is their natural, obvious, ordinary import, as used by the sacred writers, —what sense they were fitted, and must therefore have been intended, to convey to those to whom they were originally addressed. It can scarcely be disputed that these words, in their obvious and ordinary meaning, being applied to the death of Christ, decidedly support the generally received doctrine of the atonement; and the substance of what Socinians, and other opponents of the doctrine, usually labour to establish in regard to them is, that there are some grounds for maintaining that they may bear, because they sometimes must bear, a different sense, —a sense in which they could not sanction the doctrine of the atonement; so that the points to be attended to in this department of the discussion are these: First, to scrutinize the evidence adduced, that the particular word under consideration must sometimes be taken in a

different sense from that which it ordinarily bears; secondly, to see whether, in the passages in which, if taken in its ordinary sense, it would sanction the doctrine of the atonement, there be any necessity, or even warrant, for departing from this ordinary meaning. The proof of a negative upon either of these two points is quite sufficient to overturn the Socinian argument, and to leave the passages standing in full force as proofs of the orthodox doctrine; while, in regard to many of the most important passages, the defenders of that doctrine have not only proved a negative upon these two questions, —that is, upon one or other of them, —but have further established, thirdly, that, upon strictly critical grounds, the ordinary meaning of the word is that which ought to be there adopted.

But we must proceed to consider and classify statements, as distinguished from mere words, though these words enter into most of the important statements upon the subject; and here I would be disposed to place first those passages in which Christ is represented as executing the office of a Priest, and as offering up Himself as a sacrifice. That he is so represented cannot be disputed. The question is, What ideas with respect to the nature, objects, and effects of His death, was this representation intended to convey to us? The New Testament statements concerning the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ are manifestly connected with, are in some sense taken from, and must be in some measure interpreted by, the accounts given of the priesthood and sacrifices under the law, and of the origin and objects of sacrifices generally, —in so far as they can be regarded as affording any indication of the principles which regulate the divine procedure with respect to the forgiveness of sin. This opens up a wide and interesting field of discussion, —historical and critical, —comprehending not only all that we learn from Scripture upon the subject, but likewise anything to be gathered from the universal prevalence of sacrifices among heathen nations, and the notions which mankind have generally associated with them.

The substance of what is usually contended for upon this topic by Socinians and other opponents of the doctrine of the atonement is this, — that animal sacrifices were not originally appointed and required by God,

but were devised and invented by men, —that they were natural and appropriate expressions of men’s sense of their dependence upon God, their unworthiness of His mercies, their penitence for their sins, and their obligations to Him for His goodness; but that they were not generally understood to involve or imply any idea of substitution or satisfaction, — of propitiating God, and of expiating or atoning for sin: that they were introduced by God into the Mosaic economy, because of their general prevalence, and their capacity of being applied to some useful purposes of instruction; but that no additional ideas were then connected with them beyond what had obtained in substance in heathen nations: that the Levitical sacrifices were not regarded as vicarious and propitiating; and that their influence or effect, such as it was, was confined to ceremonial, and did not extend to moral offences: that the statements in the New Testament in which Christ is represented as officiating as a Priest, and as offering a sacrifice, are mere allusions of a figurative or metaphorical kind to the Levitical sacrifices, employed in accommodation to Jewish notions and habits; and that, more especially, the minute and specific statements upon this subject, contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are, as the Improved or Socinian version, published about forty years ago, says, characterized by “far-fetched analogies and inaccurate reasonings.” In opposition to all this, the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement generally contend that animal sacrifices were of divine appointment, and were intended by God to symbolize, to represent, and to teach the great principles which regulate His conduct in regard to sin and sinners, —that they expressed a confession of sin on the part of the person by, or for, whom they were offered, —that they indicated the transference of his sin, and the punishment it merited, to the victim offered, the endurance of the punishment by the victim in the room of the offerer, —and, as the result, the exemption of the offerer from the punishment he deserved; in other words, that they were vicarious, as implying the substitution of one for the other, and expiatory or propitiatory, as implying the oblation and the acceptance of a satisfaction, or compensation, or equivalent for the offence, and, as a consequence, its remission, —that these ideas, though intermingled with much error, are plainly enough exhibited in the notions which prevailed on the subject among heathen nations, and are fully sanctioned by the statements made with respect to the nature, objects, and consequences of the divinely appointed sacrifices of the

Mosaic economy;— that these were evidently vicarious and expiatory, — that they were appointed to be offered chiefly for ceremonial, but also for some moral offences, considered as violations of the ceremonial law, though, of course, they could not of themselves really expiate or atone for the moral, but only the ceremonial, guilt of this latter class, —that they really expiated or removed ceremonial offences, or were accepted as a ground or reason for exempting men from the punishment incurred by the violation or neglect of the provisions of the Jewish theocracy, while their bearing upon moral offences could be only symbolical or typical;— that, in place of the New Testament statements about the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ being merely figurative allusions to the Levitical sacrifices, the whole institution of sacrifices, and the place which they occupied in the Mosaic economy, were regulated and determined by a regard to the one sacrifice of Christ, —that they were intended to direct men's faith to it, —that they embodied and represented the principles on which its efficacy depended, and should therefore be employed in illustrating its true nature and bearings; while everything to be learned from them, in regard to it, is fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that it was vicarious and expiatory, —that is, presented and accepted in the room and stead of others, and thus effecting or procuring their reconciliation to God, and their exemption from the penal consequences of their sins. All this has been maintained, and all this has been established, by the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement; and with the principal grounds on which these various positions rest, and on which they can be defended from the objections of adversaries, and from the opposite views taken by them upon these points, all students of Scripture ought to possess some acquaintance. The most important and fundamental of the various topics comprehended in this wide field of discussion, are involved in the settlement of these two questions, — namely, first, What was the character, object, and immediate effect of the Levitical sacrifices? were they vicarious and expiatory, or not? and, secondly, What is the true relation between the scriptural statements concerning the Levitical sacrifices, and those concerning the sacrifice of Christ? and what light does anything we know concerning the former throw upon the statements concerning the latter? These are questions presenting materials for much interesting discussion; and it is our duty to seek to possess some knowledge of the facts and arguments by which they

are to be decided.

Secondly, another important class of passages consists of those which bear directly and immediately upon the true nature and the immediate object of Christ's death. There are some general considerations derived from Scripture, to which we have already had occasion to refer, which afford good ground for certain inferences upon this subject. If it was the death, in human nature, of One who was also a possessor of the divine nature, as Scripture plainly teaches, then it must possess a nature, character, and tendency altogether peculiar and extraordinary; and must be fitted, and have been intended, to effect results altogether beyond the range of what could have been accomplished by anything that is competent to any creature, —results directly related to infinity and eternity. If it was the death of One who had no sin of His own, who was perfectly innocent and holy, we are constrained to conclude that it must have been inflicted upon account of the sins of others, whose punishment he agreed to bear. A similar conclusion has been deduced from some of the actual features of Christ's sufferings as described in Scripture, especially from His agony in the garden, and His desertion upon the cross; circumstances which it is not easy to explain, if His sufferings were merely those of a martyr and an exemplar, —and which naturally suggest the propriety of ascribing to them a very different character and object, and are obviously fitted to lead us to conceive of Him as enduring the punishment of sin, inflicted by God, in the execution of the provisions of His holy law.

But the class of passages to which we now refer, are those which contain distinct and specific information as to the real nature, character, and immediate object of His sufferings and death; such as those which assure us that He suffered and died for sin and for sinners; that He bore our sins, and took them away; that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust; that He was made sin for us; that He was made a curse for us, etc. Such statements as these abound in Scripture; and the question is, What ideas are they fitted— and therefore, as we must believe, intended— to convey to us concerning the true nature and character of Christ's death, and its relation to, and bearing upon, our sin, and the forgiveness of it?

Now, if we attend to these statements, and, instead of being satisfied with vague and indefinite conceptions of their import, seek to realize their meaning, and to understand distinctly what is their true sense and signification, we must be constrained to conclude that, if they have any meaning, they were intended to impress upon us the convictions— that our sin was the procuring cause of Christ's death, that which rendered His death necessary, and actually brought it about, —that He consented to occupy the place of sinners, and to bear the punishment which they had deserved and incurred, —that, in consequence, their guilt, in the sense of legal answerableness or liability to punishment (*reatus*), was transferred to, and laid on, Him; so that He suffered, in their room and stead, the punishment which they had deserved and incurred, and which, but for His enduring it, they must have suffered in their own persons. And as this is the natural and obvious meaning of the scriptural statements, —that which, as a matter of course, they would convey to any one who would attend to them, and seek to realize clearly and definitely the ideas which they are fitted to express, —so it is just the meaning which, after all the learning, ingenuity, and skill of adversaries have been exerted in obscuring and perverting them, comes out more palpably and certainly than before, as the result of the most searching critical investigation.

Suffering and dying for us means, according to the Socinians. merely suffering and dying on our account, for our good, with a view to our being benefited by it. It is true that Christ died for us in this sense; but this is not the whole of what the scriptural statements upon the subject are fitted to convey. It can be shown that they naturally and properly express the idea that He died in our room and stead, and thus constrain us to admit the conception of His substitution for us, or of His being put in our place, and being made answerable for us. The prepositions translated for, —when persons, tee or sinners, are the objects of the relation indicated, — are *διὰ*, *υπερ*, and *αντι*. Now, it is admitted that *διὰ* naturally and properly means, on our account, or for our benefit, and does not of itself suggest anything else. It is admitted, further, that *υπερ* may mean, on our account, as well as in our room, though the latter is its more ordinary signification, —that which it most readily suggests, —and that which, in many cases, the connection shows to be the only one that is admissible.

But it is contended that ἀντί, which is also employed for this purpose, means, and can mean only, in this connection, instead of, or in the room of, as denoting the substitution of one party in place of another. This does not warrant us in holding that, wherever διὰ and ὑπέρ are employed, they, too, must imply substitution of one for another, since it is also true that Christ died for our benefit, or on our account; but it does warrant us to assert that the ordinary meaning of διὰ, and the meaning which may sometimes be assigned to ὑπέρ, —namely, on account of, —does not bring out the whole of what the Scripture teaches with respect to the relation subsisting between the death of Christ and those for whose benefit it was intended.

The prepositions employed when sins, and not persons, are represented as the causes or objects of Christ's suffering or dying, are διὰ, ὑπέρ, and περί; and it is contended and proved, that, according to Scripture, what the proper ordinary meaning of dying for or on account of sin, — διὰ, ὑπέρ, περί, αμαρτίαν, or αμαρτίας, —is this, —that the sin spoken of was that which procured and merited the death, so that the death was a penal infliction on account of the sin which caused it, or for which it was endured. Bearing or carrying sin, it can be proved, has, for its ordinary meaning in Scripture, being made, or becoming legally answerable for sin, and, in consequence, enduring its punishment. There are, indeed, some other words used in Scripture in regard to this matter, which are somewhat more indeterminate in their meaning, and cannot be proved of themselves to import more than the Socinian sense of bearing sin, —namely, taking it away, or generally removing it and its consequences, such as *nasa* in the Old Testament, and αἶρω in the New; but *sabal* in the Old Testament, and φέρω or αναφέρω in the New, have no such indefiniteness of meaning. They include, indeed, the idea of taking away or removing, which the Socinians regard as the whole of their import; but it can be proved that their proper meaning is to bear or carry, and thus by bearing or carrying, to remove or take away. As to the statements, that Christ was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that he was made sin and made a curse for us, and others of similar import, there is really nothing adduced, possessed even of plausibility, against their having the meaning which they naturally and properly convey, —namely, that our liability to punishment for sin was

transferred to Him, and that He, in consequence, endured in our room and stead what we had deserved and incurred.

Thirdly, The third and last class of passages consists of those which describe the effects or results of Christ's death, —the consequences which have flowed from it to men in their relation to God, and to His law, which they had broken. These may be said to be, chiefly, so far as our present subject is concerned, reconciliation to God, —the expiation of sin, —and the redemption of sinners, — καταλλαγή, ἰλασμος, λύτρωσις. These are all ascribed in Scripture to the death of Christ; and there are two questions that naturally arise to be discussed in regard to them, though, in the very brief remarks we can make upon them, the two questions may be answered together: First, What do they mean or what is the nature of the changes effected upon men's condition which they express? Secondly, What light is cast by the nature of these changes or effects, when once ascertained, upon the true character of the death of Christ, —and more especially upon the great question, whether or not it was endured in our room and stead, and thus made satisfaction for our sins?

Reconciliation naturally and ordinarily implies that two parties, who were formerly at variance and enmity with each other, have been brought into a state of harmony and friendship; and if this reconciliation between God and man was effected, as Scripture assures us it was, by the death of Christ, then the fair inference would seem to be, that His death had removed obstacles which previously stood in the way of the existence or the manifestation of friendship between them, —had made it, in some way or other, fully accordant with the principles, the interests, or the inclinations of both parties to return to a state of friendly intercourse. We need not repeat, in order to guard against misconstruction, what was formerly explained, —in considering objections to the doctrine of the atonement founded on misrepresentations about the eternal and unchangeable love of God to men, —about the atonement being the consequence and not the cause of God's love, and about its introducing no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before. If this be true, as it certainly is, and if it be also true that the death of Christ is represented as propitiating God to men, —as turning away His wrath from them, —and as effecting their restoration to His favour, —then it

follows plainly that it must have removed obstacles to the manifestation of His love, and opened up a channel for His actual bestowing upon them tokens of His kindness; and if these obstacles consisted in the necessity of exercising and manifesting His justice, and maintaining unimpaired the honour of His law, which men had broken, then the way or manner in which the death of Christ operated in effecting a reconciliation between God and man, must have been by its satisfying God's justice, and answering the demands of His law. Socinians, indeed, allege that it is not said in Scripture that God was reconciled to men by the death of Christ, but only that men were reconciled to God, or that God in this way reconciled men to Himself; and that the only way in which the death of Christ operated in effecting this reconciliation, was by its affording motives and encouragements to men to repent and turn to Him. It is admitted that it is not expressly said in Scripture that the death of Christ reconciled God to men; but then it is contended, and can be easily proved, that statements of equivalent import to this occur; and more especially, that it is in accordance with Scripture usage, in the application of the word reconcile, that those who are said to be reconciled, are represented, not as laying aside their enmity against the other party, but as aiming at and succeeding in getting Him to lay aside His righteous enmity against them; and this general use of the word, applied to the case under consideration, leaves the argument for a real atonement, deduced from the asserted effect of Christ's death upon the reconciliation of God and man untouched, in all its strength and cogency.

The next leading effect ascribed to the death of Christ is that it expiates sin, as expressed by the word ἱλάσκομαι, and its derivatives. The statements in which these words occur, bring out somewhat more explicitly the effect of Christ's sufferings and death upon men's relation to God and to His law, and thus at once confirm and illustrate what is said about its bearing upon reconciliation. It can be fully established, that the true and proper meaning of these words is, to propitiate, or to make propitious one who had been righteously offended by transgression, so that the transgression is no longer regarded as a reason for manifesting o o o displeasure or inflicting punishment. Christ is repeatedly described in Scripture as being a propitiation for sins, ἱλασμός περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν; and we are also told that His humiliation and His execution of the priestly

office were directed to the object of making propitiation for, or expiating the sins of, the people. This is translated in our version, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: but it would be more correctly rendered, to propitiate by expiating their sins. And in another passage,) where He is also described as a propitiation, — this is expressly connected with His blood as an object of faith, and with the result of the remission of sins: it being a great principle regulating God’s dealings with sinners, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. If Christ was thus a propitiation, or propitiated God to men who had sinned against Him, and if He effected this through His humiliation and blood-shedding, it could be only by its being an atonement for their sins, or expiatory of their sins, —that is, by its presenting or affording some adequate cause or reason why the punishment of their sins should not be inflicted upon them; and this, according to every idea suggested in Scripture concerning expiation or atonement, or expiatory sacrifices, —sacrifices which, as is often said in the Old Testament, make atonement,— could be only by its being the endurance in their room and instead of the punishment they had incurred.

The general ideas expressed by some of these leading words, as descriptive of the effect of Christ’s death upon men’s condition and relation to God, are well stated by Dr John Pye Smith in this way: In enumerating the glorious effects of Christ’s sacrifice, he specifies as one, “The legal reconciliation of God and all sinners who cordially receive the gospel method of salvation and then he adds, “This all-important idea is presented under two aspects: First, Expiation or atonement. This denotes the doing of something which shall furnish a just ground or reason in a system of judicial administration, for pardoning a convicted offender. Secondly, Propitiation: anything which shall have the property of disposing, inclining, or causing the judicial authority to admit the expiation; that is, to assent to it as a valid reason for pardoning the offender.”

The third leading result ascribed to Christ’s death, in its bearing upon the condition of sinners in relation to God and His law, is redemption. As we are assured in Scripture, both that Christ died for sins and that he died for sinners, so we are told, both that sins and sinners were redeemed by

Him, by His blood, by His giving Himself for them; though the idea most frequently indicated is, that, by dying for sinners, He redeemed or purchased them, he is described as giving His life, —which, of course, is the same thing as His submitting to death, —as a λύτρον, and as giving Himself as an ἀντίλυτρον for men. Now, there is no doubt about the true, proper, ordinary meaning of these words: λύτρον means a ransom price, —a price paid in order to secure the deliverance of a debtor or a captive; and ἀντίλυτρον means the same thing, with a more explicit indication, —the effect of the prefixed preposition, —of the idea of commutation, compensation, or substitution, —that is, of the price being paid in the room and stead of something else for which it is substituted. Christ's blood or death, then, is frequently and explicitly represented in Scripture as a ransom price paid by Him, in order to effect, and actually effecting, the deliverance of men from sin, and from the injurious effects of sin upon their relation to God and their eternal welfare. And if there be any truth or reality in this representation, —if anything is meant by it at all corresponding to the words in which it is conveyed to us, then it is manifest that, taken in connection with what we know from Scripture as to men's natural state or condition, and the real nature of the difficulties or obstacles that stood in the way of their deliverance, it shuts us up to the conclusion that Christ, in suffering and dying, acted in the room and stead of sinners; and by enduring, as their substitute, the punishment which they had deserved, rendered satisfaction to the justice and law of God in their behalf.

These, then, are the leading divisions under which the extensive and varied mass of Scripture evidence for the great doctrine of the atonement may be classed: first, the general character of Christ's sufferings and death, as being the offering up of Himself as a sacrifice; secondly, the true nature and immediate object of His death, as implying that he took the place of sinners, and in all His sufferings endured the punishment which they had merited; and, thirdly and finally, the bearing or effect of His death upon their relation to God and His law, —every feature and aspect of the resulting effect, or of the change produced, affording a strong confirmation of His having acted as their substitute, and rendered satisfaction to divine justice for their sins.

XXV. The Arminian Controversy

I. Arminius and the Arminians

We have had occasion to show that the fundamental principles of Calvinism, with respect to the purposes or decrees, and the providence or proceedings, of God, were believed and maintained by Luther and Zwingle, as well as by Calvin. The opposite view of Zwingle's opinion, — though given both by Mosheim and Milner, — is quite destitute of foundation; and its inaccuracy has been demonstrated by Scott, in his excellent continuation of Milner. Luther and Melancthon had repeatedly asserted God's fore-ordaining whatever comes to pass, and His executing His decrees in providence, in stronger terms than ever Calvin used. There is no evidence that Luther changed his opinion upon this subject. There is evidence that Melancthon's underwent a considerable modification, though to what extent it is not easy to determine, as, in his later works, he seems to have written upon these subjects with something very like studied ambiguity; while, in his letters to Calvin, he continued to make a sort of profession of agreeing with him. The Reformers were substantially of one mind, not only in regard to what are sometimes spoken of in a somewhat vague and general way, as the fundamental principles of evangelical doctrine, but also in regard to what are called the peculiarities of Calvinism; though there were some differences in their mode of stating and explaining them, arising from their different mental temperaments and tendencies, and from the degrees in the extent of their knowledge and the fulness of their comprehension of the scheme of divine truth. The principal opponent of Calvinistic doctrines, while Calvin lived, was Castellio, who had no great weight as a theologian. The Lutheran churches, after the death of Melancthon, generally abandoned Calvin's doctrine in regard to the divine decrees, and seem to have been somewhat tempted to this course, by their singularly bitter animosity against all who refused to receive their doctrine about the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Socinians rejected the whole system of theology which had been generally taught by the Reformers; and Socinus published, in

1578, Castello's Dialogues on Predestination, Election, Free Will, etc., under the fictitious name of "Felix Turpio Urbevetanus." This work seems to have had an influence in leading some of the ministers of the Reformed churches to entertain laxer views upon some doctrinal questions.

The effects of this first appeared in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. The Reformation had been introduced into that country, partly by Lutherans from Germany, and partly by Calvinists from France. Calvinistic principles, however, prevailed among them; and the Belgic Confession, which agrees with almost all the confessions of the Reformed churches in teaching Calvinistic doctrines, had, along with the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism, been, from about the year 1570, invested with public authority in that church. It was in this country that the first important public movement against Calvinism took place in the Reformed churches, and it may be dated from the appointment of Arminius to the chair of theology at Leyden in 1603. An attempt, indeed, had been made to introduce anti-Calvinistic views into the Church of England a few years before this; but it was checked by the interference of the leading ecclesiastical authorities, headed by Whitgift, who was at that time Archbishop of Canterbury. And it was only as the result of the labours of Arminius and his followers, and through the patronage of the Church of England falling into the hands of men who had adopted their views, that, at a later period, Arminianism was introduced into that church. Before his appointment to the chair of theology, Arminius—whose original name was Van Harmon—who had studied theology at Geneva under Beza, and had been for some years pastor of a church in Amsterdam, seems to have adopted, even then, most of the doctrinal views which have since been generally associated with his name, though he was only suspected of heterodoxy, or of holding views inconsistent with the doctrine of the Reformed churches, and of the Belgic Confession, and had not yet afforded any public or tangible proofs of his deviation from sound doctrine. Although he seems, in general, even after he was settled as Professor of Theology at Leyden, to have proceeded in the promulgation of his opinions with a degree of caution and reserve scarcely consistent with candour and integrity, yet it soon became evident and well known that he had embraced, and was inculcating, opinions inconsistent with those which were generally professed in the Reformed

churches. This led to much contention between him and his colleague, Gomarus, who was a learned and zealous defender of Calvinism. The Church of the United Provinces soon became involved in a controversy upon this subject, which got entangled also with some political movements. Arminius was with some difficulty prevailed upon, in 1608, to make a public declaration of his sentiments on the points in regard to which he was suspected of error. he died in 1609. After his death, Episcopius was considered the head of the party; and he ultimately deviated much further from the path of sound doctrine than Arminius had done.

The followers of Arminius, in 1610, presented a remonstrance to the civil authorities of the United Provinces, stating, under five heads or articles, the opinions they had adopted, asking a revision or correction of the symbolical books of the church, —the Belgic Confession, and the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism, —and demanding full toleration for the profession of their views. This fact procured for them the designation of the Remonstrants, the name by which they are most commonly described in the theological writings of the seventeenth century; while their opponents, from the answer they gave to this paper, are often called Contraremonstrants. A conference was held between the parties, at the Hague, in 1611, —usually spoken of as the *Collatio Hagiensis*, —at which the leading points in dispute were fully discussed, but without any approach being made towards an agreement. The orthodox party were very anxious to procure a meeting of a national synod, which might take up the subjects controverted, and give a decision upon them. The Arminians laboured to prevent this, and had influence enough with the civil authorities to succeed in this object for several years. At length, in November 1618, a national synod was held at Dort, at which were present also representatives or delegates from almost all the Reformed churches of Europe, including even the Church of England. This synod sat for about six months, —unanimously condemned the doctrinal views of the Remonstrants, —and adopted a body of canons upon those points at issue which have been ever since regarded as one of the most valuable and authoritative expositions of Calvinistic theology. By the sentence of the synod, the Remonstrants were deposed from their ecclesiastical offices; and by the civil authorities they were suppressed and exiled. But in a few

years— in 1626— they were allowed to return to their country, were tolerated in the performance of public worship, and permitted to establish a theological seminary at Amsterdam. This seminary has been adorned by men of distinguished talents and learning, especially Episcopius, Curcellaius, Limborch, Le Clerc, and Wetstein, —whose labours and writings contributed, to no small extent, to diffuse Arminianism among the Reformed churches.

These are the leading facts connected with the origin and progress of Arminianism, and the reception it met with in the Reformed churches;— facts of which, from their important bearing upon the history of theology, it is desirable to possess a competent knowledge.

As there was nothing new in substance in the Calvinism of Calvin, so there was nothing new in the Arminianism of Arminius; —facts, however, which do not in the least detract from the merits of Calvin as a most powerful promoter of scriptural truth, or from the demerits of Arminius, as an influential disseminator of anti-scriptural error. The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus, and seem to have been held by many of the fathers of the third and fourth centuries, having been diffused in the church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. Pelagius and his followers, in the fifth century, were as decidedly opposed to Calvinism as Arminius was, though they deviated much further from sound doctrine than he did. The system of theology which has generally prevailed in the Church of Rome was substantially very much the same as that taught by Arminius, with this difference in favour of the Church of Rome, that the Council of Trent at least left the Romanists at liberty to profess, if they chose, a larger amount of scriptural truth, upon some important points, than the Arminian creed, even in its most evangelical form, admits of, —a truth strikingly confirmed by the fact, that every Arminian would have rejected the five propositions of Jansenius, which formed the ground of the Jansenistic controversy, and would have concurred in the condemnation which the Pope, through the influence of the Jesuits, pronounced upon them.

The more evangelical Arminians, such as the Wesleyan Methodists, are at great pains to show that the views of Arminius himself have been much

misunderstood and misrepresented, —that his reputation has been greatly injured by the much wider deviations from sound doctrine which some of his followers introduced, and which have been generally ranked under the head of Arminianism. They allege that Arminius himself agreed with all the leading doctrines of the Reformers, except what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism. There is, undoubtedly, a good deal of truth in this statement, as a matter of fact. The opinions of Arminius himself seem to have been almost precisely the same as those held by Mr Wesley, and still generally professed by his followers, except that Arminius does not seem to have ever seen his way to so explicit a denial of the doctrine of perseverance, or to so explicit a maintenance of the possibility of attaining perfection in this life, as Wesley did; and it is true, that much of what is often classed under the general name of Arminianism contains a much larger amount of error, and a much smaller amount of truth, than the writings of Arminius and Wesley exhibit. Arminius himself, as compared with his successors, seems to have held, in the main, scriptural views of the depravity of human nature, —and the necessity, because of merits depravity, of a supernatural work of grace to effect their renovation and sanctification, —and this is the chief point in which Arminianism, in its more evangelical form, differs from the more Pelagian representations of Christian doctrine which are often classed under the same designation. The difference is certainly not unimportant, and it ought to be admitted and recognised wherever it exists. But the history of this subject seems to show that, whenever men abandon the principles of Calvinism, there is a powerful tendency leading them downwards into the depths of Pelagianism. Arminius himself does not seem, —so far as his views were ever fully developed, —to have gone further in deviating from scriptural truth than to deny the Calvinistic doctrines of election, particular redemption, efficacious and irresistible grace in conversion, and to doubt, if not to deny, the perseverance of the saints. But his followers, and particularly Episcopius and Curcellteus, very soon introduced further corruptions of scriptural truth, especially in regard to original sin, the work of the Spirit, and justification; and made near approaches, upon these and kindred topics, to Pelagian or Socinian views. And a large proportion of those theologians who have been willing to call themselves Arminians, have manifested a similar leaning— have exhibited a similar result.

It is quite common, among the writers of the seventeenth century, to distinguish between the original Remonstrants, —such as Arminius and those who adhered to his views, and who differed from the doctrines of the Reformed churches only in the five articles or the five points, as they are commonly called, —and those who deviated much further from scriptural truth. The latter class they were accustomed to call Pelagianizing or Socinianizing Remonstrants; and the followers of Arminius very soon promulgated views that fully warranted these appellations, —views which tended to exclude or explain away almost everything that was peculiar and fundamental in the Christian scheme; and to reduce Christianity to a mere system of natural religion, with only a fuller revelation of the divine will as to the duties and destinies of man. The followers of Arminius very soon began to corrupt or deny the doctrines of original sin, —of the grace of the Spirit in regeneration and conversion, —of justification through Christ’s righteousness and merits. They corrupted, as we have seen, the doctrine of the atonement, —that is, the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; and some of them went so far towards Socinianism, as, at least, to talk very lightly of the importance, and very doubtfully of the validity of the evidence, of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Something of this sort, though varying considerably in degree, has been exhibited by most writers who have passed under the designation of Arminians, except the Wesleyan Methodists; and it will be a new and unexampled thing in the history of the church, if that important and influential body should continue long at the position they have hitherto occupied in the scale of orthodoxy, —that is, without exhibiting a tendency to imbibe either more truth or more error, —to lean more to the side either of Calvinism or Pelagianism. Pelagian Arminianism is more consistent with itself than Arminianism in its more evangelical forms; and there is a strong tendency in systems of doctrine to develop their true nature and bearings fully and consistently. Socinianism, indeed, is more consistent than either of them.

The Pelagians of the fifth century did not deny formally the divinity and the atonement of our Saviour, but they omitted them, —left them out in their scheme of theology to all practical intents and purposes, —and virtually represented men as quite able to save themselves. The Socinians gave consistency to the scheme, by formally denying what the Pelagians

had practically set aside or left out. Many of those who, in modern times, have passed under the name of Arminians, have followed the Pelagians in this important particular, and while distinguished from the Socinians by holding in words— or rather, by not denying— the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Christ, have practically represented Christianity, in its general bearing and tendency, very much as if these doctrines formed no part of revelation; and all who are Arminians in any sense, —all who reject Calvinism, —may be proved to come short in giving to the person and the work of Christ that place and influence which the Scriptures assign to them. The Papists have always held the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Christ; and though they have contrived to neutralize and pervert their legitimate influence by a somewhat more roundabout process, they have not, in general, so entirely omitted them, or left them out, as the Pelagians and many Arminians have done. This process of omission or failing to carry out these doctrines in their full bearings and applications upon the way of salvation, and the scheme of revealed truth, has, of course, been exhibited by different writers and sections of the church, passing under the general designation of Arminian, in very different degrees. But, notwithstanding all this diversity, it is not very difficult to point out what may fairly enough be described as the fundamental characteristic principle of Arminianism, — that which Arminianism either is or has a strong and constant tendency to become; and this is, —that it is a scheme for dividing or partitioning the salvation of sinners between God and sinners themselves, instead of ascribing it wholly, as the Bible does, to the sovereign grace of God, —the perfect and all-sufficient work of Christ, —and the efficacious and omnipotent operation of the Spirit. Stapfer, in his “Theologia Polemica,” states the originating false principle of the Arminians, in this way:

“Quod homini tribuunt vires naturales obediendi Evangelio, ut si non cum Pelagianis saltem cum semi-Pelagianis faciant. Hoc est, si non integras vires statuunt, quales in statu integritatis fuerunt, tamen contendunt, illas licet aegras, ad gratiam oblatam tamen recipiendam sufficientes esse.” The encroachment they make upon the grace of God in the salvation of sinners varies, of course, according to the extent to which they carry out their views, especially in regard to men’s natural depravity, and the nature and necessity of the work of the Spirit in regeneration and

conversion; but Arminianism, in any form, can be shown to involve the ascription to men themselves, —more directly or more remotely, —of a place and influence in effecting their own salvation, which the Bible denies to them and ascribes to God.

While this can be shown to be involved in, or fairly deducible from, Arminianism in every form, it makes a very material difference in the state of the case, and it should materially affect our judgment of the parties, according as this fundamental characteristic principle is brought out and developed with more or less fulness. This distinction has always been recognised and acted upon by the most able and zealous opponents of Arminianism. It may be proper to give a specimen of this. Ames, or Amesius, —whose writings upon the Popish controversy, in reply to Bellarmine, cannot be spoken of except in the very highest terms of commendation, —has also written several very able works against the Arminians. He was present at the Synod of Dort, though not a member of it, —was much consulted in drawing up its canons, —thoroughly versant in the whole theology of the subject, —and a most zealous and uncompromising advocate of Calvinism. In his work, “De Conscientia,” under the head De Haeresi, he puts this question, An Remonstrantes sint haerctici? And the answer he gives is this, “Remonstrantium sententia, prout a vulgo ipsis faventium recipitur, non est proprie haeresis, sed periculosus error in fide, ad breresin tendens. Prout vero a quibusdam eorum defenditur, est haeresis Pelagiana: quia gratia internae operationem efficacem necessariam esse negant ad conversionem, et fidem ingenerandam.” Ames, then, thought that Arminianism, in its more mitigated form, was not to be reckoned a heresy, but only a dangerous error in doctrine, tending to heresy; and that it should be stigmatized as a heresy, only when it was carried out so far as to deny the necessity of an internal work of supernatural grace to conversion and the production of faith. And the general idea thus indicated and maintained should certainly be applied, if we would form anything like a fair and candid estimate of the different types of doctrine, more or less Pelagian, which have passed under the general name of Arminianism.

II. Synod of Dort

The Synod of Dort marks one of the most important eras in the history of Christian theology; and it is important to possess some acquaintance with the theological discussions which gave occasion to it, —with the decisions it pronounced upon them, —and the discussions to which its decisions gave rise. No synod or council was ever held in the church, whose decisions, all things considered, are entitled to more deference and respect. The great doctrines of the word of God had been fully brought out, in the preceding century, by the labours of the Reformers; and, under the guidance of the Spirit which accompanied them, they had been unanswerably defended against the Romanists, and had been cordially embraced by almost all the churches which had thrown off antichristian bondage. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, some men appeared in different churches, who, confident in their own powers, and not much disposed to submit implicitly to the plain teaching of the word of God, were greatly disposed to speculate upon divine things. They subjected the system of doctrines, which had been generally received by the Reformers, to a pretty searching scrutiny, and imagined that they had discovered some important errors, the removal of which tended, as they thought, to make the scheme of scriptural doctrine more rational, and better fitted to command the assent of intelligent men, and to promote the interests of practical religion. They were men abundantly fitted, by their talents and acquirements, to give to these views, and to the grounds on which they rested, every fair advantage. After these alleged improvements upon the theology of the Reformation had been for some time published, and had been subjected to a pretty full discussion, the Synod of Dort assembled to examine them, and give an opinion upon them. It consisted not only of the representatives of the churches of one country (the United Provinces), but of delegates from almost all the Protestant churches, except the Lutheran. The Protestant Church of France, indeed, -was not represented in it; because the delegates appointed by that church to attend the synod (Peter du Moulin and Andrew Rivet, two of the most eminent divines of the age), were prohibited by the King from executing the commission the church had given them, but the next national Synod of the Reformed Church of France adopted the canons of the Synod of Dort, and required assent to them from all their ministers. The delegates from the Church of England had not, indeed, a commission from the church, properly so called, and

therefore did not formally represent it; but they were appointed by the civil and the ecclesiastical heads of the church, —the King, and the Archbishop of Canterbury; and there is no reason to doubt that they fairly represented, in fact, the doctrinal sentiments that then generally prevailed among their brethren. While the members of the Synod of Dort thus represented, either formally or practically, the great body of the Protestant churches, they were themselves personally the most able and learned divines of the age, many of them having secured for themselves, by their writings, a permanent place in theological literature. This synod, after full and deliberate examination, unanimously determined against the innovations of Arminius and his followers, and gave a decided testimony in favour of the great principles of Calvinism, as accordant with the word of God and the doctrines of the Reformation. These subjects continued to be discussed during the remainder of the century, very much upon the footing of the canons of the Synod of Dort, and with a reference to the decisions they had given. And in order to anything like an intelligent acquaintance with our own Confession of Faith, it is necessary to know something of the state of theological discussion during the period that intervened between the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Assembly, by which the statements and phraseology of our Confession were very materially influenced.

The influential and weighty testimony thus borne in favour of Calvinism has, of course, called down upon the Synod of Dort the hostility of all who have rejected Calvinistic principles. And much has been written, for the purpose of showing that its decision is not entitled to much weight or deference; and that generally for the purpose of exciting a prejudice against it. The chief pretences employed for this purpose are these: First, It is alleged that the assembling of the synod was connected with some political movements, and that it was held under political influence, —a statement which, though true in some respects, and as affecting some of the parties connected with bringing about the calling of the synod, does not, in the least, affect the integrity and sincerity of the divines who composed it, or the authority of their decisions; for no one alleges that they decided from any other motive but their own conscientious convictions as to the meaning of the word of God. Secondly, The opponents of the synod dwell much upon some differences of opinion, on

minor points, that obtained among members of the synod, and upon the exhibitions of the common infirmities of humanity, to which some of the discussions, on disputed topics, occasionally gave rise, —a charge too insignificant to be deserving of notice, when viewed in connection with the purpose to which it is here applied. And, thirdly, They enlarge upon the hardship and suffering to which the Remonstrants were subjected by the civil authorities, in following out the ecclesiastical decisions of the synod, employing these very much as they employ Calvin's connection with the death of Servetus, as if this at all affected the truth of the doctrines taught, or as if there was any fairness in judging, by the notions generally prevalent in modern times, of the character and conduct of men who lived before the principles of toleration were generally understood or acted upon.

It is quite true, that the divines who composed the Synod of Dort generally held that the civil magistrate was entitled to inflict pains and penalties as a punishment for heresy, and that the Arminians of that age — though abundantly subservient to the civil magistrate when he was disposed to favour them, and, indeed, openly teaching a system of gross Erastianism— advocated the propriety of both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities practising a large measure of toleration and forbearance in regard to differences of opinion upon religious subjects. The error of those who advocated and practised what would now be reckoned persecution, was the general error of the age, and should not, in fairness, be regarded as fitted to give an unfavourable impression of their character and motives, and still less to prejudice us against the soundness of their doctrines upon other and more important topics; while the views of the Arminians about toleration and forbearance— at least as to be practised by the ecclesiastical authorities, in abstaining from exercising ecclesiastical discipline against error— went to the opposite extreme of latitudinarian indifference to truth; and, in so far as they were sound and just as respected the civil authorities, are to be traced chiefly to the circumstances of their own situation, which naturally led them to inculcate such views when the civil authorities were opposed to them, and afford no presumption in favour of the superior excellence of their character, or the general soundness of their opinions.

The Romanists, too, have attacked the Synod of Dort, and have not only laboured to excite a prejudice against it, but have endeavoured to draw from it some presumptions in favour of their own principles and practices. Bossuet has devoted to this object a considerable part of the fourteenth book of his History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches. The chief points on which he dwells, so far as the history and proceedings of the synod are concerned, —for I reserve for the present the consideration of its theology, —are these: that it indicated some diversities of opinion among Protestants, on which no deliverance was given; that it was a testimony to the necessity of councils, and of the exercise of ecclesiastical authority in deciding doctrinal controversies; that the answers of the synod to the objections of the Remonstrants against the way in which the synod proceeded, and in which it treated the accused, are equally available for defending the Council of Trent against the common Protestant objections to its proceedings; and that the results of the synod show the uselessness and inefficacy of councils, when conducted and estimated upon Protestant principles. Upon all these points Bossuet has exhibited his usual unfairness, misrepresentation, and sophistry, as has been most conclusively proved by Basnage, in his History of the Religion of the Reformed Churches.

It can be easily proved that there was nothing inconsistent with the principles which Protestants maintain against Romanists, on the subject of councils and synods, in anything that was done by the Synod of Dort, or in any inferences fairly deducible from its proceedings; that there was no analogy whatever between the claims and assumptions of the Council of Trent and those of the Synod of Dort, and the relation in which the Protestants in general stood to the one, and the Remonstrants stood to the other; that, in everything which is fitted to command respect and deference, the Synod of Dort contrasts most favourably with the Council of Trent; and that the whole history of the proceedings of the Church of Rome, in regard to substantially the same subjects of controversy, when agitated among themselves during the whole of the seventeenth century, manifests, first, that her claim to the privilege of having a living infallible judge of controversies is practically useless; and, secondly, that the practical use which she has generally made of this claim has been characterized by the most shameless, systematic, and deliberate

dishonesty. It is the doctrine of Protestants in general, as laid down in our Confession of Faith, that “it belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, and that their decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His word.” This is their duty and function; and all this may be claimed and exercised without the possession or the assumption of infallibility.

The Synod of Dort, as a national Synod of the United Provinces, were the legitimate ecclesiastical superiors of the Remonstrants, entitled to try them, to examine into the innovations in doctrine which they had been introducing into the church, to condemn their errors, and, on the ground of these errors, to subject them to ecclesiastical censure, —a position which the Remonstrants usually either deny or evade, but which is undoubtedly true, and which, being true, affords a conclusive answer to the charges of injustice and tyranny which they usually bring against the Synod’s proceedings in regard to them; whereas the Council of Trent had no rightful jurisdiction, in any sense, or to any extent, over Protestants in general. It is interesting, and upon a variety of grounds, —and not merely as affording materials for a retort upon Romanists in answer to their attempts to excite prejudices against the Synod of Dort, —to remember that controversies, upon substantially the same topics, divided the Church of Rome, from the time of the dispute excited by Baius, soon after the dissolution of the Council of Trent, down till the publication of the bull *Unigenitus*, in 1713; that the Popes were repeatedly urged to pronounce a decision upon these controversies, and repeatedly took them into consideration, professedly with an intention of deciding them; that the whole history of their proceedings in regard to them, for 150 years, affords good ground to believe that they never seriously and honestly considered the question as to what was the truth of God upon the subject, and what their duty to Him required them to do, but were supremely influenced, in all that they did, or proposed, or declined to do in the matter, by a regard to the secular interests of the Papacy; and that, in the prosecution of this last object, all regard to soundness of doctrine, and all respect to the dictates of integrity and veracity, were systematically laid

aside. I shall not dwell longer upon the historical circumstances connected with the rise of Arminianism and the Synod of Dort, but must proceed to advert to some of the leading points connected with its theology.

III. The Five Points

The subjects discussed in the Synod of Dort, and decided upon by that assembly, in opposition to the Arminians, have been usually known in theological literature as the five points; and the controversy concerning them has been sometimes called the quin-quarticular controversy, or the controversy on the five articles. In the remonstrance which the followers of Arminius presented to the civil authorities in 1610, they stated their own doctrines under five heads; and this circumstance determined, to a large extent, the form in which the whole subject was afterwards discussed, —first at the conference at the Hague, in 1611, and afterwards at the Synod of Dort, in 1618. Of these five articles, as they were originally stated, the first was upon predestination, or election; the second, on the death of Christ, and the nature and extent of His redemption; the third, on the cause of faith, —that is, of course, the power or agency by which faith is produced; the fourth, the mode of conversion, or the kind of agency by which it is effected, and the mode of its operation: and the fifth, on perseverance.

On this last topic, —namely, perseverance, —neither Arminius himself nor his followers, for some little time after his death, gave a decided deliverance. They did not seem quite prepared to give an explicit and positive denial to the doctrine which had been generally taught in the Reformed churches, of the certain perseverance of all believers. Accordingly, in the conference at the Hague, they professed, as Arminius had done in his public declaration the year before his death, that their mind was not fully made up upon this point, and that they must make a fuller investigation into the import of the scriptural statements regarding it, before they could make any confident assertion, either affirmatively or negatively. It is very manifest, however, that their general scheme of theology imperatively required them, in consistency, to deny the doctrine

of the certain perseverance of believers, and to maintain that they may totally and finally fall away; and, indeed, it is rather wonderful that they should have doubted upon this point, when they had rejected every other doctrine of Calvinism; for there is certainly no article in the Arminian creed, which has more appearance of countenance from scriptural statements than that of the possibility of the apostasy or falling away of believers. Accordingly, they did not continue long in this state of doubt or indecision, and before the Synod of Dort assembled they were fully prepared to assert and maintain an explicit denial of the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance.

We have already considered the second article, under the head of the Atonement.

The third and fourth articles are evidently, from their nature, very closely connected with each other; and, indeed, are virtually identical. Accordingly, in the subsequent progress of the controversy, they were commonly amalgamated into one; and in the canons of the synod itself, they are treated of together, under one head, though designated the third and fourth articles. As originally stated in the remonstrance, and as discussed in the conference at the Hague, they referred chiefly, the one to the way and manner in which faith was produced, and the other to the way and manner in which conversion was effected. But these two words really describe what is substantially one and the same process and result. Faith and conversion both describe, in substance, —though in different relations and aspects, —the one great process by which men, individually, are united to Christ, —are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, —by which they are put in actual possession of the blessings which Christ purchased. Conversion is descriptive more immediately of the process or change itself; and faith, in the sense in which it is here used, of the means by which it is effected. Every one admits that faith and conversion are certainly and invariably connected with each other; and all, except the lowest Socinians, admit that, while they are acts of man, —that is, while it is man himself who believes and turns to God, —these acts are also, in some sense, produced by the grace or gracious operation of God. Now, the dispute upon this point, —and, indeed, upon all the points involved in the Arminian controversy, —turns

upon the question as to the way and manner in which God and man are concerned in the production of man's actions; so that the question as to the cause of faith and the mode of conversion is virtually one and the same, they being two parts, or rather aspects, of one and the same process, which must be regulated and determined by the same principles. In the *Acta et Scripta Synodalia Remonstrantium*, —an important work, in which they explained and defended at length the statement of their opinions which they had given in to the synod, —they also join together the third and fourth articles; and the general title which they give to the two thus combined is, “*De gratia Dei in conversione hominis*,” — the general subject thus indicated being, of course, the nature, qualities, and regulating principles of this gracious operation, by which God effects, or co-operates in effecting, the conversion of a sinner.

IV. Original Sin

There is a difference between the title given by the Arminians to their discussion of the third and fourth articles conjointly, and that given by the Synod of Dort to the same two articles, treated also by them as one; and the difference is worth adverting to, as it suggests a topic of some importance in a general survey of the Arminian theology. The title given to these two articles, in the canons of the synod, is this— “On the corruption or depravity of man, —his conversion to God, and the mode or manner of his conversion.” Here we have prominence given to the corruption or depravity of man, as a part of this subject, and as in some way the ground or basis of the doctrine which treats of it. If a man possessed some knowledge of what has usually passed under the name of Arminianism in this country, —except as exhibited by the Wesleyans, — but did not know anything of the form in which it appeared and was discussed at the time of the Synod of Dort, he might probably be surprised to find that original sin, or human depravity, did not form the subject of one of the five points. It is a common, and not an inaccurate, impression, that a leading and an essential feature of the Arminian scheme of theology is a denial of man's total depravity, and an assertion of his natural power or ability to do something, more or less, that is spiritually good, and that will contribute to effect his deliverance from the

guilt and power of sin, and his eternal welfare. Every consistent Arminian must hold views of this sort, though these views may be more or less completely developed, and more or less fully carried out. The original Arminians held them, though they rather shrunk from developing them, or bringing them into prominence, and rather strove to keep them in the background. Accordingly, they did not introduce, into the original statement and exposition of their peculiar opinions, anything directly and formally bearing upon the subject of original sin or human depravity, and only insinuated their erroneous views upon this important topic in connection with their exposition of the manner in which conversion is effected, and the part which God and man respectively act in that matter.

It holds true universally, that the view we take of the natural condition and character of men, in relation to God and to His law, must materially affect our opinions as to the whole scheme of revealed truth. This is evident from the nature of the case, and it has been abundantly confirmed by experience. The direct and primary object of God's revelation may be said to be, —to make known to us the way in which men may attain to eternal happiness. But the way in which this result is to be attained, must depend upon, and be regulated by, the actual state and condition of men, —the nature and strength of the obstacles, if there be any, which stand in the way of accomplishing this object, —and the power or ability of men to do anything towards removing these obstacles, and thereby effecting the results. The way of salvation, accordingly, revealed in Scripture, assumes, and is based upon, men's actual state and capacities. The one is, throughout, adapted or adjusted to the other in the actual divine arrangements, and, of course, in the revelation given to us concerning the whole state of the case. If men can attain to eternal happiness only in a certain way, and through certain arrangements, their actual state and character must have rendered these arrangements necessary; and these two things being thus necessarily connected, the one must at once determine and indicate the other. Accordingly, we find, in the history of the church, that the views which men have entertained of the natural state and condition of the human race, have always accorded with the opinions they have formed with regard to the scheme of divine truth in general.

Socinians, believing that man labours under no depraved tendency, but is now in the same condition, and possessed of the same powers, in a moral point of view, as when he was first created, naturally and consistently discard from their scheme of theology a divine Saviour, and a vicarious atonement. Calvinists, believing that man is by nature wholly guilty and entirely depraved, recognise the necessity of a full satisfaction, a perfect righteousness, and an almighty and irresistible agency. Arminians occupy a sort of intermediate place between them, —admitting the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the necessity of the agency of the Spirit, —but not assigning to the work either of the Son or of the Spirit, in the salvation of sinners, that supreme place— that efficacious and determining influence— which Calvinists ascribe to them. And, in accordance with these views, they have been in the habit of corrupting the doctrine of original sin, or of maintaining defective and erroneous opinions in regard to the guilt and sinfulness of the estate into which man fell. They have usually denied the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and, while admitting that man's moral powers and capacities have been injured or deteriorated by the fall, they have commonly denied that entire depravity, that inability— without a previous change effected upon them by God's almighty grace— to will or do anything spiritually good, which Calvinists have generally asserted; or, if they have admitted the entire depravity of men by nature, —as Arminius and Wesley did, or, at least, intended to do, —the effect of this admission has been only to introduce confusion and inconsistency into the other departments of their creed. While erroneous and defective views of the natural guilt and depravity of man have generally had much influence in leading men to adopt the whole Arminian system of theology, their views upon this subject have not always come out earliest or most prominently, because they can talk largely and fully upon men's depravity, without palpably contradicting themselves; while by other parts of their system, —such as their doctrine about the work of the Spirit, and the way and manner in which conversion is effected, —they may be practically undermining all scriptural conceptions upon the subject.

This was very much what was exhibited in the development of the views of Arminius and his followers. The statements of Arminius himself, in regard to the natural depravity of man, so far as we have them upon

record, are full and satisfactory. And the third and fourth articles, as to the grace of God in conversion, even as taught by his followers at the time of the Synod of Dort, contain a large amount of scriptural truth. It is worthy of notice, however, that on the occasion when Arminius, in the year before his death, made a public declaration of his statements, in the presence of the civil authorities of Holland, his colleague, Gomarus, charged him with holding some erroneous opinions upon the subject of original sin, —a fact from which, viewed- in connection with the subsequent history of this matter, and the course usually taken by Arminians upon this subject, we are warranted in suspecting that he had given some indications, though probably not very distinct, of softening down the doctrines generally professed by the Reformers upon this point. In the third article, the Remonstrants professed to ascribe the production of faith, and the existence of everything spiritually good in man, to the operation of divine grace, and to assert the necessity of the entire renovation

of his nature by the Holy Spirit. And, in the fourth article, they extended this principle of the necessity of divine grace, or of the agency of the Spirit, to the whole work of sanctification, —to the whole of the process, by which men, after being enabled to believe, are cleansed from all 'sin, and made meet for heaven. These statements, of course, did not form any subject of dispute between them and their opponents. The Calvinists held all this, and had always done so. They only doubted whether the Arminians really held these doctrines honestly, in the natural meaning of the words, or, at least, whether they could intelligently hold them consistently in union with other doctrines which they maintained. Ames, after quoting the third article, as stated by the Remonstrants in the conference at the Hague, —and they retained it in the same terms at the Synod of Dort, —says: “De assertionis hujus veritate, nulla in Collatione movebatur controversia, neque nunc in quaestionem vocatur: imo ad magnam harum litium partem sedandam, haec una sufficeret thesis, modo sinceram earn Remonstrantium confessionem continere constaret, et ex labiis dolosis non prodire. Sed magna subest suspicio, eos non tam ex animo, quam ex arte dixisse multa, quai continentur in istoc effato. Diruunt enim alibi, qua? hie aidificant: ut ex paucis his inter sese collatis, mihi saltern videtur manifestum.” He then proceeds to quote statements

made on other occasions by the Arminians, who took part in this conference, that are inconsistent with this article, and that plainly enough ascribe to men some power to do what is spiritually good of themselves, and in the exercise of their own natural capacities.

I have quoted this passage, because it contains an accurate description of the course commonly pursued in all ages by Arminians in discussing this subject, and most fully by the Arminians of the Church of England. They are obliged, by the necessity of keeping up an appearance of consistency with their Articles and Homilies, to make large general admissions in regard to the depravity of men, and their inability of themselves to do anything spiritually good; and as these admissions are inconsistent with the general spirit and the fundamental principles of their scheme of theology, they are under the necessity of contradicting themselves, and of withdrawing with the one hand what they had given with the other.

The confusion and inconsistency often displayed by Episcopalian Arminians on these topics, when treating of original sin, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit, is very deplorable, and sometimes appears in a form that is really ludicrous. Bishop Tom-line quoted, with disapprobation, as Calvinism, a statement on the subject, which was taken from the Homilies. Dr Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his "Apostolical Preaching Considered," — which, though a poor book, is yet decidedly superior, both in point of ability and orthodoxy, to Tomline's "Refutation of Calvinism," — warned, apparently, by the exposure of Tomline's blunders, adopts a different mode of dealing with the strong statements of the Homilies on this subject. He quotes two passages from the Homilies; one from the Homily on the Nativity, and the other from that on Whitsunday, Part I., —the second of these being the one denounced by Tomline, —and charges them with exaggeration as containing "strong and unqualified language, which is neither copied from Scripture nor sanctioned by experience."

The first part of the fourth article, —in which they apply the principle of the necessity of divine grace to the whole process of sanctification, —is to be regarded in the same light as the third, —namely, as sound in itself, but contradicted on other occasions by themselves, because inconsistent with the general spirit of their system. In the end of the fourth article,

however, they have introduced a statement, which forms the subject of one of the leading departments of the controversy. It is in these words: “Quoad vero modum operationis istius gratiaa, illa non est irresistibilis.” Calvinists, in general, do not admit that this is an accurate statement of the question, and do not undertake, absolutely, and without some explanation of the principal term, to defend the position here by implication ascribed to them, —namely, that the grace of God, in conversion, is irresistible. Still, the statement points, and was intended to point, to an important subject of controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians, —one in which a real and important difference of opinion exists. It is usually discussed by Calvinists under the heads of effectual calling and efficacious grace, and it will be necessary to devote to it some portion of our attention.

The way and manner in which faith is produced, and in which conversion is effected, depend somewhat upon the power or capacity which man has, by nature, of doing anything spiritually good and acceptable to God; and that, again, depends upon the entireness or totality of the corruption or depravity that attaches to man through the fall. And hence it was, that though the Arminians had not, in what they laid down upon the mode or manner of conversion, said anything directly about men’s natural depravity, the Synod of Dort, in their canons on the third and fourth articles, included and expounded the doctrine of man’s entire depravity by nature, and his inability to do anything spiritually good, and made this the basis, —as the Scripture does, —of their whole doctrine with respect to the cause of faith, —the necessity and nature of regeneration and conversion, —the work of the Spirit, —and the principles by which His operations are regulated, in applying to men individually the benefits purchased for them by Christ.

I have thought it proper to explain why it was that the subject of man’s natural depravity did not occupy so prominent a place as might have been expected in the formal discussion of the Arminian controversy, when it first arose, about the time of the Synod of Dort, —at least as it was conducted on the Arminian side, —although it really lies at the root of the whole difference, as was made more palpably manifest in the progress of the discussion, when the followers of Arminius developed their views

upon this subject more fully, and deviated further and further from the doctrine of the Bible and the Reformation on the subject of the natural state and character of men. I do not mean, however, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to dwell upon this topic; because I have already considered pretty fully the subjects of original sin and free-will in connection with the Pelagian controversy. The doctrine of most Arminians upon these subjects is, in substance, that of the Church of Rome, as defined by the Council of Trent, —that is, it holds true of them both that they qualify or limit the extent or completeness of the depravity which attaches to man by nature, in consequence of the fall, so as to leave room for free-will, in the sense of a natural power or ability in men to do something that is spiritually good as well as to do what is spiritually evil; and thus to represent man as able, in the exercise of his own natural powers, to contribute, in some measure, to the production of faith, and at least to prepare himself for turning to God and doing His will. In discussing this subject, in opposition to the doctrine of the Pelagians and the Church of Rome, —which is very much the same as that of the generality of Arminians, —I took occasion to explain pretty fully the great doctrine of the Reformation and of our own Confession of Faith, about the connection between men's entire moral corruption and the entire bondage or servitude of their will to sin because of depravity, or their inability to will or to do anything spiritually good, —the only species of bondage or necessity, or of anything opposed in any sense to freedom of will, which, upon scriptural grounds, as Calvinists, or because of anything contained in our Confession of Faith, we are called upon to maintain. But, while right views of the entire depravity of man's moral nature, and of the thorough bondage or servitude of his will to sin, because of this depravity, —or, as our Confession says, "his total loss, by the fall into a state of sin, of all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation," — should, when applied and carried out, settle the questions which have been raised as to the production of faith and the cause of conversion, and the nature and character of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in effecting these results, —the topics usually discussed under the head of effectual calling, —the sufficiency, efficacy, and, in some sense, irresistibility of grace, —yet the full exposition of these latter topics was not brought out until the Arminian and Jansenistic controversies arose in the Protestant and Romish churches respectively

in the seventeenth century. And, while the chief topics involved in these two great controversies were substantially the same, they present, in regard to the particular topic now before us, this remarkable and interesting contrast, that, while in the Protestant Church the Arminians corrupted the doctrine of the Reformers with regard to effectual calling, and the efficacy of divine grace, or of the work of the Spirit, in regeneration, without, at first at least, formally denying man's depravity and moral inability; on the other hand, the Jansenists in the Church of Rome strenuously maintained what were, in substance, scriptural and Calvinistic views in regard to the efficacy of grace, without formally denying the corrupt doctrine of the Council of Trent in regard to original sin and free-will.

We shall advert to this subject of effectual calling, and the nature and efficacy of divine grace, or of the work of the Spirit, in producing faith and regeneration, as suggested by the third and fourth articles of the Synod of Dort, before we proceed to consider the important subject of the first article, —the great doctrine of Predestination or Election; and we shall follow this order, partly for reasons of convenience suggested by the topics we have already been led to consider, and partly for reasons founded on the nature of the case, and the intrinsic connection of the subjects to which we may afterwards have occasion to refer.

V. Universal and Effectual Calling

We have had occasion, in discussing the subject of the atonement, to explain the distinction which has been generally made by divines between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption, and to advert especially to the use, or rather the abuse, of it by the Arminians, in maintaining that impetration and application are not only distinct in themselves, but separable, and often, in fact, separated, —that is, that Christ impetrated the spiritual blessings of reconciliation and forgiveness for many to whom they are never applied, who never actually receive or partake of them, —a position, as we have seen, which can be made to assume something like plausibility only by maintaining that reconciliation and forgiveness are not reconciliation and forgiveness, but

merely something preparatory to, or tending towards, them. Calvinists admit that the impetration and the application of spiritual blessings are distinct things, —impetration being the immediate effect of Christ's work, and being completed when Christ's sacrifice of Himself in men's room was presented and accepted; and application, or the actual bestowal of these blessings upon men individually, being the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit, when by Him men individually are united to Christ through faith, so as actually to receive the blessings which He purchased for them, and are created again in Christ Jesus by His almighty power. Arminians hold that spiritual blessings— at least reconciliation and pardon— were impetrated or purchased for all men, but that they are applied only to some; while Calvinists hold that they were purchased only for some, but that they are applied to all for whom they were purchased. This disjunction or separation of impetration and application, —an essential feature of the Arminian scheme, —compels them, as I formerly illustrated, first, to explain away the true scriptural import of the blessings which they admit to have been purchased, —to reduce reconciliation to reconciliability, pardon to a possibility of pardon, salvation to salvability; and, secondly, to deny altogether that other blessings, equally indispensable to the salvation of men individually, — such as faith and regeneration, —are to be regarded as the fruits of Christ's purchase. These are corruptions of Christian doctrine not peculiar to the Arminians. They must be held in substance by all who believe in an unlimited atonement, if they will follow out their principles consistently. This has been already explained, and we have to do now only with the application of the blessings of redemption; and with this, too, not as procured and secured by the work of Christ, but only as actually effected in men individually by the work of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of whose agency in this matter is admitted by all but Socinians.

This whole subject, taken in its widest sense, may be regarded as resolving into this question, —What provision has God made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them, and which are indispensable to their deliverance and salvation? and what are the principles which regulate or determine the actual results of this provision in the pardon, conversion, and salvation of some men, and in the continued guilt and impenitence, and the everlasting misery, of

others? It will be recollected, that, having reserved the subject of predestination for future consideration, we have not, in examining this question, anything to do, in the first instance, with the decree, purpose, or design of the divine mind in regard to individuals, but only with the provision made by God for executing His decrees or accomplishing His purposes, as it is presented to our contemplation, and with the results which flow from it. It is with the providence, not the decrees, of God, that we have at present to do; and in this statement the word providence is not to be understood in the more limited sense in which it is sometimes employed, as contradistinguished from grace, but as including it. God executes all His decrees or purposes, with respect to the human race, in His works of creation and providence, —that is, in creating and thereafter regulating all things; and though it is common to employ the word providence as descriptive only of that department of the divine procedure, in regulating and governing the world, which has respect to material, external, and temporal things, and to apply the word grace to that department of the divine actings which bear immediately upon the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of sinners, and is ascribed in Scripture to the special agency of the Holy Spirit; and though it is right that these two departments of the divine procedure should be distinguished from each other, yet this mode of distinguishing them is neither sanctioned by Scripture usage, nor very accurate in itself. All that God does in regard to the world and the human race, after creating them, is comprehended in His providence, or in the supreme dominion which He is ever exercising over all His creatures and over all their actions; and this providence, therefore, comprehends all that He does in the dispensation of the Spirit, —in communicating that grace, or those gracious supernatural influences, on which the actions and the destinies of men so essentially depend.

The general provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased by the shedding of His precious blood, may be said to consist in these three things: first, the making known to men what Christ has done and suffered for their salvation; secondly, the offering to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and the inviting men to accept of them: and, thirdly, the communication of the Holy Spirit to dispose or enable them to accept the

offer, —to comply with the invitation, —that is, to repent and believe, and to effect, or contribute to effect, in them the renovation or sanctification of their natures. Calvinists and Arminians agree in admitting that these things, when stated in this somewhat vague and indefinite form, which has been adopted intentionally for the present, constitute the provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the benefits of redemption; but they differ materially in their views upon some important points connected with the necessity and the nature of the different branches of this provision, and the principles that regulate their application and results. The Arminians, believing in universal grace, in the sense of God's love to all men, —that is, omnibus et singulis, or His design and purpose to save all men conditionally, —and in universal redemption, or Christ's dying for all men, —consistently follow out these views by asserting a universal proclamation to men of God's purpose of mercy, —a universal vocation, or offer and invitation, to men to receive pardon and salvation, —accompanied by a universal sufficient grace, —gracious assistance actually and universally bestowed, sufficient to enable all men, if they choose, to attain to the full possession of spiritual blessings, and ultimately to salvation. Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all to whom the gospel is preached, and that all who can be reached should be invited and urged to come to Christ and embrace Him, deny that this flows from, or indicates, any design or purpose on God's part to save all men; and without pretending to understand or unfold all the objects or ends of this arrangement, or to assert that it has no other object or end whatever, regard it as mainly designed to effect the result of calling out and saving God's chosen people; and they deny that grace, or gracious divine assistance, sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, is given to all men. They distinguish between the outward vocation or calling and the internal or effectual, and regard the real regulating principle that determines the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call or invitation of the gospel by men individually, to be the communication or the non-communication of the efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit; Arminians, of course, resolving this— for there is no other alternative— into men's own free-will, their own improvement or non-improvement of the sufficient grace given to them all.

In investigating these subjects, the first thing to be attended to manifestly is the proclaiming or making known to men God's purpose of mercy or way of salvation; and here, at the very outset, Arminians are involved in difficulties which touch the foundations of their whole scheme of theology, and from which they have never been able to extricate themselves. They can scarcely deny that it is at least the ordinary general rule of God's procedure, in imparting to men the blessings of redemption, that their possession of them is made dependent upon their becoming acquainted with what Christ did for sinners, and making a right use and application of this knowledge. If this be so, then it would seem that we might naturally expect that— if the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption are well founded— God would have made provision for securing that a knowledge of His love and purpose of mercy, and of the atonement of Christ, —the great means for carrying it into practical effect, —should be communicated to all men, or at least brought within their reach. And Calvinists have always regarded it as a strong argument against the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption, and in favour of their own views of the sovereign purposes of God, that, in point of fact, so large a portion of the human race have been always left in entire ignorance of God's mercy, and of the way of salvation revealed in the gospel; nay, in such circumstances as, to all appearance, throw insuperable obstacles in the way of their attaining to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.

It is a fact, that a large portion of every successive generation that has peopled the earth's surface, have been left in this condition, —a fact which we should contemplate with profound reverence and holy awe, but which we should neither turn from, nor attempt to explain away, and which, like everything else in creation and providence, ought to be applied for increasing our knowledge of God, of His character and ways. The diversities in the condition of different nations, with respect to religious privileges or the means of grace, as well as the determination of the condition and opportunities in this respect of each individual, as regulated ordinarily in a great measure by the time and place of his birth, are to be ascribed to the sovereign good pleasure of God. He has determined all this according to the counsel of His own will. We can give no other full or complete explanation of these things. Partial explanations

may sometimes be given in regard to particular countries; but these do not reach the root of the matter in any case, and are palpably inadequate as applied to the condition of the world at large. We can assign no reason, for instance, why it is that Great Britain, which; at the time of our Saviour's appearance upon earth, was in a state of thorough ignorance and barbarism, should now possess so largely herself, and be disseminating so widely to others, the most important spiritual privileges; or why we, individually, have been born in this highly favoured land, instead of coming into existence amid the deserts of Africa, which does not resolve itself, either immediately or ultimately, into the good pleasure of God. Arminians have laboured to reconcile all this, as a matter of fact, with their defective and erroneous views of the divine sovereignty, and with their unscriptural doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption; but they have not usually been satisfied themselves with their own attempts at explanation, and have commonly at last admitted, that there were mysteries in this matter which could not be explained, and which must just be resolved into the sovereignty of God and the unsearchableness of His counsels.

We have, however, to do with this topic, at present, only as it is connected with the alleged universal proclamation of God's purpose of mercy to sinners, or of a way of salvation. Arminians are bound to maintain, in order to expound with something like consistency the great leading principles of their scheme of theology, that God has made such a revelation to all men, as that, by the right use of it, or if they do not fail in the due improvement of what they have, they may, and will, attain to salvation. This has led many of them not only to maintain that men may be, and that many have been, saved by Christ, or upon the ground of His atonement, who never had any knowledge of what He had done for men, but also to devise a sort of preaching of the gospel, or proclamation of the way of salvation, without a revelation, and by means merely of the works of nature and providence, —views which are plainly inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture. While they are compelled to admit an exercise of the divine sovereignty— that is, of God's acting in a way, the reasons of which we do not know, and cannot trace or explain— in the different degrees of knowledge and of privilege which He communicates to different nations, they usually maintain, that it is indispensable, in order

to the vindication of the divine character, that all men— however inferior in degree the privileges of some may be to those of others— should have, at least, such means of knowing God, as that, by the right use and improvement of them, they can attain to salvation. We, of course, do not deny that there are mysteries in this subject which we cannot explain, and which we can only contemplate with profound reverence and awe; or that men's everlasting condition will be, in some measure, regulated by the privileges and opportunities they have enjoyed; or that all who perish shall perish justly and righteously, having incurred real guilt by the ignorance of God which they actually manifested; but we cannot, because of the difficulties attaching to this mysterious subject, renounce the plain scriptural principle, that it is “eternal life to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent;” or dispute the plain matter of fact, that, as the certain result of arrangements which God has made, many of our fellow-men are placed in circumstances in which they cannot attain to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ on which eternal life depends.

Some Arminians have been so much impressed with these considerations, as to indicate a willingness to make a sort of compromise upon this subject, by agreeing to exclude from happiness those to whom Christ has not been made known, provided they are not consigned to misery; that is, they have been disposed to cherish the notion of an intermediate eternal state, in addition to the two which the Bible reveals to us, as the ultimate and everlasting abodes of all the individuals of the human race, —heaven being provided for those who have believed the gospel, —hell for those who have rejected it when it was proclaimed to them, —and an intermediate state, without suffering, for those who never heard it. This idea is thus expressed by Limborch. After declaring it to be very probable that men who make a good use of the light they have will be graciously saved through Christ, though they have never heard of Him. This awful subject should certainly preclude the indulgence of those feelings which mere controversial discussion is apt to produce, — anything like an approach to an eager contending for victory; but it is right, from a regard to the interests of truth, to observe, that the only evidence he produces for these notions, —and which he seems to think must prove one or other of them, —is the general scriptural principle, that men shall be dealt with according to the opportunities they have enjoyed.

This principle is manifestly insufficient to support such notions; so that the whole matter resolves into this, —that Arminians will rather invent theories about subjects of which they can know nothing, than believe what God has plainly told us concerning Himself, when this does not coincide with the previous conceptions they may have formed of His character and His ways.

They are usually glad, however, to escape from this branch of the subject, about the universal proclamation of God's grace, and of a way of salvation to all men, —feeling, apparently, that the plain facts of the case, viewed in connection with the plainly revealed, though awful and mysterious, doctrines of Scripture, cannot easily be reconciled with their system; and they hasten on to try their notions of universal vocation, and sufficient grace, in the case of all to whom the gospel is made known. In making this transition, they usually allege that they have no desire to inquire curiously into the condition and destiny of those to whom the gospel is not made known, —that we have to do chiefly with the case of those who have an opportunity of knowing God's revelation, and with the principles which regulate their fate, —and that it is quite sufficient to overthrow the Calvinistic system of theology, if it can be proved that sufficient grace is communicated to all of them. We have no satisfaction, any more than they, in dwelling upon the mysterious subject of the destiny of the innumerable multitudes of our fellow-men who have died without having had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only name given under heaven or among men whereby we can be saved;— we indulge in no speculations upon their fate, beyond what Scripture sanctions;— we leave them in the hands of the Judge of all the earth, who, we are assured, will do right. But there is nothing in all this to warrant or excuse us in refusing to believe what Scripture teaches, or to contemplate in the light of Scripture what the condition of the world sets before us; and it is the more necessary and important that we should realize and apply— so far as we have clear and certain materials— the doctrines and the facts bearing upon this subject, awful and incomprehensible as it undoubtedly is, when we find that these doctrines and facts afford proofs of the erroneousness of some of the views of the divine character and government, and of the way of salvation, which the Arminians have been accustomed to propound. As to their allegation, that it is sufficient to

refute Calvinism, if they can establish their principle as applicable to all who hear the gospel, it is enough, at present, to remind them, that they have not only to attack Calvinism, but to defend their own system; and that the survey of the condition of the world at large, taken in connection with doctrines plainly taught in Scripture, —and this is the first subject which naturally presents itself for examination in this department of the controversy, —not only answers many of their common objections against Calvinism, but suggests objections to the Arminian scheme of theology, which its advocates are unable satisfactorily to dispose of.

Let us briefly advert to the application they make of their principles to all who live within the sound of the gospel. The view they give of the state and condition of those persons is this, —that they are all equally called and invited to the reception and enjoyment of the blessings which Christ purchased for all men, —that, as God desires and purposes the salvation of all of them, He gives to them all such grace or gracious assistance as is sufficient o o o to enable them all to repent and believe, if they choose, and as will certainly effect their conversion and salvation, unless they refuse to use and improve it aright. Calvinists admit that all to whom the gospel is preached, are called or invited to come to Christ and to embrace Him; but they deny that this flows from, or indicates on God's part, a design or purpose to save them all; and they deny that grace or gracious assistance, sufficient to enable them to repent and believe, is communicated to them all. They distinguish between the outward call addressed to all by the word, and the inward or effectual call addressed to some by the Spirit, whereby they are really enabled to accept of the offer, —to comply with the invitation, —and thus to believe in Christ and to turn to God. The great facts presented by the preaching of the gospel, viewed in connection with its results, are these, —that some believe it and submit to its influence, and are, in consequence, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and enabled thereafter to walk in the way of God's commandments; while others, with the same outward opportunities, with the same truths addressed to them, and the same arguments and motives urged upon them, continue to reject the truth, and remain wholly unaffected by it, in the great features of their character, and in the leading motives by which they are animated. And the question in dispute virtually resolves into this, —What is the true cause or explanation of this

difference in the result in the case of different individuals? They all enjoy the same outward privileges; they all possess substantially the same natural capacities; they are all warranted and bound to believe the truth proclaimed to them; they are all invited to come to Christ, and to receive salvation through Him. The call or invitation is seriously or honestly addressed to them all. Calvinists likewise believe, that all who reject the gospel, and refuse to submit to it and to turn to God, are themselves fully responsible for doing so, —are guilty of sin, and justly expose themselves to punishment on this account; or, as the Synod of Dort says, “*Hujus culpa non est in Evangelio, —nec in Christo per Evangelium oblato, —nec in Deo per Evangelium vocante, et dona etiam varia iis conferente, —sed in ipsis vocatis.*” There is no dispute upon these points, though Arminians attempt to show that Calvinists cannot hold these doctrines consistently with some of their other principles.

Were this all that is revealed to us as to the cause of the difference of the results, the Arminian doctrine might be true, that all had received sufficient grace to enable them to accept of the call, and that the only principle that could be brought to bear upon the explanation of the difference of the results, was, that some used and improved aright the grace they had received, and others did not. This is true, but it is not the whole truth upon the subject. The Scriptures not only inform us that all who refuse to repent and believe, are responsible for this, and incur guilt by it; they likewise tell us of the way and manner in which faith and conversion are produced in those who believe and turn to God; and what they tell us upon this point, makes it manifest that the result, in their case, is not to be ascribed to anything that is merely common to them with others, either in their natural capacities or in the grace of God, —that is, in gracious assistance communicated by Him, —but to a special distinguishing work or influence of His Spirit bestowed upon them, and not bestowed on the rest. This is what Calvinists commonly call special, distinguishing, efficacious grace, as opposed to the Arminian universal sufficient grace; they regard it as a peculiar operation of God’s Spirit bestowed upon some, and not upon others, —the true and real cause of faith and regeneration wherever they exist, and certainly and effectually securing the production of faith and regeneration wherever it is bestowed.

Now, the questions to be discussed upon this point are these: First, Do the Scriptures set before us such a special, distinguishing operation of the Spirit, bestowed upon some and not bestowed upon others? and, secondly, Do they represent this special grace or distinguishing gracious operation of the Spirit, as the true cause or source of faith and regeneration wherever they exist, —the real reason or explanation of the different results exhibited, —in that some men repent and believe, while others, with the same outward call or vocation, and with the same external privileges, continue in impenitence and unbelief? I do not mean to enter into an examination of the scriptural evidence, but will only make one or two observations upon the points involved in the discussion, as it has been usually conducted.

It is important to fix in our minds a clear conception of the alternatives in the explanation of this matter, according as the Calvinistic or the Arminian doctrine upon the subject is adopted. The thing to be accounted for is, —the positive production of faith and regeneration in some men; while others continue, under the same outward call and privileges, in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. Now, this is just virtually the question, Who maketh those who have passed from death to life, and are now advancing towards heaven, to differ from those who are still walking in the broad way? Is it God? or is it themselves? The Calvinists hold that it is God who makes this difference; the Arminians— however they may try to conceal this, by general statements about the grace of God and the assistance of the Spirit— virtually and practically ascribe the difference to believers themselves. God has given sufficient grace— everything necessary for effecting the result— to others as well as to them. There is no difference in the call addressed to them, or in the grace vouchsafed to them. This is equal and alike. There is a difference in the result; and, from the sufficiency and consequent substantial equality of the universal grace vouchsafed, this difference, in the result, must necessarily be ascribed, as to its real adequate cause, to something in themselves, —not to God's grace, not to what He graciously bestowed upon them, but to what they themselves were able to do, and have done, in improving aright what God communicated to them. If sufficient grace is communicated to all who are outwardly called, then no more than what is sufficient is communicated to those who actually repent and believe, —

for, to assert this, is virtually to deny or retract the position, that what was communicated to those who continue impenitent and unbelieving, was sufficient or adequate, and thus to contradict their fundamental doctrine upon this whole subject. And when the true state of the question, and the real alternatives involved, are thus brought out, there is no difficulty in seeing and proving that the Arminian doctrine is inconsistent with the plain teaching of Scripture, —as to the great principles which regulate or determine men’s spiritual character and eternal destiny, —the true source and origin of all that is spiritually good in them, —the real nature of faith and regeneration, as implying changes which men are utterly unable to produce, or even to cooperate, in the first instance, in originating; and as being not only the work of God in men, —the gift of God to men, —but also, and more particularly, as being, in every instance, the result of a special operation of the Holy Ghost, —an operation represented as altogether peculiar and distinguishing, —bestowed upon some and not upon others, according to the counsel of God’s own will, and certainly or infallibly effecting, wherever it is bestowed, all those things that accompany salvation.

VI. Efficacious and Irresistible Grace

We have stated generally the nature and import of the application of the blessings which Christ purchased for men, —or the way and manner in which God imparts these blessings to men individually, —explaining the Arminian doctrines of universal vocation and sufficient grace, as applicable, first, to mankind in general, and, secondly, to all to whom the gospel is made known; and contrasting them with the doctrines generally held by Calvinists, in regard to effectual calling and efficacious grace. We have seen that, as we cannot assign any other adequate cause or reason, except the good pleasure of God, why so many of our fellow-men have always been, and still are, left in a state in which they cannot attain to a knowledge of the way of salvation, while others enjoy the glorious light of the gospel; so we are shut up also to ascribe to a special distinguishing gracious operation of God’s Spirit, —bestowed upon some and not upon others, —the fact, that of those who do enjoy the same outward vocation and the same external privileges, some reject the call, refuse to believe

and to turn to God, while others believe and are converted. The provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased, may be ranked under two general heads, — namely, first, outward privileges or means of grace, the knowledge of the way of salvation, and the offers and invitations of the gospel; and, secondly, what is commonly called grace itself, or the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit upon men's minds, enabling or assisting them to repent and believe. We have already considered the first of these subjects, and have entered upon the explanation of the second, — stating, generally, the Arminian doctrine of sufficient grace, bestowed upon all men who hear the gospel, to enable them to believe it if they choose; and the Calvinistic doctrine of effectual calling and efficacious grace, bestowed only upon some, and constituting the true cause or reason why they believe and are converted, while others continue in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. The establishment of the doctrine of special distinguishing grace, bestowed by God on some, and not on others, —and certainly producing in all on whom it is bestowed faith and regeneration, —may be said to terminate the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians upon this important point.

The controversy, however, has branched out into several other questions, about which— though they are all virtually included under that of special distinguishing grace— it may be proper to give a brief explanation, especially as I have not yet adverted, directly and formally, to the point on which the Arminians commonly represent the whole controversy upon this subject as turning, —namely, what they call the irresistibility of grace. Arminius himself, and the more evangelical of those who have generally been called after his name, professing to hold the total depravity of man by nature, have asserted the necessity of the special supernatural agency of the Spirit to the production of faith and regeneration; and, in general terms, have indeed ascribed these results wholly to the grace of God and the operation of the Spirit; while they professed to be anxious only to show, that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation, it is not irresistible. The discussions, however, which have taken place upon this subject, have made it manifest that there are other deviations from sound doctrine on the subject of the work of the Spirit in producing faith and regeneration, into which Arminians are naturally, if not necessarily, led; and the subject

is inseparably connected with right views of the entire depravity of man, and of his inability, in his natural state, to will or to do anything spiritually good, —subjects on the consideration of which, for reasons formerly stated, I do not at present enter.

Arminius, in his declaration addressed to the States of Holland, in 1608, the year before his death, stated his views upon the subject in this way: "I ascribe to grace the commencement, THE CONTINUANCE, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL GOOD, —and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace. From this statement it will clearly appear, that I am by no means injurious or unjust to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man's free-will: For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question, (Is the grace of God a certain, irresistible force?' That is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or operations which may be ascribed to grace, (for I acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions and operations as any man ever did,) but it relates solely to the mode of operation, —whether it be irresistible or not: With respect to which, I believe, according to the Scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered." In like manner, as we have seen, his followers at the Synod of Dort, in their declaration as to the third and fourth articles, spoke to the same effect; though some of the very same men who professed so much scriptural truth at that time, — and especially Episcopius, —afterwards adopted, or at least promulgated, sentiments much more Pelagian, in regard to the nature and necessity of grace. It would have been well if all who have been called Arminians had ascribed as much as Arminius did to the grace of God, in the conversion and sanctification of men. But we cannot admit that, on the ground of the statement we have quoted, —strong and plausible as it is, —he can be proved to be guiltless of attributing too much to man's free-will, or must be regarded as giving a scriptural view of the nature and mode of the Spirit's operation. Notwithstanding all that he has said, in ascribing to grace, and to the operation of the Spirit, the commencement, the continuance, and consummation of all good, —that is, —for it does not necessarily mean more than this, —that nothing spiritually good is

produced in man, without, or except by, the agency of the Spirit, it is quite possible that he may have held such a co-operation or concurrence of man himself, in the exercise of his own natural powers and capacities, with the Spirit, in the whole process by which faith and regeneration are produced, as to neutralize or obscure the grace of God in the matter; and to make man a joint or concurrent cause with God even in originating those changes which are indispensable to salvation. And this, indeed, is just what is implied in the denial, that the mode of the Spirit's operation in producing conversion is irresistible.

Calvinists, indeed, do not admit that it is an accurate mode of stating the question, to put it in this form, —whether or not the grace or gracious operation of the Spirit be irresistible? for they do not dispute that, in some sense, men do resist the Spirit; and they admit that resistance to the Spirit may be predicated both of the elect and of the non-elect, —the non-elect having operations of the Spirit put forth upon them which they resist or throw off, and never yield to, —and the elect having generally resisted the operations of the Spirit for a time before they yielded to them. Accordingly, although the only thing in the Arminian declaration, as given in to the Synod of Dort, which was regarded as containing a positive error in doctrine, was the assertion that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation in conversion, it was not irresistible, there is not, in the canons of the synod, any formal deliverance, in terminis, upon this precise point, though all that the Arminians meant to assert, by denying the irresistibility of grace, is clearly and fully condemned. This statement likewise holds true, in all its parts, of our own Confession of Faith. It does not contain, in terminis, an assertion of the irresistibility, or a denial of the resistibility, of the grace of God in conversion; but it contains a clear and full assertion of the whole truth which Arminians have generally intended to deny, by asserting the resistibility of grace, and which Calvinists have intended to assert, when—accommodating themselves to the Arminian phraseology, but not admitting its accuracy— they have maintained that grace in conversion is irresistible.

They object to the word irresistible, as applied to their doctrine, because of its ambiguity, —because, in one sense, they hold grace in conversion to be resistible, and in another, not. It may be said to be resistible, and to be

actually resisted, inasmuch as motions or operations of the Spirit upon men's minds— which, in their general nature and bearing, may be said to tend towards the production of conversion— are resisted, or not yielded to, by the non-elect, and for a time even by the elect; while it may be said to be irresistible, —or, as Calvinists usually prefer calling it, insuperable, or infrustrable, or certainly efficacious, —inasmuch as, according to their doctrine, whenever the gracious divine power that is sufficient to produce conversion, and necessary to effect it, is put forth, it certainly overcomes all the resistance that men are able to make, and infallibly produces the result.

And here I may remark by the way, that it is a point sometimes controverted among Calvinists themselves, whether the non-elect are ever the subjects of motions or operations of the Spirit, which, in their own nature, tend towards conversion, or possess, in a measure, those general properties which, when they possessed them in a higher degree, produce conversion. Upon this point, our Confession of Faith takes the side of asserting that they “may have some common operations of the Spirit and this view of the matter is more accordant than the opposite one with what seems to be indicated by Scripture upon the subject, while it is not liable to any serious objection. But Calvinists, while differing upon this point, —which is not of much intrinsic importance, —all admit that the elect do for a time resist divine grace, or the gracious operations of the Spirit; while they all maintain that, whenever that special grace which is necessary to conversion, and which alone is sufficient to effect it, is put forth, men cannot resist, or overcome, or frustrate it, and do, in fact, certainly and necessarily yield to its influence. This doctrine is asserted in our Confession of Faith— not in express terms, indeed, but plainly and unequivocally— in this way: It declares that, in the work of effectual calling, —which is asserted to be wrought in “all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only,” — He renews their wills, and, by His almighty power, determines them to that which is good, and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace; and it further declares, that, in this process of effectual calling, man is “altogether passive,” “until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.”

If the depravity of man by nature is so entire or total, as that he labours under an inability to will anything spiritually good, and therefore— for this is a necessary consequence of his want of ability to will— must have his will renewed by a power from without himself, and must be wholly passive in the commencement of the process by which this renovation of the will is effected, then it is evident that— though he may have resisted an inferior measure of the power that tended in the direction of renewing him— the power by which the renovation of the will was actually effected must have been such that he could not resist or overcome it, —that, whenever power sufficient to effect such a result was really put forth, it must certainly remove every obstacle, and infallibly accomplish the result intended. If it were a power that could be overcome or frustrated by anything in man, it would not be sufficient to effect the result, because there is no other source from which any assistance or co-operation in producing the result could v be derived. Man himself is dead in sins and trespasses, —utterly destitute, until his will has been renewed, of any ability to will what is good; and therefore the power which is sufficient or adequate to renew his will, must be such as certainly to overcome all obstacles, and infallibly produce the necessary change. The Arminian doctrine is, that when all the means have been used, and the whole power has been put forth, that are sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, and that do, in point of fact, produce them, Wherever they are produced, all men may, and many do, resist (these means and this power, and in the exercise of their own freewill, continue impenitent and unbelieving, overcoming or frustrating the very same power or agency— the same, both in kind and degree— to which others yield, and are, in consequence, converted and saved. This is plainly— whatever general statements may be made about the necessity of divine grace— to ascribe to men a natural power to will what is spiritually good, and to make this natural power to will what is spiritually good the real determining cause of their conversion, —that which discriminates or distinguishes those who repent and believe from those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. Men attribute too much to man's free-will, —to adopt the language of Arminius, —when they ascribe to it any power to will what is spiritually good, or any activity or power of co-operating with divine grace in the origin or commencement of the process of regeneration. And unless this be ascribed to it, the power by which regeneration is actually effected

must be irresistible, —must be such that men cannot frustrate or overcome it.

It will be seen, then, that the doctrine of the irresistibility, or insuperability, of divine grace in conversion is a necessary consequence of scriptural views of man's entire depravity, and his inability by nature to will anything spiritually good; and that all that Calvinists intend to set forth in maintaining this doctrine, is declared when they assert that it is necessary that men's wills be renewed, and that, in the commencement of the process by which this renovation is effected, they are wholly passive, —incapable of co-operating with divine grace, or with the Holy Spirit operating upon them, until He has, by His own almighty power, effected an important change upon them. This change is sometimes called regeneration, when that word is taken in its most limited sense, as distinguished from conversion; and, in that case, regeneration means the first implantation of spiritual life, —the process of vivification, or making alive, —while conversion describes the process by which men, now quickened and renewed, —no longer passive, but active, —do willingly turn to God, and embrace Jesus Christ as all their salvation and all their desire; and the whole is comprehended under the designation of effectual calling, which includes the whole work of the Spirit, in applying to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and in effecting that important change in their condition and character which is, in every instance, indispensable to salvation.

An essential part of this process is the renovation of the will, or the giving it a new capacity or tendency, —a power of willing what is spiritually good, —whereas before it could will only what was spiritually evil. And it is important to have our attention directed to this feature in the process, as it is that right view of which most directly oppose and exclude Arminian errors upon this subject. In the description of effectual calling, given in the Shorter Catechism, it is said to be “a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.” The general principles of the Arminians upon this subject lead them to deny the renovation of the will, as a distinct step in this process. If there be

such a thing as a renovation of the will, it must manifestly, from the nature of the case, be effected by a divine power; and that power, finding nothing previously existing in or about the will, that can assist or cooperate in the production of the result of its own renovation, must be exerted in such a measure, in effecting the object, as to be insuperable, or certainly and infallibly victorious. The Arminians, in denying the insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, and in maintaining that, even when a divine power sufficient to produce conversion is put forth, men may frustrate it and continue unconverted, not only ascribe to the will of man, in his natural state, a power or capacity, in regard to what is spiritually good, which is inconsistent with the necessity of its being renewed, but also assign to the truth, or the word, an influence or efficacy in the matter which Calvinists generally regard as opposed to the teaching of Scripture; and hence the importance, not only of holding the necessity of the renovation of the will, but also of regarding this as a distinct step in the Spirit's work of effectual calling, from the enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ.

Arminians commonly resolve regeneration, not into an almighty and insuperable agency of the Spirit, operating directly upon the will, in renovating it, by giving it a new capacity, tendency, or direction, but into what they commonly call a moral suasion, —that is, into the mere influence of motives addressed to the understanding, and, through the understanding, operating upon the will, —in other words, into the mere influence of the truth, opened up and impressed by the Spirit; while Calvinists have usually maintained that there is a direct and immediate operation of the Spirit upon the will itself, and not merely through the influence of the truth operating upon the understanding.

The distinctions and explanations, which have been put forth in the discussions upon this subject, are too numerous and minute to admit of our attempting any exposition of them; we can merely point it out as a subject which has been much discussed, and is entitled to some attention. The standards of our church, while they do not give any formal deliverance upon this subject, as it has been usually handled in theological discussions, and no deliverance at all upon some of the minuter questions which have been controverted among Calvinists

regarding it, plainly enough indicate, not only that it is necessary that the will should be renewed, but also that this step in the process of effectual calling is distinct from any mere agency of the Spirit in enlightening the understanding, —in opening up and impressing the truth which God has revealed. And I have no doubt that this view corresponds most fully with all that Scripture makes known to us about men's natural condition of darkness and depravity, —about the nature of faith and regeneration, and the agency and the means by which they are produced.

The Arminians usually object to these views about the certain efficacy or insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, that they are inconsistent with the nature of the human will, and with the qualities that attach to it. They usually represent our doctrine as implying that men are forced to believe and to turn to God against their will, or whether they will or not. This is a misrepresentation. Calvinists hold no such opinion; and it cannot be shown that their doctrine requires them to hold it. Indeed, the full statement of their doctrine upon the subject excludes or contradicts it. Our Confession of Faith, after giving an account of effectual calling, which plainly implies that the grace of God in conversion is an exercise of omnipotence, and cannot be successfully resisted, adds, "Yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace." That special operation of the Spirit, which cannot be overcome or frustrated, is just the renovation of the will itself, by which a power of willing what is spiritually good— a power which it has not of itself in its natural condition, and which it could not receive from any source but a divine and almighty agency— is communicated to it. In the exercise of this new power, men are able to co-operate with the Spirit of God, guiding and directing them; and they do this, and do it, not by constraint, but willingly, —being led, under the influence of the news concerning Christ, and the way of salvation which He has opened up to and impressed upon them, and the motives which these views suggest, to embrace Christ, and to choose that better part which shall never be taken away from them. In the commencement of the process, they are not actors at all; they are wholly passive, —the subjects of a divine operation. And from the time when they begin to act in the matter, or really to do anything, they act freely and voluntarily, guided by rational motives, derived from the truths which their eyes have been opened to see, and which, humanly speaking,

might have sooner led them to turn to God, had not the moral impotency of their wills to anything spiritually good prevented this result. There is certainly nothing in all this to warrant the representation, that, upon Calvinistic principles, men are forced to repent and believe against their wills, or whether they will or not.

Neither is there anything in this view of the subject that can be shown to be inconsistent with any truth concerning the will of man, or the properties attaching to it, established, either by an examination of man's mental constitution, or by the word of God. It is plainly inconsistent, both with reason and with revelation, to suppose that God has created anything which he cannot regulate and direct, absolutely and infallibly, and which he cannot regulate and direct without treating it inconsistently with its proper nature, —the nature and qualities he has assigned to it. We cannot suppose that God should have bestowed any powers or properties upon any creatures which would place them beyond His entire and absolute control, or would require Him, in any case, in order to effect any of His purposes, with them or by them, to exercise His omnipotence, in a manner that runs counter to the constitution He has assigned to them. He does, indeed, exercise His omnipotence in renewing men's wills, and giving them a capacity for willing what is spiritually good; but, in doing so, He is only restoring them, in so far, to the condition in which He originally created them. And in the mode of doing it, while there is an exercise of omnipotence, effecting a change upon them, there is nothing done that interferes with the constitution of man, as man, or with the nature of will, as will. Our Confession teaches, that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil." But this does not imply that God Himself cannot, if He chooses, certainly and effectually determine it to good, —whatever may be necessary, in existing circumstances, in order to secure this, —without taking away the natural liberty with which He has endued it. This natural liberty does indeed imply a possibility of men yielding to temptation, and falling into sin; but it does not imply that God cannot, by an exercise of His omnipotence, recover men from any of the consequences of the sin into which, from the abuse of their freedom of will, they may have fallen; and do this without taking from them, or obstructing, the exercise of that freedom which He

originally conferred upon them.

In short, the will of man could not originally have possessed, and never could by any process acquire, any capacity or property, in virtue of which it should be placed beyond God's absolute control, or which should prevent Him from regulating and determining, at all times and in all circumstances, the character and actions of His creatures. Nothing is more clearly revealed in Scripture than this, that when God enables men to repent and believe, He puts forth upon them an exercise of almighty power, analogous to that by which He created all things out of nothing, or by which he raises the dead; but there is no ground for asserting that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the nature of this process, He does not treat man, in effecting this change, according to his proper nature as a rational and responsible being. We are very sure that no property does, or can, attach to the will of man, whether fallen or unfallen, that can take it beyond the reach of God's sovereign control, or prevent Him from directing its operations, without interfering, by a mere exercise of omnipotence, with its true nature and essential properties. Of all the capacities or properties that have ever been ascribed to the human will, the one that has most the appearance of being inconsistent with God's supremacy over it, is what is called by the Arminians its self-determining power; and yet I doubt if there are sufficiently clear and certain reasons for denying even this view of the freedom of the will, upon the mere ground that, if the will possess this self-determining power, it would be impossible for God to exercise absolute control over its operations. But if this cannot be clearly and certainly made out, still less can it be proved, on the other hand, that any agency which Calvinists ascribe to God in renewing the will, is inconsistent with a full regard to its true nature and essential properties, —to anything that can be shown to attach to it.

It is, of course, no objection to the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious, insuperable grace in conversion, —though some of the more Pelagian Arminians have sometimes represented it in that light, —that it deprives men of everything like merit or ground of boasting in repenting and believing. If it did not do so, it would not be the doctrine of the sacred Scriptures; and one great objection to the Arminian doctrine, —that men, even when a divine power amply sufficient to produce in them faith and

regeneration, has been put forth, may still overcome and frustrate the exercise of this power, and continue unconverted, —is just this, that this doctrine, with whatever general professions about man's depravity and moral impotency by nature, and about the necessity of the gracious operation of the Spirit in producing conversion, it may be accompanied, practically assigns to men themselves, and not to God, the regulating or determining power in the matter, —the power by which, in each case, it is settled that repentance and conversion shall take place, —that is, that a man shall be put in actual possession of all spiritual blessings, and finally of the kingdom of heaven.

The difficulty is much more serious that is founded upon the case of those who are not converted, though they have the gospel offers and invitations addressed to them; or, when the special distinguishing efficacious grace of God is not put forth, who continue in their sins, and finally perish. The difficulty, of course, is to reconcile their responsibility for their impenitence and unbelief, —their guilt and just liability to punishment on this account, —with the views which have been explained as to the way and manner in which the conversion of those who are converted is effected. This is, virtually, the great difficulty which is commonly urged against the whole Calvinistic scheme of theology; it is usually discussed in connection with the subject of predestination. To the examination of that subject we must now proceed; and under that head we will have to advert to the considerations by which this difficulty has been usually met and disposed of.

VII. The Decrees of God

Having been led to enter upon the consideration of the Arminian controversy by an examination of the extent of the atonement, —because it was most natural and convenient to finish, without turning aside to any other topic, the subject of the atonement, which we had been examining as an important department of the Socinian controversy, —we endeavoured to improve this order in the arrangement of the topics, for the purpose of bringing out more fully the important principle, that right scriptural views of the true nature and immediate bearing and effects of the atonement are sufficient to settle the question of its extent; and of showing also that the doctrine of a limited destination of the atonement— which is commonly reckoned the weakest part of the Calvinistic system— is quite able to stand upon its own distinct and appropriate evidence, without being dependent, for the proof of its truth, merely upon the connection subsisting between it and the other doctrines of the system. Having, in this way, been led to advert to the connection subsisting between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption, —to the connection subsisting between the sufferings and death of Christ, and not merely reconciliation, pardon, and acceptance (the blessings which involve or imply a change in men's state in relation to God and His law), but also those blessings which involve or imply a change in their character, and prepare them for the enjoyment of God, — we have further thought it best, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to finish the subject of the application of the blessings of redemption, or the investigation of what it is that God does in bestowing upon men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them. Accordingly, we have explained the doctrine of our standards in regard to the work of the Spirit in effectual calling, —the doctrine of special, distinguishing, efficacious, insuperable grace in the production of faith, and regeneration, wherever they are produced, —as opposed to the Arminian doctrine of universal vocation, accompanied by the bestowal upon all of grace sufficient to produce faith and regeneration. The connection of the topics, as forming part of the development of a great scheme for securing the salvation of sinners, has thus been preserved;

and some other collateral advantages, arising from the order we have been led to adopt, may appear in the course of the investigation of the subject of predestination, which $\Lambda\nu\beta$ have hitherto reserved, but on which we must now enter.

We have now to consider the important and difficult topic of predestination, which formed the subject of the first of the five points in the original discussions between Calvinists and Arminians, about the time of the Synod of Dort, and in connection with which are usually considered most of those general topics that bear upon all the leading doctrines in regard to which the Calvinistic and Arminian systems of theology differ from each other. The consideration of this great doctrine runs up into the most profound and inaccessible subjects that can occupy the minds of men, —the nature and attributes, the purposes and the actings, of the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah, —viewed especially in their bearing upon the everlasting destinies of His intelligent creatures. The peculiar nature of the subject certainly demands, in right reason, that it should ever be approached and considered with the profoundest humility, caution, and reverence, as it brings us into contact, on the one side, with a subject so inaccessible to our full comprehension as the eternal purposes of the divine mind; and, on the other, with a subject so awful and overwhelming as the everlasting misery of an innumerable multitude of our fellow-men. Many men have discussed the subject in this spirit, but many also have indulged in much presumptuous and irreverent speculation regarding it. There is probably no subject that has occupied more of the attention of intelligent men in every age. It has been most fully discussed in all its bearings, philosophical, theological, and practical; and if there be any subject of speculation with respect to which we are warranted in saying that it has been exhausted, it is this.

Some, at least, of the topics comprehended under this general head have been discussed by almost every philosopher of eminence in ancient as well as in modern times; and it is to this day a standing topic of reproach against Calvinists, that they teach the same doctrines as the ancient Stoics about fate and necessity. The subject was largely discussed in the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in connection with the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies. It exercised most fully the subtilty of

the schoolmen, many of whom held sounder views upon this subject than might have been expected from the general character and tendency, in other respects, of the theology that then generally prevailed, —a fact which, it appears to me, may be fairly regarded as affording a presumption that Calvinistic doctrines upon this subject are the only ones that can really stand a thorough investigation, even upon philosophical grounds, or as mere subjects of intellectual speculation.

The subject was not much discussed at the era of the Reformation, for the Reformers were of one mind concerning it; and the Romanists did not then openly and formally deny the doctrine which the Reformers taught upon this point, —though they laboured to excite a prejudice against the Reformed doctrine, as making God the author of sin. Protestants, however, soon differed upon this and cognate questions; and it has ever since formed a prominent feature in a large proportion of theological discussions. All that the highest human ability, ingenuity, and acuteness can effect, has been brought to bear upon the discussion of this subject; but the difficulties attaching to it have never been fully solved, and we are well warranted in saying that they never will, unless God give us either a fuller revelation or greatly enlarged capacities, —although, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, that, from the very nature of the case, a finite being never can fully comprehend it, since this would imply that he could fully comprehend the infinite mind.

It is "not practicable, and it would not be at all profitable, to enter at any length into the intricacies of this subject, —into the innumerable speculations which have been put forth concerning it. Here, as in regard to most subjects, the topics which it is most important for us clearly to apprehend and to remember, are just the plainest, the most obvious and palpable, views of the question; and to these, therefore, we will confine our attention.

The subject may be said, in general, to embrace the investigation of the plan which God has formed for administering the government of the world, and especially of His rational creatures, and more particularly for regulating the actions and determining the everlasting destinies of man. The materials to be employed in the investigation are, generally, the knowledge we may possess concerning Gods attributes, character, and

ways, —especially any knowledge which He may have Himself directly communicated to us upon these subjects; and the survey of what He actually has done and is doing in the government of the world, —viewed in the light of His word, or in connection with any information He may have given us, as to the principle that regulates His procedure. The subject embraces the investigation of such questions as these: Has God formed a plan for governing the world, —for regulating or controlling the actions, and determining the fate, of His rational creatures? If so, when was the plan formed, what are the principles on which it was formed, and the qualities that attach to it? What provision has He made for carrying it into execution, and what are the principles that regulate the execution of it, and determine its results? Thus wide and various, thus profound and incomprehensible, are the topics involved in the investigation of this subject; and the slightest reference to their general nature and import should impress upon us the necessity of proceeding in the investigation with the profoundest reverence and caution, —of abandoning all confidence in our own discoveries and speculations, —and of submitting our understandings implicitly to anything which God may have revealed to us concerning it.

Let us, first, advert to the meaning and ordinary application of some of the principal terms usually employed in connection with this subject, and then to the settlement of the state of the question as a topic of controversial discussion. The principal terms employed in describing and discussing this subject are these, —the decrees of God, predestination, election, and reprobation. “The decrees of God” is the widest and most comprehensive of these terms, and describes generally the purposes or resolutions which God has formed, and in accordance with which He regulates His own procedure, or orders whatever comes to pass in the government of the world. That God has, and must have, formed decrees— that is, purposes or resolutions— for the regulation of His own procedure, must be admitted by all who regard Him as possessed of intelligence and wisdom; and the disputes which have been raised upon this subject, respect not the existence of the divine decrees, but the foundation on which they rest, —the properties which attach to them, —and the objects which they embrace.

Predestination, or fore-ordination, is sometimes used in so wide a sense, as to comprehend the whole decrees or purposes of God, —the whole plan which He has formed, —including all the resolutions He has adopted for the regulation of the government of the world; and sometimes it is used in a more limited sense, as including only His decrees or purposes with respect to the ultimate destinies of men, as distinguished from the other departments of His government. It is sometimes used in a still more limited sense, as synonymous with election, or that department of God’s decrees or purposes which respects the salvation of those men who are saved, without including reprobation. Election, of course, describes God’s decree or purpose to choose some men out of the human race to be saved, and at length to save them; while reprobation is generally used by theologians to describe the decrees or purposes of God, whatever these may be, in regard to those of the human race who ultimately perish.

Little more can be said in the explanation of these terms, without entering into topics which belong rather to the state of the question; but, before proceeding to this, we may make a remark or two in illustration of the phraseology employed upon this subject in the standards of our church. The general title of the chapter in the Confession where this subject is stated, —the third, —is “Of God’s Eternal Decree and under this head is embodied a statement of the leading truths taught in Scripture concerning the whole plan and purposes formed by God from eternity, and executed in time, in governing the world, and in determining the everlasting destiny of all His creatures. God’s decree, made from eternity, is represented as comprehending everything that takes place in time, so that He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass. In proceeding to state the substance of what is taught in Scripture as to God’s decree or eternal purpose, with respect to the destiny of His intelligent creatures, the Confession represents men and angels as equally included in the decree; while it uses a different phraseology in describing the bearing of the decree upon those of them whose ultimate destiny is life or happiness, from what is employed in regard to those of them whose ultimate destiny is death or misery. The result, in both cases, takes place, with respect to angels and to men, by virtue of God’s decree; but one class, —the saved, —both angels and men, are said to be “predestinated” by the decree to life, while the other class are said to be “fore-ordained” by the decree to

death. The statement is this: “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory” (the whole sentence being under the regimen of this important clause), “some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death and that the substitution of the word “fore-ordained” for “predestinated” was intentional, and designed to mark a distinction in the two cases, is evident from the words which immediately follow in the fourth section, where, resuming the whole subject, without reference to the different results of life and death, but stating a point common to both, it introduces both words, in order to include both classes, in this way: “These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed.” It can scarcely be said that, either etymologically or according to the general usage of theologians, there is any difference of meaning between the words “predestinated” and “fore-ordained;” but Calvinists, in general, have held that there is an important difference between the way and manner in which the decree of election bears or operates upon the condition and fate of those who are saved, and that in which the decree of reprobation, as it is often called, bears or operates upon the condition of those who perish; and the existence of this difference, though without any exact specification of its nature, the compilers of our Confession seem to have intended to indicate, by restricting the word “predestinate” to the elect, the saved; and using the word “fore-ordained” in regard to the rest. The Confession does not make use of the word “reprobation,” which is commonly employed by theologians upon this subject; and the reason of this undoubtedly was, that it is an expression very liable to be misunderstood and perverted, and thus to excite a prejudice against the truth which Calvinistic theologians intend to convey by it. The Confession further says, that “those men who are predestinated unto life, God . . . hath from eternity also chosen or elected in Christ unto everlasting glory;” that “God hath appointed the elect unto glory,” and has also, “by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto;”— so that they certainly and infallibly attain to eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which God has devised for the salvation of sinners. Though the Confession does not use the word “reprobation,” and does not apply the word “predestinate” to those who perish, it teaches explicitly, that, by the decree of God, some men are fore-ordained to

everlasting death; and the further explanation given of this subject is, that “the rest of mankind,” — that is, all those not predestinated unto everlasting life, not chosen or elected in Christ, — “God was pleased ... to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice,” — these expressions being descriptive of two distinct acts, which Calvinistic theologians usually regard as included in what is commonly called the decree of reprobation, —namely, first, *privteritio*, or passing by, which is an act of sovereignty; and, secondly, *proedamnatio*, which is a judicial act, described in the Confession as “ordaining them to dishonour and wrath for their sin.”

The views generally entertained by Calvinists upon this subject have been, in some measure, indicated by the explanations we have given of the statements of the Confession. But it will be proper to explain them somewhat more fully, and to compare our doctrine with that of the Arminians, that we may bring out exactly the state of the question. The whole controversy may be said to be involved in the settlement of the question as to the nature and properties of the divine decrees.

The doctrine generally held by Calvinists upon this subject is, —as the Confession says, —that God, from all eternity, did freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass, —that is, that He has eternally formed, and does in time execute, a plan for the government of the world, including in it all actions and events; so that every event that takes place comes to pass, as God had from all eternity purposed and arranged that it should come to pass, and because He had so purposed and arranged. If this doctrine about the divine decrees, in general, be well founded, it determines the whole question about election and reprobation, which are included under the decrees. If the ordinary actions of men are fore-ordained by God, of course their ultimate fate or destiny must also, in every instance, have been determined. The Arminians generally hold, that God only foresees all the events and actions that take place, but deny that He fore-ordained them. They admit that He exerted some land or degree of efficiency in actually bringing them about; but deny that, in doing so, He was carrying into effect, in each case, a purpose which He had formed from eternity, and which He had resolved to execute; or that it was His agency that exerted any

determining influence in causing them to come to pass. On this subject, the controversy, as usually conducted, is made to turn principally upon what are called the properties or qualities of the divine decrees; for, that God, in some sense, did make decrees, or form purposes, in regard to the way in which He would govern the world, is not disputed, except by Socinians, who deny that He could even foresee future contingent events, which were, in any sense, dependent upon the volitions of responsible beings. And the chief questions usually discussed with reference to the general properties of the divine decrees are these two: —First, Are they conditional or not? Secondly, Are they unchangeable or not?

It seems pretty plain, that if they are conditional and changeable, as the Arminians hold, they cannot, in any proper sense, be the decrees or purposes of a Being of infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom; in other words, the Arminian doctrine amounts to a virtual denial of the existence of divine decrees, in any proper sense of the word. If God has formed plans and purposes with regard to the actual administration of the whole government of the world, and the regulation of man's actions and fate, — and if these plans or purposes were not conditional and changeable, — that is, if they were not left dependent for their execution upon what creatures might do, independently of God, and liable to be changed or altered, according to the manner in which these creatures might choose to act, —and all this seems to be necessarily involved in all that we know concerning the divine perfections, both from reason and Scripture, —then the substance of all this truth is just expressed in the doctrine taught in our Confession, that “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”

The foundations of this great doctrine are these: —that unless God left the world, and all the creatures whom He had formed, to rule and govern themselves, altogether independently of Him, He must, from eternity, have formed plans and purposes for regulating its affairs, —for determining and controlling their actions, —that these plans and purposes could not be conditional and changeable, —that is, left to be dependent upon the volitions of creatures, and liable to be changed, according to the nature and results of these volitions, —but must have

been formed in the exercise of His infinite knowledge, and all His other infinite perfections, and must therefore certainly and infallibly be in time carried into full effect. These are the topics usually discussed under the head “De Decretis Dei,” taken in its widest sense; and it is manifest, as we formerly remarked, that if the Calvinistic doctrine upon this great general question be established, this settles all the questions bearing upon the subjects of election and reprobation, or the purposes and actings of God with respect to the character and fate of men individually. If God has unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and if, in point of fact, some men are saved and the rest perish, then it must be true that He has predestinated some men to everlasting life, and has fore-ordained others to everlasting death.

It is, however, upon the field of this latter and more limited question that the controversy has been chiefly conducted; and there is no doubt that there are more full and abundant materials furnished to us in Scripture upon this more limited topic, than upon the wider and more comprehensive one of the divine decrees in general, in their bearing upon whatsoever comes to pass. We have seen, in the Confession, what is the doctrine held by Calvinists upon this subject. It is in substance this, —that from all eternity God chose or elected some men— certain definite persons of the human race— to everlasting life; that He decreed or determined, certainly and infallibly, and not conditionally and mutably, to bring those persons to salvation by a Redeemer; that in making this selection of some men, and in decreeing to save them, He was not influenced or determined by anything existing in them, or foreseen in them, —such as faith or good works, —by which they were distinguished from other men, or by anything out of Himself, by any reason known to us, or comprehensible by us; and that this eternal purpose or decree He certainly and infallibly executes, in regard to each and every one included under it; while all the rest of men not thus elected He decreed to pass by, —to leave in their natural state of sin and misery, and finally to punish eternally for their sin.

The Arminians, on the contrary, hold that God made no decree, —formed no purpose, —bearing immediately upon the salvation of men, except this general one, that he would save and admit to heaven all who should, in

fact, repent and believe, and that He would condemn and consign to punishment all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving. God having formed this general purpose, and announced it to men, and having sent His Son into the world to remove the obstacles that stood in the way of their salvation, virtually left it to men themselves to comply or not with the terms or conditions He had prescribed, having no purpose to exercise, and, of course, not in fact exercising, any determining influence upon the result in any case.

Some Arminians profess to believe, that God has made, from eternity, fixed and unchangeable decrees, with respect to the eternal condition of men individually. But those of them who, in accommodation to the language of Scripture, choose to adopt this mode of expressing their statements, do not, in reality, hold anything different from the rest; for they make the sole ground or foundation of these decrees or purposes, in regard to the salvation of individuals, God's foreknowledge of the faith and repentance of some, and of the unbelief and impenitence of others. All that is implied in the election of a particular individual to life is, that God foresees that that individual will repent and believe; and that, on this ground, this being the cause or condition moving Him thereto, God decrees or purposes to admit him to heaven, and to give him everlasting life, —the result being thus determined by the man himself; and God's decree, with respect to his salvation, being nothing more than a recognition of him as one who would, without God's efficacious determining interposition, comply with the conditions announced to him. This being all that any Arminians do, or can, admit, as to the bearing or import of any decree or purpose of God, upon the salvation of men individually, those Arminians act much the more manly and consistent part, who deny altogether any decree or purpose of God, with respect to the salvation of men individually.

The fundamental position of the Arminians, at the time of the Synod of Dort, was, that the only and whole decree of election consisted in this, that God had formed a general purpose or determination, that all who should repent and believe would be saved, and that all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving would be condemned, without any reference whatever to individuals, except the bare foresight or

foreknowledge of what would be, in fact, the result in the case of each person. A decree or purpose, based or founded solely upon the foreknowledge or foresight of the faith and obedience of individuals, is, of course, the same thing as the entire want or non-existence of any purpose or decree in regard to them. It determines nothing concerning them, — bestows nothing upon them, — secures nothing to them. It is a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in obscurity and confusion: whereas, upon Calvinistic principles, God's electing decree, in choosing some men to life, is the effectual source, or determining cause, of the faith and holiness which are ultimately wrought in them, and of the eternal happiness to which they at last attain. God elects certain men to life, not because He foresees that they will repent, and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness, but for reasons no doubt fully accordant with His wisdom and justice, though wholly unknown to us, and certainly not based upon anything foreseen in them, as distinguished from other men; and then further decrees to give to those men, in due time, everything necessary, in order to their being admitted to the enjoyment of eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which His wisdom has devised for saving sinners.

The Arminians do not well know how to explain the source of the faith and holiness by which some men come to be distinguished, and to be prepared for heaven. They do not venture, as the Socinians do, to exclude God's agency wholly from the production of them; and they can scarcely deny, that whatever God does in the production of them, He decreed or resolved to do, and decreed and resolved to do it from eternity; and on this account, as well as for other reasons, they are much fonder of dwelling upon reprobation than election; because they think that, in regard to the former subject, they can make out a more plausible case than with respect to the latter, if not in defending their own views, at least in assailing those of the Calvinists. The Arminians at the Synod of Dort wished to begin, under the first article, with discussing the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as injustice, when the Synod refused to concede this demand. The demand was obviously unreasonable; it did not, and could not, spring from an honest love of truth, and it was not fitted to promote the cause of truth; and yet this has been substantially, though not in form, the course generally adopted by Arminians, in stating

and discussing this subject. They usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against the doctrine of reprobation, or God's decree or purpose with relation to those who ultimately perish, often by distorting and misrepresenting the views held by Calvinists upon this subject; and then, after having produced all they can allege against this doctrine, they argue that, as there is no such thing as reprobation, so neither can there be any such thing as election.

Calvinists, on the contrary, usually produce first the evidence for the doctrine of election, and then show, that this doctrine being once established, all that they hold on the subject of reprobation follows as a matter of course. They do not, indeed, regard the doctrine of reprobation as wholly dependent for its evidence upon the doctrine of election; for they believe that the doctrine of reprobation has its own distinct scriptural proof; but they think that the proof of the doctrine of election is quite sufficient to establish all they hold on the subject of reprobation, and that there are much fuller materials in Scripture bearing upon the former subject than upon the latter. It is this last consideration that establishes the utter unfairness of the course usually pursued by the Arminians, in giving priority and superior prominence to the discussion of the doctrine of reprobation. As the Scriptures give us much more information as to what God does in producing faith and regeneration in those who believe and are converted, than as to His mode of procedure in regard to those who are left in impenitence and unbelief, so it tells us much more, with respect to His decrees and purposes with regard to those who are saved, than with regard to those who perish; and if so, we ought, in our investigations into the subject, to begin with the former, and not with the latter, and to endeavour to form our opinion of what is less clearly revealed in Scripture by what is more plainly declared. Calvinists do not shrink from discussing the subject of reprobation, though, from its awful character, they have no satisfaction in dwelling upon it, and feel deeply the propriety of being peculiarly careful here not to attempt to be wise above what is written. They do not hesitate to admit that it is necessarily involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of election; and they think they can fully prove and defend all that they really hold regarding it. What they hold upon this subject is this, —that God decreed, or purposed, to do from eternity what He actually does in

time, in regard to those who perish, as well as in regard to those who are saved; and this is, in substance, to withhold from them, or to abstain from communicating to them, those gracious and insuperable influences of His Spirit, by which alone faith and regeneration can be produced, —to leave them in their natural state of sin, and then to inflict upon them the punishment which, by their sin, they have deserved.

Some Calvinists have been disposed to go to the other extreme from that which we have just exposed on the part of the Arminians. The Arminian extreme is to press reprobation, as a topic of discussion, into Undue and unfair prominence; the other is, to throw it too much out of sight. Those to whom we now refer, are disposed to assert God's eternal, unconditional, and unchangeable decree or purpose, electing some men to everlasting life, and effecting and ensuring their salvation; but to omit all mention of His decrees or purposes in regard to those who ultimately perish. This is the course adopted in the seventeenth article of the Church of England, where the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to life is set forth so plainly, that it is strange that men could have persuaded themselves that the article fairly admits of an Arminian sense, but where nothing is said of what theologians have been accustomed to discuss under the head of reprobation. Whatever respect may be entertained for the motives in which such an omission originates, or for the general character of some of the men who are influenced by them, the omission itself is unwarranted. Every one who adopts the Calvinistic interpretation of those passages of Scripture on which the doctrine of election to life is founded, must admit that there are indications in Scripture— though certainly neither so full nor so numerous— of God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, as well as with respect to those who are saved. And unless men deliberately refuse to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, they cannot dispute that the election of some men necessarily implies a corresponding preterition, or passing by, of the rest. And though there is certainly no subject where the obligation to keep it within the limits of what is revealed is more imperative, and none I think that ought to be stated and discussed under a deeper feeling of reverence and holy awe, yet there is no reason why, upon this, any more than other subjects, we should not ascertain and bring out all that "is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary

consequence may be deduced from Scripture.”

In stating and discussing the question with respect to reprobation, Calvinists are careful to distinguish between the two different acts formerly referred to, decreed or resolved upon by God from eternity, and executed by Him in time, —the one negative and the other positive, —the one sovereign and the other judicial. The first, which they call non-election, preterition, or passing by, is simply decreeing to leave, —and, in consequence, leaving— men in their natural state of sin, —to withhold from 'them, or to abstain from conferring upon them, those special, supernatural, gracious influences, which are necessary to enable them to repent and believe; so that the result is, that they continue in their sin, with the guilt of their transgression upon their head. The second— the positive judicial act, —is more properly that which is called, in our Confession, “fore-ordaining to everlasting death,” and “ordaining those who have been passed by to dishonour and wrath for their sin.” God ordains' none to wrath or punishment, except on account of their sin, and makes no decree to subject them to punishment which is not founded on, and has reference to, their sin, as a thing certain and contemplated. But the first, or negative, act of preterition, or passing by, is not founded upon their sin, all perseverance in it as foreseen. Were sin foreseen the proper ground or cause of the act of preterition or passing by, preterition must have been the fate equally of all men, for all have sinned, and, of course, were foreseen as sinners. It is not alleged that those who are not elected, or who are passed by, have been always greater sinners than those who have been chosen and brought to eternal life. And with respect to the idea, that final impenitence or unbelief foreseen might be the ground or cause of the first act of preterition, as distinguished from fore-ordination to wrath because of sin, this Calvinists regard as plainly inconsistent with the scriptural statements, which ascribe the production of faith and regeneration, and perseverance in faith and holiness, solely to the good pleasure of God and the efficacious operation of His Spirit, and with the intimations which Scripture also gives, that there is something about God's decrees and purposes, even in regard to those who perish, which can be resolved only into His own good pleasure, —into the most wise and holy counsel of His will.

XIII. Predestination—State of the Question.

From the account which we have given of the state of the question, in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, upon the subject of the divine decrees, it must be evident that there are just two theories which can be maintained upon this matter; and that all men who are able to understand the question, and who have formed any fixed opinion regarding it, must be either Calvinists or Arminians; while it is also manifest that Calvinists cannot, on any point of very material importance, differ among themselves. It is, I think, of great importance, in order to our having clear and definite conceptions upon this subject, and in order to our being prepared to thread our way, most safely and successfully, through the intricacies of this controversy, that we should see clearly that there are just two alternatives, and no medium between them, and that we should firmly and distinctly apprehend what these two alternatives are.

It will be seen, from what has been said, that the course which fairness, and an impartial love of truth, obviously dictate in the investigation of this subject, is to seek to ascertain, in the first place, what we should believe as to what God has decreed from eternity, and does or effects in time, with respect to the salvation of those who are saved; and then consider what information we have as to His purposes and actings with respect to the ultimate destiny of those who perish. As much fuller information is given us, in Scripture, in regard to the former than the latter of these subjects, the course which right reason dictates is,—that we should first investigate the subject of election, and then consider whether there be anything revealed or established, in regard to reprobation, or God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, which should confirm, or overthrow, or modify the opinions we have formed on the subject of election,—that, in short, in the primary and fundamental investigation of the subject, we should have in view only the case of those who are saved,—the sources or causes to which this result is to be traced,—the principles by which it is to be explained,—the provision made for effecting it,—and the way in which this provision is brought into operation.

The substance of the Calvinistic doctrine is:—that God, from eternity, chose, or elected, certain men to everlasting life; and resolved, certainly and infallibly, to effect the salvation of these men, in accordance with the provisions of a great scheme which had devised for this purpose,—a scheme without which no sinners could have been saved; and that, in making this selection of these individuals, who were to be certainly saved. He was not influenced or determined by the foresight or foreknowledge, that they, as distinguished from others, would repent and believe, and would persevere to the end in faith and holiness; but that, on the contrary, their faith and conversion, their holiness and perseverance, are to be traced to His election of them, and to the effectual provision He has made for executing His electing purpose or decree, as their true and only source,—they being chosen absolutely and unconditionally to salvation; and chosen also to faith, regeneration, and perseverance, as the necessary means, and in some sense, conditions, of salvation. Now, if this doctrine be denied, it is plain enough that the view which must be taken of the various points involved in the statement of it, is in substance this:—that God does not make from eternity any selection of some men from among the human race, whom He resolves and determines to save; that of course He never puts in operation any means that are fitted, and intended, to secure the salvation of those who are saved, as distinguished from others; and that, consequently, their faith and regeneration, with which salvation is inseparably connected, are not the gifts of God, effected by His agency, but are wrought by themselves, in the exercise of their own powers and capacities. On this theory, it is impossible that God could have decreed or purposed the conversion and salvation of those who are saved, any more than of those who perish. And the only way in which their salvation, individually, could have come under God's cognizance, is that merely of its being foreseen as a fact future,—which would certainly take place—though He neither decreed nor caused it,—their own acts in repenting and believing, and persevering in faith and obedience, simply foreseen as future, being the cause, or ground, or determining principle of any acts which God either did or could pass in regard to them, individually, as distinguished from the rest of their fellow men. This brings out the true, real, and only possible alternative in the case; and it is just in substance this: whether God is the the author and cause of the salvation of those who are saved? or whether this result is to be ascribed, in each case, to

men themselves? Calvinistic and Arminian writers have displayed considerable variety in their mode of stating and discussing this subject; and Calvinists, as well as Arminians, have sometimes imagined that they had fallen upon ideas and modes of statement and representation, which threw some new light upon it,—which tended to establish more firmly their own doctrine, or to expose more successfully that of their opponents. But the practical result of all these ingenious speculations has always, upon a full examination of the subject, turned out to be, that the state of the question was found to be the same as before,—the real alternative unchanged,—the substantial materials of proof and argument unaltered; and the difficulties attaching to the opposite doctrines as strong and perplexing as ever, amid all the ingenious attempts made to modify their aspect, or to shift their position.

The practical lesson to be derived from these considerations—considerations that must have suggested themselves to every one who has carefully surveyed this controversy—is, that the great object we ought to aim at, in directing our attention to the study of it, is this: to form a clear and distinct apprehension of the real nature of the leading point in dispute,—of the true import and bearing of the only alternatives that can be maintained with regard to it; to familiarize our minds with definite conceptions of the meaning and evidence of the principal arguments by which the truth upon the subject may be established, and of the leading principles applicable to the difficulties with which the doctrine we have embraced as true may be assailed; and then to seek to make a right and judicious application of it, according to its true nature, tendency, and bearing, without allowing ourselves to be dragged into endless and unprofitable speculations, in regard to its deeper mysteries or more intricate perplexities, or to be harassed by perpetual doubt and difficulty.

The same cause which has produced the result of there being really just two opposite alternatives on this important subject, and of the consequent necessity of all men who study it, taking either the Calvinistic or the Arminian side in the controversy, has also produced the result, that Calvinists and Arminians have not offered very materially among themselves, respectively, as to the substance of what they held and taught upon the subject. I have referred to the many attempts that have been

made to devise new solutions of the difficulties attaching to the opposite theories; but these have not, in general, affected the mode of stating and expounding the theories themselves. The same ingenuity has been often exerted in trying to devise new arguments, or to put the said arguments in a new and more satisfactory light; but, so far from affecting the state of the question, these attempts have scarcely ever produced any substantial variety, even in the arguments themselves.

The Socinians generally, upon this subject, agree with the Arminians,—that is, they agree with them in rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. While, however, these two parties agree with each other in what they hold and teach upon the subject, there is one important point, in the mode in which they conduct the argument against Calvinism, where there is a difference, which it may be worth while to notice. The Socinians as we formerly had occasion to explain, deny that God does or can foresee, certainly and infallibly, future contingent events,—such as the future actions of men, dependent upon their volitions and I formerly had occasion to mention the curious and interesting fact, that some of them have been bold enough and honest enough to acknowledge that the reason which induced them to deny God's certain foreknowledge of the future actions of men was, that if this were admitted, it was impossible to disprove, or to refuse to concede, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The Arminians have not, in general, denied God's certain foreknowledge of all future events, though some of them have made it very manifest—as I may perhaps afterwards show—that they would very willingly deny it if they could; but, not denying it, they have, in consequence, been obliged to try to show, though, without success, that this admission is not fatal, as Socinians acknowledge it to be, to anti-Calvinistic views upon the subject of predestination; while the Socinians, with greater boldness and consistency, cut the knot which they felt themselves unable to untie. These differences, however, do not affect the substance of what is maintained on either side of the question; and accordingly we concede to the anti-Calvinists, that they are all, in the main of one mind as to the substance of what they teach upon the subject of predestination, though they differ considerably as to the arguments by which their doctrine should be defended. Indeed, we reckon it a point of some importance, to make it palpable that there is really but one

alternative to Calvinism,—one doctrine that can be held upon this subject, if that of the Calvinists be denied. But they scarcely make the same concession to us; at least they usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against Calvinism, by dwelling much upon, and exaggerating, a difference connected with this matter, that has been discussed, and occasionally with some keenness, among Calvinists themselves. I allude to the dispute between the Supralapsarians and the Sublapsarians.

There have been two or three eminent Calvinists, especially among the supralapsarians, who have contended with considerable earnestness upon this subject, as if it were a vital point,—particularly Gomarus, the colleague and opponent of Arminius; and Twisse, the prolocutor or president of the Westminster Assembly; but Calvinists, in general, have not reckoned it a controversy of much importance. Indeed, it will be found that the subject is much more frequently spoken of by Arminians than by Calvinists, just because, as I have said, they usually endeavour to improve it, as a means of exciting a prejudice against Calvinism,—first, by representing it as an important difference subsisting among Calvinists, on which they are not able to come to an agreement; and, secondly, and more particularly, by giving prominence to the supralapsarian view, as if it were the truest and most consistent Calvinism,—this being the doctrine which is the more likely of the two to come into collision with men's natural feelings and impressions. I do not think it necessary to enter into any exposition or discussion of these topics, because, in truth, to give it much prominence, or to treat it as a matter of much importance, is just to give some countenance to what is merely a controversial artifice of our opponents. The state of the question upon this point is very clearly explained, and the sublapsarian view very ably defended, by Turretine, under the head "De Praedestinationis objecto."²⁹ I will merely make a single remark, to explain what will be found in the writings of theologians upon the point. The question is usually put in this form: Whether the object or the subject—for, in this case, these two words are synonymous—of the decree of predestination, electing some and passing by others, be man unfallen, or man fallen,—that is, whether God, in the act of electing some to life, and passing by others, contemplated men, or had them present to His mind, simply as rational and responsible beings, whom He was to create, or regarded them as fallen into a state of sin and misery,

from which state He decreed to save some of them, and to abstain from saving the rest. Those who hold the former view are supralapsarians; and those who hold the latter are sublapsarians.

The difference between Calvinists upon this subject is not in itself of any material importance; and almost all judicious Calvinists in modern times have thought it unnecessary, if not unwarrantable, to give any formal or explicit deliverance upon it while they have usually adhered to the ordinary representation of Scripture upon the subject, which are practically sublapsarian. This is substantially the course adopted both in the canons of the Synod of Dort and in our own Confession; though there is perhaps, less in our Confession that would be distasteful to a rigid supralapsarian, than in the canons of the Synod of Dort. Sublapsarians all admit that God unchangeably fore-ordained that fall of Adam, as well as everything else that comes to pass; while—in the words of our Confession—they deny that this principle can be proved to involve the conclusion, that "God is the author of sin; that violence is offered to the will of the creatures; or that the liberty or contingency of second causes is taken away." And supralapsarians all admit that God's eternal purposes were formed upon a full and certain knowledge of all things possible as well as actual,—that is, certainly future,—and in the exercise of all His perfections of wisdom and justice, and, more especially, that a respect to sin does come into consideration in predestination, or, as Turretine expresses it, settling the true state of the question upon this point, "in Praedestinatione rationem peccati in considerationem" venire . . . "ut nemo damnetur nisi propter peccatum; et nemo salvetur, nisi qui miser fuerit et perditus."³⁰

The fall of the human race into a state of sin and misery in Adam, is the basis and foundation of the scheme of truth revealed in the sacred Scripture,—it is the basis and foundation of the Calvinistic system of theology; and in the truths plainly revealed in Scripture as to the principles that determine and regulate the provision by which some men are saved from this their natural state of sin and misery, and the rest are left to perish in it, there are, without entering into unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, ample materials for enabling us to decide conclusively in favour of Calvinism, and against Arminianism, on all the

points that are really involved in the controversy between them.³¹

If we are correct in this account of the state of the question concerning predestination as controverted between Calvinists and Arminians, it is evident that the real points in dispute are these: Did God from eternity, in contemplating and arranging about the everlasting condition of mankind, choose some men out of the human race—that is, certain persons, individually and specifically—to be, certainly and infallibly, partakers of eternal life? or did He merely choose certain qualities or properties,—faith, repentance, holiness, and perseverance,—with a purpose of admitting to heaven all those men, whoever they might be, that should possess or exhibit these qualities, and to consign to punishment all those who, after being favoured with suitable opportunities, should fail to exhibit them? This question really, and in substance, exhausts the controversy; and the second of these positions must be maintained by all anti-Calvinists. But as the Arminian differs from the Socinian section of the anti-Calvinists, in admitting God's foreknowledge of all events,—and, of course, in admitting that God foresaw from eternity, and consequently had present to His mind, though He did not fore-ordain, what would, in fact, be the ultimate fate of each individual,—the controversy, as managed with Arminian opponents, has more commonly assumed this form: Was God's election of some men to everlasting life based or founded only on His mere free grace and love, or upon their faith, holiness, and perseverance, foreseen as future? This is the form in which the controversy is usually discussed with Arminians who admit God's foreknowledge of all events; but the question in this form does not at all differ in substance from the preceding, in which it applies equally to all anti-Calvinists, whether they admit or deny foreknowledge. Of course an election founded upon a foresight of the faith, holiness, and perseverance of particular persons is not an election at all, but a mere recognition of the future existence of certain qualities found in certain men, though God has neither produced, nor decreed to produce, them. Accordingly, Arminians are accustomed to identify the election of a particular individual with his faith or believing in Christ, as if there was no antecedent act of God bearing upon him—his character and condition—until he believed; while others of them reacting upon the same general idea, but following it out more consistently by taking into account their

own doctrine, that faith is not necessarily connected with salvation, since believers may fall away and finally perish—identify the time of God's decree of election with the death of believers, as if then only their salvation became by the event certain, or certainly known, while till that time nothing had been done to effect or secure it.³² But a more important question is, To what is it that men are chosen? is it merely to what is external and temporary, and not to what is internal and everlasting?

It is common, in discussions upon this subject, to divide it into two leading branches,—the first comprehending the investigation of the object of election, or the discussion of the question whether God, in election, chooses particular men, or merely general qualities; and the second comprehending the investigation of the cause of election, or the discussion of the question whether God, in resolving to save some men, is influenced or determined by a foresight of their faith, holiness, or perseverance or chooses them out of His mere good pleasure,—His free grace and love,—and resolves, in consequence of having chosen them to salvation, to give them faith, holiness, and perseverance. But from the explanations already given, it is manifest that these two questions virtually resolve into one.

It has been common, also, in discussions upon this subject, to give the supposed *ipsissima verba* of God's decree of election upon the two opposite theories; and though this, perhaps, savours of presumption, as putting words into the mouth of God, it is fitted to bring out the difference between them in a clear and impressive light. Upon the Calvinistic theory, the decree of election, or that which God decrees or declares in regard to a particular individual, runs in this way: "I elect Peter,—or any particular individual, definitely and by name,—I elect Peter to everlasting life; and in order that he may obtain everlasting life in the way appointed, I will give him faith and holiness, and secure that he shall persevere in them;" whereas, upon the Arminian theory the decree of election must run in this way: "I elect to everlasting life all those men who shall believe and persevere, I foresee that Peter will believe and persevere, and therefore elect him to everlasting life."

But we have said enough upon the state of the question, and must now

proceed to make a few observations upon the leading grounds on which the Calvinistic doctrine has been established and the objections by which it has been assailed.

IX. Predestination, and the Doctrine of the Fall.

The evidence upon this, as upon most subjects of a similar kind, is usually divided into two branches: first, that derived from particular statements of Scripture which bear, or are alleged to bear, directly and immediately upon the precise point in dispute; and, secondly, that derived from general principles taught in Scripture, or other doctrines revealed there, from which the one or the other theory upon the subject of predestination may be alleged to follow by necessary logical sequence. It holds true, to a large extent, that the interpretation which men put upon particular statements of Scripture is, in point of fact, determined by the general conceptions they may have formed of the leading features of the scheme of divine truth. It is dangerous to indulge the habit of regulating our opinions upon divine truth chiefly in this way, without a careful and exact investigation of the precise meaning of particular statements of Scripture; for we are very apt to be mistaken in the views we form of the logical relations of different doctrines to each other, and to be led, in attempting to settle this, into presumptuous speculations in which we have no solid foundation to rest upon. Still it cannot be disputed that there is a complete and harmonious scheme of doctrine revealed to us in Scripture,—that all its parts must be consistent with each other,—and that it is our duty to trace out this consistency, though we must be careful of making our distinct perception of the consistency of doctrines with each other the sole, or even the principal, test of their truth individually.

We shall first advert to the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from other principles or doctrines which are taught in Scripture, with which it seems to be connected, or from which it may be probably or certainly deduced.

And here we are naturally led to advert, in the first place, to the

connection subsisting between the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal life, and the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam into an estate of sin and misery. With regard to this point, Calvinists generally admit that the fall of mankind, or of the whole human race, in Adam, is an essential part of their scheme of predestination, in this restricted sense; and that, unless this doctrine were true, their views upon the subject of predestination could not well be maintained, and would be destitute of one of the foundations on which they rest. Our doctrine of predestination necessarily implies that men are all by nature, in point of fact, in a condition of guilt and depravity, from which they are unable to rescue themselves, and that God might, without injustice, have left them all in this condition to perish. It is this state of things, as a fact realized in the actual condition of men by nature, that lays a foundation for the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, or God's choosing some out of this condition, of His mere free grace and love, and determining to save them; and it is upon this ground—as evincing that all might justly have been left to perish, and that none had any claim upon God for deliverance and salvation—that we vindicate our doctrine from many of the objections by which it is commonly assailed, as if it represented God as exhibiting respect of persons, in any sense implying injustice, with reference to those whom He decreed to save, or as exhibiting injustice in any sense with reference to those whom He decreed to pass by, and to leave to perish. I do not at present enter into any exposition or defence of the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam,—of the grounds on which the universal guilt and depravity of men, as a matter of fact, is established, or of the light, partial indeed, but still important, which Scripture casts upon this mysterious subject, by making known to us the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. It is enough to remark that Arminians never have disproved the Calvinistic doctrine of the universal guilt and depravity of mankind, and of course have no right to found upon a denial of this great fact an argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Could the universal guilt and depravity of mankind by nature, as a matter of fact, be conclusively disproved, this would no doubt occasion serious difficulty to Calvinists, in establishing and vindicating their doctrine of predestination; but then, on the other hand, the proof of this fact—which can be satisfactorily established both from Scripture and experience—not only leaves the doctrine of

predestination unassailable from that quarter, but affords some positive evidence in support of it; for it is manifest that, if men are all by nature, in point of fact, involved in guilt or depravity,—if they are wholly unable to deliver themselves, and have no claim whatever upon God for deliverance,—then the deliverance and salvation of those of them who are delivered and saved must originate wholly in the good pleasure—in the free grace and love—of God, and must be effected only by His almighty power,—principles which Arminians may profess to hold in words, but which are manifestly inconsistent with the whole substance and spirit of their theology, and which find their full and honest expression only in the doctrines of Calvinism.

Sec. 10. Predestination, and the Omniscience of God.

This naturally leads us to advert to the support which the Calvinistic doctrine derives from the scriptural representations of the divine perfections and sovereignty, as exercised in the government of the world. Calvinists have always contended that their doctrine of predestination is involved in, or clearly deducible from, the views which are presented, both by reason and revelation, concerning what are called the natural attributes of God,—His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom,—and the supreme and sovereign dominion which He exercises, and must exercise, over all His creatures; and it is on this account that some of the fundamental principles bearing upon the subject of predestination are often discussed, in systems of theology, under the head " De Deo," in giving an account of the divine attributes and perfections, and especially in considering the subject of God's will,—that is. His power of volition,—the principles which regulate, and the results which flow from, its exercise. The substance of the argument is this,—that the Arminian system of theology, in several ways, ascribes to God what is inconsistent with His infinite perfections, and represents Him as acting and conducting His government of the world in a manner which cannot be reconciled with the full exercise of the attributes or perfections which He undoubtedly possesses; whereas the Calvinistic doctrine not only leaves full scope for the exercise of all His perfections in the government of the world, so as to be free from all objection on that ground, but may be directly and positively deduced from what we know concerning their

nature and exercise. The two principal topics around which the discussion of the points involved in the investigation of this department has been gathered, are the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty.

God knows all things, possible and actual; and Arminians, as distinguished from Socinians, admit that God's omniscience includes all the actions which men ever perform,—that is, that He from eternity foresaw—and this not merely probably and conjecturally, but certainly and infallibly—every event that has occurred or will occur,—every action which men have performed or will perform; so that from eternity He could have infallibly predicted every one of them, as He has, in fact, predicted many which have occurred just as He had foretold. Now, when we dwell upon this truth,—which Arminians concede,—and realize what is involved or implied in it, we can scarcely fail to see that it suggests considerations which disprove the Arminian, and establish the Calvinistic, doctrine of predestination. God's foreknowledge of all events, implies that they are fixed and certain; that from some cause or other, it has already become a certain thing—a thing determined and unalterable—that they shall take place—a proposition asserting that they shall come to pass being already, even from eternity, a true proposition. This is inconsistent with that contingency which the principles of the Arminians require them to ascribe to the actions of men. And it is to no purpose to allege, as they commonly do, that certainty is not a quality of the events themselves, but only of the mind contemplating them;³³ for, even though this were conceded as a mere question of definition, or of exactness in the use of language, it would still hold true, that the certainty with which the divine mind contemplates them as future, affords good ground for the inference that they; are not contingent or undetermined, so that it is just as possible that they may not take place as that they may; but that their future occurrence is already—that is, from eternity—a fixed and settled thing; and if so, nothing can have fixed or settled this except the good pleasure of God,—the great First Cause,—freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass.³⁴ So much for the bearing of God's certain foreknowledge of all future events upon the character and causes of the events themselves.

But there is another question which has been broached upon this subject,

—namely. How could God foresee all future events except on the ground of his having fore-ordained them, or decreed to bring them to pass? The question may seem a presumptuous one: for it must be admitted that, in order to derive an argument in favour of Calvinism from this consideration, we must assert that it is not possible that God could have certainly foreseen all future events, unless He had fore-ordained them; and it is not commonly warrantable or safe to indulge in dogmatic assertions, as to what was or was not possible to God, unless we have His own explicit declaration to this effect,—as we have in Scripture in some instances,—to authorize the assertion. Still this consideration is not altogether destitute of weight, as an argument in favour of Calvinism. We are fully warranted in saying that we are utterly unable to form any conception of the possibility of God's foreseeing certainly future events, unless He had already—that is, previously in the order of nature, though, of course, not of time—fore-ordained them. And in saying this, we have the support of the Socinian section of our opponents, who have conceded, as I formerly noticed, that if the infallible foreknowledge of all future events be admitted, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination cannot be refuted; and who were accustomed, when pressed with the proof that God had foretold certain particular actions of men, to take refuge in the position, that, if so, He must have fore-ordained these particular actions, and was thus enabled to predict them; while they denied that this holds true of future actions in general. We are not, indeed, entitled to make our inability to conceive how God could have foreseen all events without having fore-ordained them, a proof of the impossibility of His having done so; but still this inability entitled to some weight in the absence of any conclusive evidence on the other side ; and this use, at least, we are fully warranted to make of it,—namely, that we may fairly regard it as neutralizing or counterbalancing the leading objection against the Calvinistic scheme, derived from the alleged impossibility of conceiving how God could fore-ordain whatsoever comes to pass, and yet man be responsible for his actions. There is just as much difficulty in conceiving how God could have foreknown all events unless He fore-ordained them, as in conceiving how man can be responsible for his actions, unless God has not fore-ordained them; and the one difficulty may be fairly set over against the other.

Arminians, in dealing with the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from God's omniscience, are accustomed to enlarge upon the difference between foreknowledge and fore-ordination, to show that the knowledge which another being may possess that we will perform certain actions, does not interfere with our freedom or exert any influence or efficiency in bringing these actions to pass; while fore-ordination does. Now this mode of arguing does not really touch the point at present in dispute. It may affect the question, how far God's fore-ordination of all events exempts men from the responsibility of their sins, and involves Him in it; but it does not touch the argument by which, from foreknowledge, we infer fore-ordination;³⁵ and that is the only point with which we have at present to do. The mere knowledge which another being may possess, that I shall perform certain actions, will not of itself exert any influence upon the production of these actions; but it may, notwithstanding, afford a satisfactory proof in the way of inference, that these actions, yet future, are fixed and determined; that provision has been made, in some way or other, for effecting that they shall take place; and that, with this provision, whatever it may be, the foreknowledge of them, when traced back to its original source, must be inseparably connected. There is no fair analogy—though this is really the leading argument of Arminians upon the subject—between the foreknowledge that may have been communicated to the mind of another being of my future actions, and that foreknowledge of them, existing in the divine mind, from which all certain foreknowledge of them must have been derived. The certain foreknowledge of future events belongs, originally and inherently, only to God, and must be communicated by Him to any other beings who possess it. He may have communicated the knowledge of some future actions of men to an angel, and the angel may have communicated it to one of the prophets. At neither of these stages, in the transmission, is there anything to exert any influence upon the production of the result; but still the certainty of the knowledge communicated and possessed affords good ground for the inference that the events must have been fixed and determined. And when we trace this knowledge up to its ultimate source, in the divine mind, and contemplate it as existing there from all eternity, we are constrained, while we still draw the same inference as before,—namely, that the foreknowledge affords proof that the events were fixed and settled,—to ascribe the

determination of them, or the provision securing that they shall take place, to the only existing and adequate cause,—namely, the eternal purpose of God, according to the counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever is to come to pass.

The doctrine of God's omniscience has been employed by Calvinists, not only as affording a direct and positive proof or evidence of His having fore-ordained all events, but also as affording a satisfactory answer to some of the objections which are adduced by Arminians against the doctrine. There are not a few of the arguments which Arminians adduce, both from reason and Scripture, against the doctrine of predestination, founded on facts or statements alleged to be inconsistent with its truth, and therefore disproving it, with respect to which it is easy to show that, if valid, they would equally disprove God's having foreseen all events. And when this can be established, then the right conclusion is, that, as they prove too much, they prove nothing. I will not enlarge upon this point, but content myself with simply mentioning it, as one important topic to be attended to in the study of this controversy.

After this explanation of the way and manner in which the doctrine of God's omniscience bears upon the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians on the subject of predestination, we need not be surprised at a statement I formerly made,—namely, that while Arminians in general have not ventured to follow the Socinians in denying that God foresees all future events, some of them have made it manifest that they would very willingly deny the divine foreknowledge, if they could, or dared. As this is an important fact in the history of theological discussion, and well fitted to afford instruction and warning, it may be proper to refer some of the evidences on which it rests. Arminius himself maintained—as the sounder portion of those who have been called after his name have generally done—that God certainly foresees all future events, and that the election of individuals to life was founded upon this foresight. But his followers soon found that this admission of the divine foreknowledge involved them in difficulties from which they could not extricate themselves; and they, in consequence, began to omit it altogether in their exposition of their views, and then to talk doubtfully, first of its importance, and then of its truth. In their *Acta et Scripto Synodalia*,

published in 1620, they omit all reference to God's, foreknowledge, and declare it to be their opinion, that the object of election to glory, is all those men, and those only, who, by divine assistance, believe in Christ, and persevere and die in true faith,³⁶— just as if God Himself did not know certainly whether a particular individual would be saved until He actually saw the termination of his life. They followed the same course in the Confession written by Episcopius, but published in 1622 in the name of the whole body; and when they were challenged for this, in an answer to the Confession, written by the professors of theology at Leyden, entitled *Censura in Confessionem*, and called upon to declare their sentiments openly upon this important subject, they, in their *Apologia pro Confessione*, in reply to the Censure,—a work written also by Episcopius, in the name of them all,—evaded the demand, and refused to make any declaration of their sentiments³⁷ upon the subject, attempting to escape by a sophistical, quibbling retort upon their opponents. Episcopius and Limborch, in their own works, have both spoken doubtfully or disparagingly of the doctrine of the divine foreknowledge, and have intimated that, in their opinion, it was not of much importance whether men believed it or not. Nay, they almost, in so many words, admit that they have been obliged to concede reluctantly the truth of this doctrine; because they have not been able to devise any plausible mode of evading or disposing of the fact, that the Scripture contains predictions of the future actions of free responsible beings. And Curcellaeus has gone so far as to tell us plainly, that men had much better reject foreknowledge than admit fore-ordination. His words are: "Non dubitabo hic asserere, minus illum in Deum esse injurium, qui futurorum contingentium Praescientiam ipsi prorsus adimit; quam qui statuit Deum, ut illa certo praescire possit, in alterutram partem decreto suo prius determinare."³⁸

Some Arminian divines have indicated the same leaning and tendency,—though in a somewhat different form,—by suggesting that God's omniscience may imply merely that He can know all things, if He chooses,—just as His omnipotence implies that He can do all things, if He chooses. This notion has been advocated even by some of the more evangelical Arminians, such as the late celebrated Wesleyan commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke; but it only shows that they feel the difficulty, without affording them any fair means of escape. There is no

fair analogy between the omniscience and the omnipotence of God in this matter: for future events—that is, events which are certainly to be—are not merely possible things, but actual realities, though yet future; and therefore, to ascribe to God actual ignorance of any of them, even though it is conceded that He might know them if He chose, is plainly and palpably to deny to Him the attribute of omniscience. And men who hold this notion would act a more consistent and creditable part, if they would at once avow the Socinian doctrine upon this subject; for they, too, admit that God can foreknow all future events if He chooses,—that is, by fore-ordaining them.

Another attempt has been made by Arminians to dispose of the arguments in favour of Calvinism, derived from the divine omniscience, and indeed from the divine attributes and perfections generally. It was fully expounded and applied by Archbishop King, in his celebrated sermon, entitled "Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will;" and it has been adopted by some of the most eminent anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston. It consists substantially—for I cannot enter into any detailed explanation of it—in maintaining that we know too little about God, and the divine attributes and perfections, to warrant us in drawing conclusions from them as to the divine procedure,—that the divine attributes, though called by the same names, are not the same in kind as those which we ourselves possess, even while infinitely superior in degree; but that our knowledge of them is altogether analogical, and that we are not entitled to draw inferences or conclusions,—from the divine knowledge or wisdom, for instance, —as we would from the same qualities—that is, knowledge and wisdom—in men. We do not dispute that there is a large measure of truth in this general view of the subject; and it would have been well if Arminians had acted somewhat more fully upon the practical lessons which it suggests. Their principal arguments against Calvinism have always been derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral attributes of God,—His goodness, justice, and holiness; and if they are to be deprived, by a sounder philosophy upon this subject, of their arguments derived from these topics, they will have little else to say. The principle, in so far as it is sound and just, overturns the great body of the common Arminian objections against

Calvinism; and Archbishop Whately candidly and consistently abandons, virtually, as unwarrantable and unphilosophical, the objections against Calvinism, on which Arminians have been accustomed to rest their chief confidence, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God. The principle, however, does seem to be carried too far, when it is laid down so absolutely that our knowledge of God's attributes is wholly analogical, and does not warrant any inferences as to the mode of the divine procedure. The incomprehensibility of Jehovah—the infinite distance between a finite and an infinite being—should ever be fully recognised and acted on. But Scripture and right reason seem plainly enough to warrant the propriety and legitimacy of certain inferences or conclusions as to God's procedure, derived from the contemplation of His attributes,—especially from what are called His natural, as distinguished from His moral, attributes. The arguments in favour of Calvinism have been derived from His natural attributes,—His power and supremacy,—His knowledge and wisdom; while the objections against it have been commonly derived from His moral attributes,—His goodness, justice, and holiness. And there is one important distinction between these two classes of attributes, which furnishes a decided advantage to Calvinism, by showing that inferences as to the divine procedure, derived from the natural, may be more warrantable and certain than inferences derived from the moral, attributes of God. While we ought never to forget, that in all God does He acts in accordance with all the perfections of His nature; still it is plain that His moral attributes—if each were fully carried out and operating alone—would lead to different and opposite modes of dealing with His creatures,—that while His goodness might prompt Him to confer happiness. His holiness and justice might prompt Him to inflict pain as punishment for sin. His mercy and compassion may be exercised upon some sinners, and His holiness and justice upon others; so that we cannot, from His moral attributes merely, draw any certain conclusions as to whether He would save all sinners, or none, or some; and if some, upon what principles He would make the selection. God's moral attributes are manifested and exercised in purposing and in bringing to pass the ultimate destiny, both of those who are saved and of those who perish. The one class, to use the language of our Confession, "He predestinates to everlasting life,—to the praise of His glorious grace; the other class He passes by, and ordains to dishonour

and wrath for their sin,—to the praise of His glorious justice."

Now there is nothing analogous to this diversity, or apparent contrariety, in regard to God's natural attributes. No purpose, and no procedure, can be warrantably ascribed to God, which would imply any defect or limitation in His power, knowledge, or supremacy. There is nothing which we can fix upon and establish as limiting or modifying the exercise of these attributes. It is true that God cannot exercise His power and supremacy in a way inconsistent with His moral perfections. But still the distinction referred to shows that we may be proceeding upon much more uncertain and precarious grounds, when we assert that any particular mode of procedure ascribed to God is inconsistent with His infinite goodness, holiness, and justice, than when we assert that it is inconsistent with His infinite power, knowledge, wisdom, and sovereign supremacy. In short, I think it would be no difficult matter to show that we are fully warranted in accepting the actual concession of Archbishop Whately as to the precarious and uncertain character of the arguments against Calvinism, from the alleged inconsistency with God's moral attributes; while at the same time we are not bound to renounce the arguments in favour of Calvinism, and in opposition to Arminianism, derived from the consideration of God's natural attributes. This topic is one of considerable importance, and of extensive application, for its bearings not only upon the direct and positive arguments in favour of Calvinism, but also upon the leading objections which Arminians have been accustomed to adduce against it.

XI. Predestination and the Sovereignty of God.

The leading scriptural doctrines concerning God which have been employed as furnishing arguments in favour of Calvinism, are those of the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty. The doctrine of the divine sovereignty may be regarded as comprehending the topics usually discussed under the heads of the divine will and the divine efficiency,—or the agency which God in providence, exerts in determining men's character, actions, and destiny. That God is the supreme ruler and

governor of the universe,—that, in the exercise and manifestation of His perfections, He directs and controls all events, all creatures, and all their actions,—is universally admitted; and we contend that this truth, when realized and applied, under the guidance of the information given us concerning it in Scripture, affords materials for establishing Calvinistic and for disproving Arminian views. In the general truth, universally admitted, that God is the Great First Cause of all things,—the Creator and the constant Preserver of everything that exists,—the sovereign Ruler and Disposer of all events,—seems to be fairly involved this idea—that He must have formed a plan for regulating all things; and that in all that He is doing in providence, in the wide sense in which we formerly explained this word, or in the whole actual government of the world, and all the creatures it contains, He is just carrying into effect the plan which He had formed; and if so, must be accomplishing His purposes, or executing His decrees, in all that is taking place,—in whatsoever cometh to pass. The general representations of Scripture describe God as ruling and directing all things according to the counsel of His own will; and this is fully accordance with the conceptions which we are constrained to form of the agency or government of a Being who is infinite in every perfection, and who is the First Cause and Supreme Disposer of all things.

In ascribing absolute supremacy or sovereignty to God in the disposal of all things, Calvinists do not mean, as their opponents commonly represent the matter, that He decrees and executes His decrees or purposes, and acts arbitrarily, or without reasons.³⁹ They hold that, in everything which God purposes and does, He acts upon the best reasons, in the exercise of His own infinite wisdom, and of all His moral perfections; but they think that He purposes and acts on reasons which He has not thought proper to make known to us,—which are not level to our comprehension,—and which, therefore, we can resolve only into His own unsearchable perfections,—into the counsel of His own will; whereas Arminians virtually undertake to explain or account for all that God does in His dealings with men,—to assign the causes or reasons of His purposes and procedure. This, indeed, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the two systems,—that the Arminians virtually deny God's sovereignty, by undertaking and professing to assign the reasons of all His dealings with men; while Calvinists resolve them, principally and

ultimately, into the counsel of His own will,—a view which seems much more accordant with scriptural representations of His perfections, of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, and of the supremacy which He exercises over them. The sovereignty ascribed to God in Scripture, and involved in all worthy conceptions of Him, seems plainly to imply that His purposes, volitions, and acts must be ascribed ultimately to the essential perfections of His own nature; while it also seems to imply that His purposes and volitions must be, in some sense, the causes or sources of all that takes place in His administration of the affairs of the world; and if these principles well founded, they plainly afford clear and certain grounds or conclusions which form the sum and substance of Calvinistic theology,—namely, that God, according to the counsel of His own will, hath fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, and hath predetermined the everlasting destiny of all His creatures.

There have been very long and intricate discussions upon the abject of the will of God,—*voluntas Dei*,—His power of volition, including His actual volitions, and the principles by which they are regulated; and the investigation of this subject forms an essential part of the argument in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. It is of course universally admitted, that God has revealed to men a law for the regulation of their character and conduct,—that this law indicates and expresses the divine will as to what they should be and do, and unfolds what will, in point of fact, be the consequences, upon their fate and ultimate destiny, of compliance or non-compliance with the divine will thus revealed to them. On this point—on all that is involved in these positions—there is no dispute. But in the great truth that God rules and governs the world, exercising supreme dominion over all the actions and concerns of men, there is plainly involved this general idea,—that events, the things which are actually taking place, are also, in some sense, the results, the expressions, the indications, of the divine will, or of what God desires and purposes should exist or take place. It is admitted that everything that takes place—including all the actions which men perform, and of course including their ultimate fate or destiny—was foreseen by God; and that His providence is, in some way or other, concerned in the ordering of all events. It cannot be disputed, without denying God's omnipotence, that He could have prevented the occurrence of anything, or everything, that

has taken place, or will yet take place, if He had so chosen,—if this had been His will or pleasure; and therefore everything that cometh to pass—including the actions and the ultimate destiny of men—must be, in some sense, in accordance with His will,—with what He has desired and purposed. The question of Augustine is unanswerable: "Quis porro tam impie desipiat, ut dicat Deum malas hominum voluntates quas voluerit, quando voluerit, ubi voluerit, in bonum non posse convertere?"⁴⁰ Many of the events that take place—such as the sinful actions of men—are opposed to, or inconsistent with. His will as revealed in His law, which is an undoubted indication of what He wished or desired that men should do. Here, therefore, there is a difficulty,—an apparent contrariety of wills in God; and of course either one or other of these things,—namely, the law and event must be held not to indicate the will of God; or else, some distinctions must be introduced, by which the whole of what is true, and is proved, upon this subject may be expressed.

It is unquestionable that the law is an expression of the divine will, and indicates that, in some sense, God wishes, as He commands and enjoins, that all His rational creatures should ever walk in the ways of holiness; and that all men, doing so, should be for ever blessed. Arminians virtually contend that this is the only true and real indication of the mind and will of God, and that actual events, simply as such, are not to be regarded as expressing, in any sense, the divine will,—indicating at all what God wished or desired,—what He purposed or has effected; while Calvinists contend that events, simply as such,—and of course all events,—do, as well as His law, in some sense express or indicate God's will; and hold this position to be certainly involved in the doctrine of the supreme dominion which He exercises over all the actions and concerns of men; and in the obvious and undeniable consideration, that He could have prevented the occurrence of everything that has occurred, or will occur, and would have done so, if it had not been, in some sense, accordant with His will, and fitted to accomplish His purposes,—that He could, if He had thought proper, have prevented the sin and the final destruction of all His rational creatures. As the Arminians do not regard the events that take place—the actions which are performed, viewed simply as such—as at all indicating or expressing any will of God, they are, of course, obliged to admit that many things come to pass—such as men's sinful actions—

which are altogether, and in every sense, opposed to God's will. And as this statement, nakedly put, seems scarcely consistent with God's omnipotence and supremacy, they are obliged, as well as the Calvinists, to introduce some distinctions into the exposition of this subject. The controversy upon this point really resolves very much into this general question,—whether the Calvinistic or the Arminian distinctions, or sets of distinctions, on the subject of the will of God, are the more accordant with right views of the divine perfections and character, as they are revealed to us in Scripture.

The distinctions which the Calvinists commonly employ in expounding and discussing this subject are chiefly these: They say there is a *voluntas decreti* and a *voluntas praecepti*, or a will of decree, and a will of precept or command, or a secret and a revealed will; and these two wills they call by a variety of names, all of them suggested by something that is said or indicated upon the subject in Scripture. God's will of decree, or His secret will, they call also His *voluntas euvdoki,aj*, and *voluntas beneplaciti*; while His will of precept. His revealed will, they call also His *voluntas euvaresti,aj*, and *voluntas signi*. Now these terms are really nothing more than just descriptions of what maybe called matters of fact, as they are set before us in Scripture. There is a will of God regulating or determining events or actions, and indicated by the events which take place,—the actions which are performed. To deny this, is just to exclude God from the government of the world,—to assert that events take place which He does not direct and control, and which are altogether, and in every sense, inconsistent with, or opposed to, His will, or at least wholly uninfluenced by it. This, His will of decree, determining events, is secret, because utterly unknown to us until the event occurs, and thereby declares it. Every event that does occur reveals to us something concerning the will of God—that is, concerning what God had purposed,—had resolved to bring to pass, or at least to permit—of which we were previously ignorant. There is nothing in these distinctions, the *voluntas decreti*, *arcana*, *euvdoki,aj*, *beneplaciti* (all these four expressions being, according to the *usus loquendi* that prevails among Calvinistic divines, descriptions, or just different designations, of one and the same thing,—namely, of the will by which God determines events or results), and the *voluntas praecepti*, *revelata*, *euvaresti,aj*, and *signi* (these four contrasting

respectively with the preceding, and being all likewise descriptive of one and the same thing,—namely, of the will by which He determines duties);—there is nothing in these two sets of distinctions but just the embodying in language—technical, indeed, to some extent, but still suggested and sanctioned by Scripture—of two doctrines, both of which we are constrained to admit. In no other way could we bring out, and express, the whole of what Scripture warrants us to believe upon this subject; because, as has been said, the only alternative is, to maintain that the events which take place—including the actions and the ultimate fate of men—are in no sense indications of the divine will; in other words, have been brought about altogether independently of God, and of His agency. That there are difficulties in the exposition of the matter—difficulties which we cannot fully solve—is not disputed; but this affords no sufficient ground for rejecting, or refusing to admit, whatever is fully sanctioned by the sacred Scriptures, and confirmed by the plain dictates of reason.

There are no such difficulties attaching to the Calvinistic, as to the Arminian, doctrines upon this subject. Not only is their general position—that events or results, simply as such, are not, in any sense, expressions or indications of the will of God—plainly inconsistent with right views of the divine omnipotence and supremacy; but, in the prosecution of the subject, they need to have recourse to distinctions which still further manifest the inconsistency of their whole system with right views of the divine perfections and government. The great distinction which they propose and urge upon this subject, is that between the antecedent and the consequent will of God; or, what is virtually the same thing, the inefficacious or conditional, and the efficacious or absolute, will of God. These distinctions they commonly apply, not so much to the purposes and decrees of God in general, and in all their extent, in their bearing upon whatsoever comes to pass, but only to the ultimate fate or destiny of men. They ascribe to God an antecedent will to save all men, and a consequent will—a will or purpose consequent upon, and conditioned by, their conduct, actual or foreseen—to save those, and those only, who believe and persevere, and to consign to misery those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. This antecedent will is of course not absolute, but conditional,—not efficacious, but inefficacious. And thus they represent God as willing what never takes place, and what, therefore, He

must be either unable or unwilling to effect. To say that He is unable to effect it, is to deny His omnipotence and supremacy. To say that He is unwilling to effect it, is to contradict themselves, or to ascribe to God two opposite and contrary wills,—one of which takes effect, or is followed by the result willed, and the other is not. To ascribe to God a conditional will of saving all men, while yet many perish, is to represent Him as willing what He knows will never take place,—as suspending His own purposes and plans upon the volitions and actions of creatures who live and move and have their being in Him,—as wholly dependent on them for the attainment of what He is desirous to accomplish; and all this, surely, is plainly inconsistent with what we are taught to believe concerning the divine perfections and government,—the relation in which God stands to His creatures, and the supremacy which He exercises over them.⁴¹

If God's decrees or purposes concerning the salvation of individual men are founded—as Arminians teach—solely upon the foresight of their faith and perseverance, this represents Him as wholly dependent upon them for the formation of His plans and purposes; while it leaves the whole series of events that constitute the moral history of the world, and, in some sense, determine men's everlasting destiny, wholly unexplained or unaccounted or,—entirely unregulated or uncontrolled by God. The highest, and indeed the only, function ascribed to Him with respect to men's actions and fate, is that simply of foreseeing them. He does this, and He does nothing more. What it was that settled or determined their futurity—or their being to be—is left wholly unexplained by the Arminians; while Calvinists contend that this must be ascribed to the will of God, exercised in accordance with all the perfections of His nature. Their specific character, with their consequent results, in their bearing upon men's eternal destiny, is really determined by men themselves; for, while Arminians do not dispute that God's providence and grace are, somehow, exercised in connection with the production of men's actions, they deny that He exercises any certainly efficacious or determining influence in the production of any of them. Whatever God does, in time, in the administration of the government of the world, He purposed or resolved to do from eternity. Arminians can scarcely deny this position; but then the admission of it only makes them more determined to limit the extent and efficacy of His agency in the production of events or

results, and to withhold from Him any determining influence in the production even of good characters and good actions. Calvinists apply the principle of God's having decreed from eternity to do all that He actually does in time, in this way. The production of all that is spiritually good in men,—the production of faith and regeneration,—are represented in Scripture as the work of God; they are ascribed to His efficacious and determining agency. Faith and regeneration are inseparably connected, according to God's arrangements, in each case, with salvation. If the general principle above stated be true, then it follows, that whenever God produces faith and regeneration, He is doing in time what He purposed from eternity to do; and He is doing it, in order to effect what He must also have resolved from eternity to effect,—namely, the everlasting salvation of some men,—that is, of all to whom He gives faith and regeneration. Hence it will be seen how important, in this whole controversy, is the subject of the certain or determining efficacy of divine grace in the production of faith and regeneration; and how essentially the whole Arminian cause is bound up with the ascription of such a self-determining power to the human will, as excludes the certain and unfrustrable efficacy of God's grace in renovating and controlling it. The production of faith and regeneration is a work of God, wrought by Him on some men and not on others,—wrought upon them in accordance, indeed, with the whole principles of their mental constitution, but still wrought certainly and infallibly, whenever the power that is necessary for the production of it—without the exercise of which it could not be effected—is actually put forth.

If this be the agency by which faith and regeneration are in each case produced,—if the production of them is, in this sense, to be ascribed to God,—then He must have decreed or purposed from eternity to produce them, whenever they are produced; and, of course, to effect the ultimate and permanent results with which their existence stands inseparably connected,—namely, deliverance from guilt, and everlasting happiness. Were the production of faith and regeneration left dependent, in each case, upon the exercise of men's own free will,—that being made the turning-point,—and divine grace merely assisting or co-operating, but not certainly determining the result, then it is possible, so far as this department of the argument is concerned, that God might indeed have

decreed from eternity what He would do in the matter, but still might, so far as concerned the actual production of the result, merely foresee what each man would do in improving the grace given him, and might be wholly regulated by this mere foresight in anything He might purpose with respect to men's ultimate fate. Whereas, if God produces faith and regeneration,—if it be, indeed. His agency that determines and secures their existence wherever they come to exist,—then, upon the general principle, that God resolved to do from eternity whatever He does in time, we are shut up to the conclusion, that He chose some men to faith and regeneration,—that He did so in order that He might thereby save them,—and that thus both the faith and the salvation of those who believe and are saved, are to be ascribed wholly to the good pleasure of God, choosing them to be the subjects of His almighty grace and the heirs of eternal glory.

Results, or events, are, of course, expressions or indications of God's will, only, in so far as He is concerned in the production of them. The general views taught, both by reason and Scripture, about God's perfections, supremacy, and providence, fully warrant as in believing that His agency is, in some way, concerned in the production of all events or results whatever, since it is certain that He could have prevented any of them from coming to pass if He had so chosen, and must, therefore, have decreed or purposed either to produce, or, at least, to permit them. God's agency is not employed in the same manner, and to the same extent, in the production of all events or results; and the fulness and clearness with which different events and results express or indicate the divine will, depend upon the kind and degree of the agency which He exerts—and of course purposed to exert—in the ordering of them. This agency is not exerted in the same manner, or in the same degree, in the permission of the bad, as in the production of the good, actions of men. In the good actions of men, God's *voluntas decreti* and His *voluntas praecepti*—His secret and His revealed will—concur and combine; in their sinful actions they do not; and therefore these latter do not express or indicate the divine will in the same sense, or to the same extent, as the former. Still we cannot exclude even them wholly from the *voluntas decreti*, as they are comprehended in the general scheme of His providence,—as they are directed and overruled by Him for promoting His wise and holy

purposes,—and as He must, at least, have decreed or resolved to permit them, since He could have prevented them if He had chosen.

Arminians base their main attempt to exclude or limit the application of these principles upon the grand peculiarity of free agency as attaching to rational and responsible beings. We formerly had occasion, in discussing the subject of the efficacy of grace, to advert to the considerations by which this line of argument was to be met,—namely, by showing the unreasonableness of the idea that God had created any class of beings who, by the constitution He had given them, should be placed absolutely beyond His control in anything affecting their conduct and fate; and by pointing out the impossibility of proving that anything which Calvinists ascribe to God's agency in ordering or determining men's actions, character, and destiny, necessarily implies a contravention or violation of anything attaching to man as man, or to will as will. And while this is the true state of the case in regard to God's agency in the production of men's actions generally, and the limitation which free-will is alleged to put upon the character and results of this agency, we have full and distinct special information given us in Scripture in regard to by far the most important department at once of God's agency and men's actions,—namely, the production and the exercise of faith and conversion, which are inseparably connected in each case with salvation; and this information clearly teaches us that God does not leave the production of faith and conversion to be dependent upon any mere powers or capacities of the human will, but produces them Himself, wherever they are produced, certainly and infallibly, by His own almighty power; and of course must, upon principles already explained, have decreed or purposed from eternity to put forth in time this almighty power, wherever it is put forth, to effect the result which it alone is sufficient or adequate to effect, and to accomplish all the ultimate results with which the production of these effects stands inseparably connected. If this be so, then the further conclusion is unavoidable,—that, in regard to all those in whom God does not put forth this almighty power to produce faith and conversion, He had decreed or purposed, from eternity, to pass by these men, and to leave them to perish in their natural state of guilt and depravity, to the praise of His glorious justice.

Sec. 12. Scripture Evidence for Predestination

We have illustrated some of the leading arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from other principles and doctrines, which are taught at once by Scripture and reason, and which either actually involve or include this doctrine, or can be shown to lead to it by necessary consequence,—especially the doctrines of God's omniscience, including His foreknowledge of all future events, and of His sovereignty or supremacy, or of His right to regulate, and His actually regulating, all things according to the counsel of His own will; more particularly as exhibited in the bestowal of the almighty or infallibly efficacious grace, by which faith and regeneration—the inseparable accompaniments of salvation—are produced in some men, to the pretention or exclusion of others. These great doctrines of the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty are taught by natural as well as by revealed religion; and if it be indeed true, as we have endeavoured to prove, that they afford sufficient materials for establishing the doctrines that God has fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, and that He determines the everlasting destinies of all His creatures, then must the Calvinistic scheme of theology not only be consistent with, but be required by, all worthy and accurate conceptions which, from any source, we are able to form concerning the divine perfections and supremacy. There are other principles or doctrines clearly revealed in Scripture, that afford satisfactory evidence in support of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination,—principles and doctrines connected with topics which are matters of pure revelation, as entering more immediately into the character and provisions of the scheme which God has devised and executed for the salvation of sinners, for delivering men from their natural state of guilt and depravity, and preparing them for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness. This general head may be said to comprehend all indications given us in Scripture of God's having a peculiar or chosen people, as distinguished from the mass of the human race,—of His having given His Son to be the Redeemer and the Head of a chosen or select company from among men,—of His having given some men to Christ in covenant as the objects of His peculiar care and kindness,—and of the way and manner in which all this is connected, in point of fact, with the ultimate salvation of those who are saved.

Everything which is either asserted or indicated in Scripture concerning the end for which Christ was sent into the world, and the purposes which His humiliation, sufferings, and death were intended to effect, and do effect, in connection with the fall and the salvation, the ruin and the recovery, of men, is in fullest harmony with the principle that God has, out of His mere good pleasure, elected some men to eternal life, and has unchangeably determined to save these men with an everlasting salvation, and is indeed consistent or reconcilable with no other doctrine upon this subject. The general tenor of Scripture statement upon all these topics can be reconciled with no scheme of doctrine which does not imply that God from eternity selected some men to salvation, without anything of superior worth foreseen in them, as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto,—that this choice or election is the origin or source of everything in them which conduces or contributes to their salvation,—and implies that effectual provision has been made for securing that result. In short, all that is stated in Scripture concerning the lost and ruined condition of men by nature, and the provision made for their deliverance and salvation,—all that is declared or indicated there concerning the divine purpose or design with respect to ruined men,—the object or end of the vicarious work of the Son,—the efficacious agency of the Spirit in producing faith and conversion, holiness and perseverance,—is perfectly harmonious, and, when combined together, just constitutes the Calvinistic scheme of theology,—of God's electing some men to salvation of His own good pleasure,—giving them to Christ to be redeemed by Him,—sending forth His Spirit to apply to them the blessings which Christ purchased for them,—and thus securing that they shall enjoy eternal blessedness, to the praise of the glory of His grace. This is the only scheme of doctrine that is really consistent with itself, and the only one that can be really reconciled with the fundamental principles that most thoroughly pervade the whole word of God with respect to the natural condition and capacities of men, and the grace and agency of God as exhibited in the salvation of those of them who are saved.

But I need not dwell longer upon the support which the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derives from the great general principles, or from other particular doctrines, taught in Scripture concerning God's perfections and supremacy, and the leading provisions and arrangements

of the scheme of salvation,—of the covenant of grace; and will now proceed, according to the division formerly intimated, to make a few observations upon the way in which the scriptural evidence of this doctrine has been discussed, in the more limited sense of the words, as including the investigation of the meaning of those scriptural statements that bear more directly and immediately upon the precise point in dispute. I do not mean to expound the evidence, or to unfold it, but merely to suggest some such observations concerning it as may be fitted to assist in the study of the subject.

Though the subject, as thus defined and limited, may be supposed to include only those scriptural statements which speak directly and immediately of predestination, or election to grace and glory, yet it is important to remember that any scriptural statements which contain plain indications of a limitation or specialty in the destination of Christ's death as to its personal objects, and of a limitation or specialty in the actual exercise or forth-putting of that gracious agency which is necessary to the production of faith and regeneration, may be regarded as bearing directly, rather than in the way of inference or implication, upon the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The connection between the doctrines of absolute personal election to life—particular redemption—and special distinguishing efficacious grace in conversion, is so clear and so close, as scarcely to leave any room for inference or argumentation. They are, indeed, rather parts of one great doctrine; and the proof of the truth of any one of them directly and necessarily establishes the truth of the rest. The Arminian scheme—that is, in its more Pelagian, as distinguished from its more evangelical, form—may be admitted to be equally consistent with itself in these points, though consistent only in denying the whole of the fundamental principles taught in Scripture with respect to the method of salvation. And, accordingly, the old Arminians were accustomed to found their chief scriptural arguments against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination upon the proof they professed to produce from the word of God, that Christ died for all men,—that is, pro omnibus et singulis,—and that God gives to all men, or at least to all to whom the gospel is preached, grace sufficient to enable them to repent and believe. There is not the same consistency or harmony in the representation of the scheme of Christian doctrine given by some of the

more evangelical Arminians; for, by their views of the entire depravity of mankind, and of the nature of the work of the Spirit in the production of faith and regeneration, they make concessions which, if fully followed out, would land them in Calvinism. Neither is there full consistency in the views of those men who hold Calvinistic doctrines upon other points, but at the same time maintain the universality of the atonement; for their scheme of doctrine, as we formerly showed, amounts in substance to this,—that they at once assert and deny God's universal love to men, or His desire and purpose of saving all men,—assert it by maintaining the universality of the atonement, and deny it by maintaining the specialty of efficacious grace bestowed upon some men, in the execution of God's eternal purpose or decree. But while it is thus important to remember that scriptural statements, which establish the doctrine of particular redemption and of special distinguishing efficacious grace in conversion, may be said directly, and not merely in the way of inference, to prove the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, yet, as we have already considered these great doctrines, we intend now to confine our observations to the discussions which have been carried on with regard to the meaning and import of those scriptural statements which speak still more directly and immediately of predestination or election,—that is, the passages where the words *proginw,skw*, *proori,zw*, *proti,qhmi*, *proetoima,zw*, *evkle,gw*, and their cognates, occur in connection with the character and the ultimate destiny of man.

That the different passages where these words occur do, in their natural and literal import, favour the Calvinistic doctrine, is too obvious to admit of dispute. I have had occasion to advert to the fact, that it is no common thing now-a-days for German rationalists—differing in this from the older Socinians—to concede plainly and distinctly that the apostles believed, and intended to teach, evangelical and Calvinistic doctrine, and that their statements, in accordance with the fair application of the principles and rules of philology and criticism, cannot admit of any other interpretation; while, of course, they do not consider themselves bound to believe these doctrines upon the authority of any apostle. An instance of this occurs in regard to the topic we are at present considering, which it may be worth while to mention. Wegscheider, late one of the professors of theology at Halle, in his *Institutiones Theologiae Christianae*

Dogmaticae⁴²—usually esteemed the text-book of rationalistic theology, —admits that these words naturally and properly express a predestination or election of men by God to eternal happiness, and adds, "nec nisi neglecto Scripturarum sacrarum usu loquendi aliae significationes, mitiores quidem, illis subjici possunt." He ascribes the maintenance of this doctrine by the apostle to the erroneous notions of a crude and uncultivated age concerning divine efficiency, and to the Judaical particularism from which the apostles were not wholly delivered, and asserts that it is contradicted in other parts of Scripture; but this does not detract from the value of his testimony that the Apostle Paul believed and taught it, and that his words, critically investigated, do not admit of any other sense.

The passages which have been referred to, seem plainly fitted to convey the ideas that God had beforehand chosen, or made a selection of, some men from among the rest of men,—intending that these men, thus chosen or selected, should enjoy some peculiar privilege, and serve some special end or purpose. Even this general idea, indicated by the natural meaning of these words taken by themselves, is inconsistent with the Arminian doctrine, which, I as we formerly explained, does not admit of a real election at all; and when it further appears, from the connection in which these words are employed,—first, that this predestination or election is not founded upon anything in the men chosen, as the cause or reason why God chooses them, but only on His own good pleasure; secondly, that it is a predestination or election of individuals, and not merely of bodies or masses of men; and, thirdly, that the choice or selection is directed to the object of effecting their eternal salvation, and does certainly issue in that result,—then the Calvinistic doctrine upon the subject is fully established. Calvinists, of course, maintain that all these three positions can be established with regard to the election which God, in Scripture, is represented as making among men; while Arminians deny this. And on this point hinges most of the discussion that has taken place in regard to the meaning of those scriptural statements in which God's act in predestinating or electing is spoken of.

Now, with respect to the first of these positions,—namely, that the election ascribed to God is not founded upon anything in those chosen, as

the cause or reason why He chooses them, but only on His own good pleasure,—this is so clearly and explicitly asserted in Scripture—especially in the ninth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans—that the Arminians scarcely venture to dispute it. This statement may, at first sight, appear surprising. Knowing, as we do, that the founding of election upon a foresight of men's faith and perseverance is a prominent part of the Arminian scheme, as usually set forth, it might be supposed that, if they do not dispute this position, they are abandoning their whole cause. But the explanation lies here. When they maintain the position, that election is founded upon a foresight of faith and perseverance, they use the word election in a sense in some measure accommodated to that in which it is employed by their opponents, and not in the sense in which they themselves generally maintain that it is used in Scripture; and, by saying that it is founded upon a foresight of faith and perseverance, they virtually, as we have already explained, deny that it is election at all. The true and proper Arminian doctrine, as set forth by Arminius and his followers in opposition to Calvinism, is this,—that the whole of the decree of election—meaning thereby the only thing that bears any resemblance to the general idea Calvinists have of a decree of election—is God's general purpose to save all who shall believe and persevere, and to punish all who shall continue in impenitence and unbelief; so that, if there be anything which may be called an election of God to salvation, having reference to men individually, it can be founded only upon a foresight of men's faith and perseverance. Now there is nothing in this necessarily inconsistent with conceding that there is an election of God spoken of in Scripture, which is founded only upon His own good pleasure, and not upon anything in the men chosen, so long as they maintain that this is not the personal election to eternal life which the Calvinists contend for,—that is, so long as they deny one or other of the two remaining positions of the three formerly stated,—or, in other words, so long as they assert that the election of God which is spoken of in Scripture is not an election of individuals, but of nations or bodies of men; or, that it is not an election to faith and salvation, but merely to outward privileges, which men may improve or not as they choose.

It is true that, amid the confusion usually exhibited when men oppose truth, and are obliged to try to pervert the plain and obvious meaning of

scriptural statements, some Arminians have tried to show that even the election of God, described in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is not founded upon God's good pleasure, but upon something foreseen or existing in men themselves. But these have not been the most respectable or formidable advocates of error; and as the most plausible defenders of the Arminian scriptural argument concede this point, it is proper to explain where the main difficulty really lies, and what they can still maintain, notwithstanding this concession. Archbishop Whately, in his Essay upon Election, which is the third in his work entitled Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul, distinctly admits that the word elect, as used in Scripture, "relates in most instances to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree;"⁴³ and shows that those Arminians who endeavour to answer the Calvinistic argument, founded upon the passages of Scripture where this word is used, by denying this, are not able to maintain the position they have assumed.

The two other positions which were mentioned, as necessary to be proved in order to establish from Scripture the Calvinistic argument, are,—first, that there is an election ascribed to God, which is a choice or selection of some men individually, and not of nations, or masses of men; and, secondly, that it is an election of these men to faith and salvation, and not merely to outward privileges. The Arminians deny that there is any such election spoken of in Scripture; and maintain that the only election ascribed to God is a choice,—either, first, of nations or bodies of men, and not of individuals; or, secondly, an election of men to the enjoyment of outward privileges, or means of grace, and not to faith and salvation. Some Arminians prefer the one, and some the other, of these methods of answering the Calvinistic argument, and evading the testimony of Scripture; while others, again, think it best to employ both methods, according to the exigencies of the occasion. There is not, indeed, in substance, any very material difference between them; and it is a common practice of Arminians to employ the one or the other mode of evasion, according as the one or the other may seem to them to afford the more plausible materials, for turning aside the argument in favour of Calvinism, derived from the particular passage which they happen to be examining at the time. The ground taken by Dr. Whately is, that the election ascribed to God in Scripture, which he admits to relate, in most

instances, to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree, is not an election to faith and salvation; but only to external privileges or means of grace, which men may improve or not as they choose. Dr. Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his work on Apostolical Preaching, takes the other ground, and maintains that it is an election, not of individuals, but of nations.⁴⁴

These questions, of course, can be decided only by a careful examination of the particular passages where the subject is spoken of, by an investigation of the exact meaning of the words, and of the context and scope of the passage. It is to be observed, in regard to this subject in general, that Calvinists do not need to maintain—and do not in fact maintain—that wherever an election of God is spoken of in Scripture, it is an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to faith and salvation,—or, that there is nothing said in Scripture of God's choosing nations, or of His choosing men to outward privileges, and to nothing more. God undoubtedly does choose nations, to bestow upon them some higher privileges, both in regard to temporal and spiritual matters, than He bestows upon others. The condition, both of nations and of individuals, with respect to outward privileges and the means of grace, is to be ascribed to God's sovereignty, to the counsel of His own will; and Calvinists do not dispute that this doctrine is taught in Scripture,—nay, they admit that it is the chief thing intended, in some of the passages, where God's election is spoken of. But they maintain these two positions, which, if made out, are quite sufficient to establish all that they contend for,—namely, first, that in some cases, where an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, is spoken of, or at least is included, there is more implied than is expressly asserted; or that the argument, either in its own nature, or from the way in which it is conducted, affords sufficient grounds for the conclusion, that the inspired writer believed or assumed an election of individuals to faith and salvation;—and, secondly, and more particularly, that there are passages in which the election spoken of is not an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, at all; but only, and exclusively, an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to sanctification and eternal life, or to grace and glory.

***⁴⁷⁹ The principal passage to which the first of these positions has

been applied by some Calvinists, though not by all, is the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Komans. In this passage it is conceded by some, that one thing comprehended in the apostle's statements and arguments is an election of nations to outward ; privileges ; wdiile they also think it plain, from the whole scope i of his statements, that he did not confine himself to this point, — ? that this w^as not the only thing he had in view,—and that, in his exposition of the subject of the rejection of the Jews as the pecu- liar people of God, and the admission of the Gentiles to all the •privileges of the church, he makes statements, and lays down principles, which clearly involve the doctrine, that God chooses men to eternal life according to the counsel of His own will. The principle of the divine sovereignty is manifested equally in both cases. There is an invariable connection established, in God's government of the world, between the enjoyment of outward privileges, or the means of grace, on the one hand, and faith and salvation on the other ; in this sense, and to this extent, that the legation of the first implies the negation of the second. We are varranted, by the whole tenor of Scripture, in maintaining that where God, in His sovereignty, withholds from men the enjoyment)f the means of grace, —an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only way of salvation,—He at the same time, and by the ame means, or ordination, withholds from them the opportunity nd the power of believing and behig saved. These two things re based upon the same general principle ; and thus far are directed to the same end. It is not, therefore, in the least to be wondered at, that the apostle, in discussing the one, should also introduce the other. The truth is, that no exposition could be given of God's procedure, in bestowing or withholding outward privileges, without also taking into account His procedure in enabling men to improve them ; and the apostle, accordingly, in the discussion of this subject, has introduced a variety of state- ments, which cannot, without the greatest force and straining, be regarded as implying less than this, that as God gives the means of grace to whom He will,—not from anything in them, as dis- tinguishing them from others, but of His own good pleasure, —so He gives to whom He will, according to an election which He has made,—not on the ground of any worth of theirs, but of His own good pleasure, —the power or capacity of improving aright the means of grace, and of thereby attaining to salvation. The truth is, that in the course of the discussion contained in this chapter, the apostle makes statements which far too

plainly and explicitly assert the Calvinistic doctrine of the election of individuals to eternal life, to admit of their being evaded or turned aside by any vague or indefinite considerations derived from the general object for which the discussion is supposed to be introduced,—even though there was clearer evidence than there is, that his direct object in introducing it, was merely to explain the principles connected with the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them. All this has been fully proved, by an examination of this important portion of Holy Writ ; and nothing has yet been devised, — though much ingenuity has been wasted in attempting it, —that is likely to have much influence, in disproving it, upon men who are simply desirous to know the true meaning of God's statements, and are ready to submit their understandings and their hearts to whatever He has revealed. The apostle, in this passage, not only makes it manifest that he intended to assert the doctrine which is held by Calvinists upon the subject of election ; but, further, that he expected that his readers would understand his statements, just as Calvinists have always understood them, by the objections which he puts into their mouths,— assuming that, as a matter of course, they would at once allege, in opposition to what he had taught, that it represented God as unrighteous, and interfered with men's being responsible, and justly blameable for their actions. These are just the objections which, at first view, spring up in men's minds, in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, —the very objections which, to this day, are constantly urged against it, —but which have not even a prima facie plausibility, as directed against the Arminian doctrine, of God's merely choosing men to outward privileges, and then leaving everything else connected with their ultimate destiny to depend upon the improvement which they choose to make of them. A doctrine which does not afford obvious and plausible grounds for these objections, cannot be that which the apostle taught ; and this—were there nothing else—is sufficient to disprove the interpretation put upon the passage by our opponents. Arminians, indeed, profess to find an inscrutable mystery —such as might have suggested these objections —in the different degrees in which outward privileges are communicated by God to different nations and to different individuals. But although they assert this, when pressed with the consideration, that the objections which the apostle intimates might be adduced against his doctrine implied that there was

some inscrutable mystery attaching to it,— they really do not leave any mystery in the matter which there is any great difficulty in solving. There is no great mystery in the unequal distribution of outward privileges, unless there be an invariable connection between the possession of outward privileges and the actual attainment of salvation, at least in the sense formerly explained, — namely, that the negation of the first implies the negation of the second. If Arminians were to concede to us this connection, this would no doubt imply such a mystery as might naturally enough be supposed to suggest such objections as are mentioned by the apostle. But their general principles will not allow them to concede this ; for they must maintain that, whatever differences there may be in men's outward privileges, all have means and opportunities sufficient to lead, when duly improved, to their salvation. Accordingly, Limborch—after attempting to find, in the inequality of men's outward privileges, something that might naturally suggest these objections to men's minds, and warrant what the apostle himself says about the inscrutable mystery involved in the doctrine which he had been teaching—is obliged, in consistency, to introduce a limitation of this inequality and of its necessary results,—a limitation which really removes all appearance of unrighteousness in God, and supersedes the necessity of appealing to the incomprehensibility of His judgments, by asserting of every man, that "*licet careat gratia salvifica*" — by which * he just means the knowledge of the gospel revelation,—"*non tamen illa gratie mensura destitutus est, quin si ea recte utatur sensim in meliorem statum transferri possit, in quo ope gratiae salutaris ad salutem pervenire queat.*"

* Arminians are unable to escape from inconsistency in treating of this subject. When they are dealing with the argument, that the condition of men who are left, in providence, without the knowledge of the gospel, and without the means of grace, virtually involves the principle of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, they labour to establish a distinction between the cases, and thus to evade the argument by denying a connection between the knowledge of the gospel and salvation, and try to explain the inequality by something in the conduct of men themselves, instead of resolving it into God's sovereignty ; and have thus cut away the only plausible ground for maintaining that this inequality in the distribution of the means of grace is the inscrutable mystery of which the apostle speaks, as involved in his doctrine of election. Having laid the

foundations of their whole scheme in grounds which exclude mystery, and make everything in the divine procedure perfectly comprehensible, they are unable to get up a mystery, even when they are compelled to make the attempt, in order to escape from the inferences which the apostle's statements so plainly sanction. In short, Arminians must either adopt the Calvinistic principle of the invariable connection, negatively, between the enjoyment of the means of grace and the actual attainment of salvation, or else admit that there is no appearance of ground for adducing against their doctrine the objections which the apostle plainly intimates that his doctrine was sure to call forth ; and in either case, their attempt to exclude the Calvinistic doctrine of the absolute election of individuals to faith and salvation, from the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, can be conclusively proved to be wholly unsuccessful. Thus it appears that, even if we concede, as some Calvinists have done, that the more direct object of the apostle, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is to unfold the principles that regulate the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them,— this is altogether insufficient to show that he has not here also plainly and fully asserted, as virtually identical in principle, the sovereignty of God in choosing some men, according to His mere good pleasure, to everlasting life, and in leaving the rest, not worse or more unworthy in themselves, to perish in their natural condition of guilt and depravity. I shall now only again advert to the second position formerly mentioned, as maintained by Calvinists, — namely, that while there are passages in Scripture which refer to God's electing nations, and choosing men to the enjoyment of external privileges or means of grace, there are also many passages which there is no plausible pretence for evading in this way,—passages which plainly teach that God—uninfluenced by anything in men themselves, or by anything, so far as we know or can know, but the counsel of His own will —elects some men to faith and holiness, to perseverance in them and everlasting life, to be conformed to the image of His Son, and to share at length in His glory. These passages are to be found not only—as is sometimes alleged—in the writings of Paul, but in the discourses of our Saviour Himself, and in the writings of the Apostles Peter and John. It is our duty to be acquainted with them, and to be able to state and defend the grounds on which it can be shown that, when carefully examined and

correctly understood, they give the clear sanction of God's word to the doctrines which we profess to believe. The Calvinistic doctrine of election is stated in Scripture expressly and by plain implication,—formally and incidentally,—dogmatically and historically, —as a general truth, unfolding the principle that regulates God's dealings with men, and also as affording the true explanation of particular events which are recorded to have taken place; and thus there is the fullest confirmation given to all that is suggested upon this subject by the general views presented to us concerning the perfections and supremacy of God,—the end or object of Christ in coming into the world to seek and to save lost sinners,—and the agency of the Holy Ghost, in applying to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them, by working faith in them, and thereby uniting them to Christ in their effectual calling, and in preserving them in safety unto His everlasting kingdom.

XIII. Objections against Predestination.

We now proceed to make some observations upon the objections which have been commonly adduced against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and the way in which these objections have been, and should be, met. There is no call to make such a division of the objections against Calvinism as we have made of the arguments in support of it,—namely, into, first, those which are derived from general principles, or from other connected doctrines, taught in Scripture; and, secondly, those derived from particular scriptural statements bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute: for it is an important general consideration, with reference to the whole subject of the objections against the Calvinistic doctrine, that the Arminians scarcely profess to have anything to adduce against it, derived from particular or specific statements of Scripture, as distinguished from general principles, or connected doctrines, alleged to be taught there. We have shown that, in favour of Calvinistic predestination, we can adduce from Scripture not only general principles which plainly involve it, and other doctrines which necessarily imply it, or from which it can be clearly and certainly deduced, but also specific statements, in which the doctrine itself is plainly, directly, and immediately taught. Arminians, of course, attempt

to answer both these classes of arguments, and to produce proofs on the other side. But they do not allege that they can produce passages from Scripture which contain, directly and immediately, a negation of the Calvinistic or an assertion of the Arminian view, upon the precise point of predestination. Their objections against our views, and their arguments in favour of their own opinions, are wholly deduced, in the way of inference, from principles and doctrines alleged to be taught there; and not from statements which even appear to tell us, plainly and directly, that the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject is false, or that the Arminian doctrine is true. We profess to prove not only that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the representations given us in Scripture concerning the divine perfections and the divine sovereignty, as manifested in the government of the world, and especially in the production of faith and regeneration in all in whom they are produced, but also that there are statements which, rightly interpreted, plainly and directly tell us that God made an election or choice among men, not founded upon anything in the men elected, but on the counsel of His own will; and that this was an election of some men individually to faith, holiness, and eternal life, and was intended and fitted to secure these results in all who are comprehended under it. Arminians, of course, allege that the passages in which we find this doctrine do not really contain it; and they allege further, that there are passages which convey representations of the perfections and providence of God,—of the powers and capacities of men,—and of the principles that determine their destiny,—which are inconsistent with this doctrine, and from which, therefore, its falsehood may be deduced in the way of inference; but they do not allege that there are any passages which treat directly of the subject of election, and which expressly, or by plain consequence from these particular statements themselves, tell us that there is no such election by God as Calvinists ascribe to Him,—or that there is such an election, falsely so called, as the Arminians ascribe to Him. In short, their objections against Calvinistic predestination, and their arguments in support of their own opinions, are chiefly derived from the general representations given us in Scripture concerning the perfections and moral government of God, and the powers and capacities of men, and not directly, from what it tells us, upon the subject of predestination itself.

Arminians, indeed, are accustomed to quote largely from Scripture in opposition to our doctrine and in support of their own, but these quotations only establish directly certain view in regard to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men; and from these views, thus established, they draw the inference that Calvinistic predestination cannot be true, because it is inconsistent with them. We admit that they are perfectly successful in establishing from Scripture that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin, and that He is not a respecter of persons,—and that men are responsible for their actions,—that they are guilty of sin, and justly punishable in all their transgressions of God's law, in all their shortcomings of what He requires of them,—that they are guilty of peculiarly aggravated sin, in every instance in which they refuse to comply with the invitations and commands addressed to them to come to Christ, to repent and turn to God, to believe in the name of His Son,—and are thus justly responsible for their own final perdition. They prove all this abundantly from Scripture, but they prove nothing more; and the only proof they have to adduce that God did not from eternity choose some men to everlasting life of His own good pleasure, and that He does not execute this decree in time by giving to these men faith, holiness, and perseverance, is just that the Calvinistic doctrine thus denied can be shown, in the way of inference and deduction, to be inconsistent with the representations given us in Scripture of God's perfections, and of men's capacities and responsibilities.

There is a class of texts appealed to by Arminians, that may seem to contradict this observation, though, indeed, the contradiction is only in appearance. I refer to those passages, often adduced by them, which seem to represent God as willing or desiring the salvation of all men, and Christ as dying with an intention of saving all men. It will be recollected that I have already explained that the establishment of the position, that God did not will or purpose to save all men, and that Christ did not die with an intention of saving all men,—that is, *omnes et singulos*, or all men collectively, or any man individually (for of course we do not deny that, in some sense, God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all),— proves directly, and not merely in the way of deduction or inference, the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. And it

might seem to follow, upon the ground of the same general principle,—though by a converse application of it,—that the proof, that God desired and purposed the salvation of all men, and that Christ died with an intention of saving all men, directly, and not merely by inference, disproves the Calvinistic, and establishes the Arminian, view of predestination. We admit that there is a sense in which these positions might be taken, the establishment of which would directly effect this. But then the difference between the two cases lies here, that the Arminians scarcely allege that they can make out such a sense of these positions, as would establish directly their main conclusion, without needing to bring in, in order to establish it, those general representations of the perfections and moral government of God, and of the capacities and responsibilities of men, which we have described as the only real support of their cause. So far as concerns the mere statements, that God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all, they could scarcely deny that there would be some ground —did we know nothing more of the matter—for judging, to some extent, of their import and bearing from the event or result; and upon the ground that all men are not saved, in point of fact, while God and Christ are possessed of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power, inferring that these statements were to be understood with some limitation, either as to the purpose or the act,—that is, as to the will or intention of God and Christ,—or as to the objects of the act, that is, the all. Now, in order to escape the force of this very obvious consideration, and to enable them to establish that sense of their positions, which alone would make them available, as directly disproving Calvinistic, and establishing Arminian, doctrines upon the subject of predestination, they are obliged, as the whole history of the manner in which this controversy has been conducted fully proves, to fall back upon the general representations given us in Scripture, with respect to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men. Thus we can still maintain the general position we have laid down,—namely, that the scriptural evidence adduced against Calvinism, and in favour of Arminianism, upon this point, does not consist of statements bearing directly and immediately upon the precise point to be proved, but of certain general representations concerning God and man, from which the falsehood of the one doctrine, and the truth of the other, are deduced in the way of inference. It is of some importance to

keep this consideration in remembrance, in studying this subject, as it is well fitted to aid us in forming a right conception of the true state of the case, argumentatively, and to confirm the impression of the strength of the evidence by which the Calvinistic scheme of theology is supported, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the arguments by which it is assailed.

The evidence adduced by the Arminians from Scripture just proves that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin,—that He is no respecter of persons,—and that a man is responsible for all his actions;—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punished for his disobedience to God's law, and for his refusal to repent and believe the gospel. They infer from this, that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is false; while we maintain—and we are not called upon to maintain more, at this stage of the argument—that this inference cannot be established; and that, in consequence, the proper evidence, direct and inferential, in favour of the Calvinistic argument, stands unassailed, and ought, in right reason, to compel our assent to its truth.

While the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, from its alleged inconsistency with the divine perfections and moral government, and from men's capacities and responsibilities, are the only real arguments against it, the discussion of these does not constitute the only materials to be found in the works which have been written upon the subject. Calvinists have had no small labour, while conducting the defence of their cause, in exposing the irrelevancy of many of the objections which have been adduced on the other side, and the misapprehensions and misstatements of their doctrine, on which many of the common objections against it are based; and it may be proper to make some observations upon these points, before we proceed to advert to the method in which the true and real difficulties of the case ought to be met.

Under the head of pure irrelevancies, are to be classed all the attempts which have been made by Arminian writers to found an argument against Calvinism upon the mere proof of the unchangeable obligation of the moral law, the universal acceptableness to God of holiness, and its indispensable necessity to men's happiness,—the necessity of faith and repentance, holiness and perseverance, in order to their admission into

heaven. There is nothing, in these and similar doctrines, which even appears to be at variance with any of the principles of the Calvinistic system. We do not deny, or need to deny, or to modify, or to throw into the background, any one of these positions. The question is not as to the certainty and invariableness of the connection between faith and holiness on the one hand, and heaven and happiness on the other. This is admitted on both sides; it is assumed and provided for upon both systems. The question is only as to the way and manner in which the maintenance of this connection invariably has been provided for, and is developed in fact; and here it is contended that the Calvinistic view of the matter is much more accordant with every consideration suggested by the scriptural representations of man's natural condition, and of the relation in which, both as a creature and as a sinner, he stands to God.

It is also a pure irrelevancy to talk, as is often done, as if Calvinistic doctrines implied, or produced, or assumed, any diminution of the number of those who are ultimately saved, as compared with Arminianism. A dogmatic assertion as to the comparative numbers of those of the human race who are saved and of those who perish, in the ultimate result of things, forms no part of Calvinism. The actual result of salvation, in the case of a portion of the human race, and of destruction in the case of the rest, is the same upon both systems, though they differ in the exposition of the principles by which the result is regulated and brought about. In surveying the past history of the world, or looking around on those who now occupy the earth, with the view of forming a sort of estimate of the fate that has overtaken, or yet awaits, the generations of their fellow-men (we speak, of course, of those who have grown up to give indications of their personal character; and there is nothing to prevent a Calvinist believing that all dying in infancy are saved), Calvinists introduce no other principle, and apply no other standard, than just the will of God, plainly revealed in His word, as to what those things are which accompany salvation; and consequently, if, in doing so, they should form a different estimate as to the comparative results from what Arminians would admit, this could not arise from anything peculiar to them, as holding Calvinistic doctrines, but only from their having formed and applied a higher standard of personal character—that is, of the holiness and morality which are necessary to prepare men

for admission to heaven—than the Arminians are willing to countenance. And yet it is very common among Arminian writers to represent Calvinistic doctrines as leading, or tending to lead, those who hold them, to consign to everlasting misery a large portion of the human race, whom the Arminians would admit to the enjoyment of heaven. But it is needless to dwell longer upon such manifestly irrelevant objections as these.

It is of more importance to advert to some of the misapprehensions and misstatements of Calvinistic doctrine, on which many of the common objections to it are based. These, as we have had occasion to mention in explaining the state of the question, are chiefly connected with the subject of reprobation,—a topic on which Arminians are fond of dwelling,—though it is very evident that the course they usually pursue in the discussion of this object, indicates anything but a real love of truth. I have already illustrated the unfairness of the attempts they usually make, to give priority and prominence to the consideration of reprobation, as distinguished from election; and have referred to the fact that the Arminians, at the Synod of Dort, insisted on beginning with the discussion of the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as a great hardship, when the synod refused to concede this.⁴⁵ And they have continued generally to pursue a similar policy. Whitby, in his celebrated book on the Five Points,—which has long been a standard work among Episcopalian Arminians, though it is not characterized by any ability,—devotes the first two chapters to the subject of reprobation. And John Wesley, in his work entitled *Predestination Calmly Considered*,⁴⁶ begins with proving that election necessarily implies reprobation, and thereafter confines his attention to the latter topic. Their object in this is very manifest. They know that reprobation can be more easily misrepresented, and set forth in a light that is fitted to prejudice men's feelings against it. I have already illustrated the unfairness of this policy, and have also taken occasion to advert to the difference between election and reprobation,—the nature and import of the doctrine we really hold on the latter subject,—and the misrepresentations which Arminians commonly make of our sentiments regarding it.

We have now to notice the real and serious objections against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from its alleged

inconsistency,—first, with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; and, secondly, with men's responsibility for all their acts of disobedience or transgression of God's law, including their refusal to repent and believe the gospel, and being thus the true authors and causes of their own destruction,—the second of these objections being, in substance, just the same as that which is founded upon the commands, invitations, and expostulations addressed to men in Scripture. The consideration of these objections has given rise to endless discussions on the most difficult and perplexing of all topics; but I shall limit myself to a few observations concerning it, directed merely to the object of suggesting some hints as to the chief things to be kept in view in the study of it.

First, there is one general consideration to which I have repeatedly had occasion to advert in its bearing upon other subjects, and which applies equally to this,—namely, that these allegations of the Arminians are merely objections against the truth of a doctrine, for which a large amount of evidence, that cannot be directly answered and disposed of, has been adduced, and that they ought to be kept in their proper place as objections. The practical effect of this consideration is, that in dealing with these allegations, we should not forget that the condition of the argument is this,—that the Calvinistic doctrine having been established by a large amount of evidence, direct and inferential, which cannot be directly answered, all that we are bound to do in dealing with objections which may be advanced against it,—that is, objections to the doctrine itself, as distinguished from objections to the proof,—is merely to show that these objections have not been substantiated,—that nothing has really been proved by our opponents, which affords any sufficient ground for rejecting the body of evidence by which our doctrine has been established. The onus probandi lies upon them; we have merely to show that they have not succeeded in proving any position which, from its intrinsic nature, viewed in connection with the evidence on which it rests, as sufficient to compel us to abandon the doctrine against which it is adduced. This is a consideration which it is important for us to keep in view and to apply in all cases to which it is truly and fairly applicable, as being fitted to preserve the argument clear and unembarrassed, and to promote the interests of truth. It is specially incumbent upon us to attend to the true condition of the argument in this respect, when the objection

is founded on, or connected with, considerations that have an immediate relation to a subject so far above our comprehension as the attributes of God, and the principles that regulate His dealings with His creatures. In dealing with objections derived from this source, we should be careful to confine ourselves within the limits which the logical conditions of the argument point out, lest, by taking a wider compass, we should be led to follow the objectors in their presumptuous speculations about matters which are too high for us. The obligation to act upon this principle, in dealing with objections with respect to the subject under consideration, may be said to be specially imposed upon us by the example of the Apostle Paul, who had to deal with the very same objections, and whose mode of disposing of them should be a guide and model to us.

We have already had occasion to advert to the fact—as affording a very strong presumption that Paul's doctrine was Calvinistic—that he gives us to understand that the doctrine which he taught in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was likely, or rather certain, to be assailed with the very same objections which have constantly been directed against Calvinism,—namely, that it contradicted God's justice, and excluded man's responsibility for his sins and ultimate destiny,—objections which are not likely to have been ever adduced against Arminianism, but which naturally, obviously, and spontaneously, spring up in opposition to Calvinism in the minds of men who are not accustomed to realize the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and to follow out what these great truths involve; who, in short, are not in the habit, in the ordinary train of their thoughts and reflections, of giving to God that place in the administration of the government of His creatures to which He is entitled. But we have at present to do, not with the evidence afforded by the fact that these objections naturally suggested themselves against the apostle's doctrine, but with the lesson which his example teaches as to the way in which they should be dealt with and disposed of. In place of formally and elaborately answering them, he just resolves the whole matter into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and men's incapacity either of frustrating His plans or of comprehending His counsels. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" etc. The conduct of the apostle in this matter is plainly fitted to teach us that we should rely mainly upon the direct and proper evidence of the doctrine itself; and,

when satisfied upon that point, pay little regard to objections, however obvious or plausible they may be, since the subject is one which we cannot fully understand, and resolves ultimately into an incomprehensible mystery, which our powers are unable to fathom. This is plainly the lesson which the conduct of the apostle is fitted to teach us; and it would have been well if both Calvinists and Arminians had been more careful to learn and to practise it. Arminians have often pressed these objections by very presumptuous speculations about the divine nature and attributes, and about what it was or was not befitting God, or consistent with His perfections, for Him to do; and Calvinists, in dealing with these objections, have often gone far beyond what the rules of strict reasoning required, or the apostle's example warranted,—and have indulged in speculations almost as presumptuous as those of their opponents. Calvinists have, I think, frequently erred, and involved themselves in difficulties, by attempting too much in explaining and defending their doctrines; and much greater caution and reserve, in entering into intricate speculations upon this subject, is not only dictated by sound policy, with reference to controversial success, but is imposed, as a matter of obligation, by just views of the sacredness and incomprehensibility of the subject, and of the deference due to the example of an inspired apostle. Instead of confining themselves to the one object of showing that Arminians have not proved that Calvinism necessarily implies anything inconsistent with what we know certainly concerning the perfections and moral government of God, or the capacities and responsibilities of man, they have often entered into speculations, by which they imagined that they could directly and positively vindicate their doctrines from all objections, and prove them to be encompassed with few or no difficulties. And thus the spectacle has not unfrequently been exhibited, on the one hand, of some shortsighted Arminian imagining that he has discovered a method of putting the objections against Calvinism in a much more conclusive and impressive form than they had ever received before; and, on the other hand, of some shortsighted Calvinist imagining that he had discovered a method of answering the objections much more satisfactorily than any that had been previously employed; while, all the time, the state of the case continued unchanged,—the real difficulty having merely had its position slightly shifted, or being a little more thrown into the background at one

point, only to appear again at another, as formidable as ever. The truth is, that no real additional strength, in substance, can be given to the objection, beyond what it had as adduced against the apostle, "Is there unrighteousness with God? why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?" and that nothing more can be done in the way of answering it, than bringing out the ground which he has suggested and employed,—of resolving all into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and the absolute dependence and utter worthlessness of man, and admitting that the subject involves an inscrutable mystery, which we are unable to fathom.

Secondly, it is important to remember that these objections—if they have any weight, and in so far as they have any—are directed equally against Calvinistic views of the divine procedure, as of the divine decrees,—of what God does, or abstains from doing, in time, in regard to those who are saved and those who perish, as well as of what He has decreed or purposed to do, or to abstain from doing, from eternity. Arminians, indeed, as I formerly explained, do not venture formally to deny that whatever God does in time, He decreed or purposed from eternity to do; but still they are accustomed to represent the matter in such a way as is fitted to convey the impression, that some special and peculiar difficulty attaches to the eternal decrees or purposes ascribed to God, different in kind from, or superior in degree to, that attaching to the procedure ascribed to Him in providence. And hence it becomes important—in order at once to enable us to form a juster estimate of the amount of evidence in favour of our doctrine, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the objections adduced against it—to have our minds familiar with the very obvious, but very important, consideration, that Calvinists do not regard anything as comprehended in the eternal decrees or purposes of God, above and beyond what they regard God as actually doing in time in the execution of these decrees. If it be inconsistent with the perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should form certain decrees or purposes from eternity in regard to men, it must be equally, but not more, inconsistent with them, that He should execute these decrees in time. And anything which it is consistent with God's perfections and man's moral nature that God should do, or effect, or

bring to pass, in time, it can be no more objectionable to regard Him as having from eternity decreed to do.

The substance of the actual procedure which Calvinists ascribe to God in time—in connection with the ultimate destiny of those who are saved and of those who perish—is this, that in some men He produces or effects faith, regeneration, holiness, and perseverance, by an exercise of almighty power which they cannot frustrate or overcome, and which, certainly and infallibly, produces the result,—and that the rest of men He leaves in their natural state of guilt and depravity, withholding from them, or de facto not bestowing upon them, that almighty and efficacious grace, without which—as He, of course, well knows—they are unable to repent and believe,—the inevitable result thus being, that they perish in their sins. If this be the actual procedure of God in dealing with men in time, it manifestly introduces no new or additional difficulty into the matter to say, that He has from eternity decreed or resolved to do all this; and yet many persons seem to entertain a lurking notion—which the common Arminian mode of stating and enforcing these objections is fitted to cherish—that, over and above any difficulties that may attach to the doctrine which teaches that God does this, there is some special and additional difficulty attaching to the doctrine which represents Him as having decreed or resolved to do this from eternity. To guard against this source of misconception and confusion, it is desirable, both in estimating the force of the evidence in support of Calvinism, and the strength of the Arminian objections, to conceive of them as brought to bear upon what our doctrine represents God as doing, rather than upon what it represents Him as decreeing to do; while, of course, the Arminians are quite entitled to adduce, if they can find them, any special objections against the general position which we fully and openly avow,—namely, that all that God does in time, He decreed from eternity do. The substance, then, of the objection, is really this,—that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should certainly and effectually, by His almighty grace, produce faith and regeneration in some men, that He may thereby secure their eternal salvation, and abstain from bestowing upon others this almighty grace, or from effecting in them those changes, with the full knowledge that the inevitable result

must be, that He will consign them to everlasting misery as a punishment for their impenitence and unbelief, as well as their other sins.

Thirdly, we observe that the direct and proper answer to the Arminian objections is this,—that nothing which Calvinists ascribe to God, or represent Him as doing, in connection with the character, actions, and ultimate destiny, either of those who are saved or of those who perish, can be proved necessarily to involve anything inconsistent with the perfections of God, or the principles of His moral government, or with the just rights and claims, or the actual capacities and responsibilities, of men. With respect to the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with the perfections and moral government of God, this can be maintained and defended only by means of assertions, for which no evidence can be produced, and which are manifestly, in their general character, uncertain and presumptuous. It is a much safer and more becoming course, to endeavour to ascertain what God has done or will do, and to rest in the conviction that all this is quite consistent with His infinite holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy, than to reason back from our necessarily defective and inadequate conceptions of these infinite perfections, as to what He must do, or cannot do.

It cannot be proved that we ascribe to God anything inconsistent with infinite holiness, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He is involved in the responsibility of the production of the sinful actions of men. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His justice, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He withholds from any man anything to which that man has a just and rightful claim. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His goodness and mercy, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He does not bestow upon men all the goodness and mercy which it consists with the combined glory of His whole moral perfections to impart to them, and because it is evidently unreasonable to represent anything as inconsistent with God's goodness and mercy which actually takes place under His moral government, when He could have prevented it if He had chosen. On such grounds as these, it is easy enough to show, as it has been often shown, that the allegation that Calvinism ascribes to

God anything necessarily inconsistent with His moral perfections and government, cannot be substantiated upon any clear and certain grounds. This is sufficient to prove that the objection is possessed of no real weight. In consequence, probably, of the sounder principles of philosophizing now more generally prevalent in this country, the objection to Calvinism—on which its opponents used to rest so much, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God—has been virtually abandoned by some of the most distinguished anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—such as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston.⁴⁷

It may seem, however, as if that branch of the objection had a stronger and firmer foundation to rest upon, which is based upon the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with what is known concerning the capacities and responsibilities of men. Man is indeed better known to us than God; and there is not the same presumption in arguing from the qualities and properties of man, as in arguing from the perfections and attributes of God. It is fully admitted as a great truth, which is completely established, and which ought never to be overlooked or thrown into the background, but to be constantly and strenuously enforced and maintained,—that man is responsible for all his actions,—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punishable whenever he transgresses or comes short of anything which God requires of men, and, more especially, whenever he refuses to comply with the command addressed to him, to repent and turn to God, and to believe in the name of His Son. All this is fully conceded; but still it is denied that any conclusive proof has ever been adduced, that there is anything in all this necessarily inconsistent with what Calvinists represent God as doing, or abstaining from doing, in connection with the character, actions, and destiny of men. God has so constituted man, and has placed him in such circumstances, as to make him fully responsible for his actions. He has made full provision in man's constitution, not only for his being responsible, but for his feeling and knowing that he is responsible; and this conviction of responsibility is probably never wholly extinguished in men's breasts. We doubt very much whether there ever was a man who firmly and honestly believed that he was not responsible for his violations of God's law. There have been men who professed to deny this, and have even professed to base

their denial of their own responsibility upon views that resembled those generally entertained by Calvinists. And Arminians have been sometimes disposed to catch at such cases, as if they afforded evidence that the maintenance of Calvinistic doctrines, and the maintenance of a sense of personal responsibility, were incompatible with each other. But the cases have not been very numerous where men even professed to have renounced a sense of their own responsibility; and even where this profession has been made, there is good ground to doubt whether it really coincided with an actual conviction, decidedly and honestly held, and was not rather a hypocritical pretence, though mixed, it may be, with some measure of self-delusion.

It is admitted generally, that it is unsuitable to the very limited powers and capacities of man to make his perception of the harmony, or consistency, of doctrines, the test and standard of their actual harmony and consistency with each other; and that, consequently, it is unwarrantable for us to reject a doctrine, which appears to be established by satisfactory evidence, direct and appropriate, merely because we cannot perceive how it can be reconciled with another doctrine, which, when taken by itself, seems also to be supported by satisfactory evidence. We may find it impossible to explain how the doctrine of God's foreordination and providence—of His giving or withholding efficacious grace—can be reconciled, or shown to be consistent, with that of men's responsibility; but this is no sufficient reason why we should reject either of them, since they both appear to be sufficiently established by satisfactory proof,—proof which, when examined upon the ground of its own merits, it seems impossible successfully to assail. The proof adduced, that they are inconsistent with each other, is derived from considerations more uncertain and precarious than those which supply the proof of the truth of each of them, singly and separately; and therefore, in right reason, it should not be regarded as sufficient to warrant us in rejecting either the one or the other, though we may not be able to perceive and develop their harmony or consistency. Let the apparent inconsistency, or difficulty of reconciling them, be held a good reason for scrutinizing rigidly the evidence upon which each rests; but if the evidence for both be satisfactory and conclusive, then let both be received and admitted, even though the difficulty of establishing their consistency, or our felt inability

to perceive and explain it, remains unaltered.

It is also to be remembered, that Calvinists usually maintain that it has never been satisfactorily proved that anything more is necessary to render a rational being responsible for his actions than the full power of doing as he chooses,—of giving full effect to his own volitions,—a power the possession and exercise of which does not even seem to be inconsistent with God's fore-ordination of all events, and His providence in bringing them to pass; and also that they generally hold that men's inability or incapacity to will anything spiritually good is a penal infliction or punishment justly and righteously inflicted upon account of sin,—a subject which I have already discussed. On these various grounds, it has been shown that the validity of the Arminian objections cannot be established,—that their leading positions upon this subject cannot be proved,—and that, therefore, there is no sufficient reason, in anything they have adduced, why we should reject a doctrine so fully established by evidence which, on the ground of its own proper merits, cannot be successfully assailed.

Fourthly, There is one other important position maintained by Calvinists upon this subject, which completes the vindication of their cause, and most fully warrants them to put aside the Arminian objections as insufficient to effect the object for which they are adduced. It is this,—that the real difficulties connected with this mysterious subject are not peculiar to the Calvinistic system of theology, but apply almost, if not altogether, equally to every other,—that no system can get rid of the difficulties with which the subject is encompassed, or afford any real explanation of them,—and that, at bottom, the real differences among different theories merely mark the different positions in which the difficulties are placed, without materially affecting their magnitude or their solubility. It is very plain that God and men, in some way, concur or combine in forming man's character, in producing man's actions, and in determining man's fate. This is not a doctrine peculiar to any one scheme of religion professedly founded on the Christian revelation, but is common to them all,—nay, it must be admitted by all men who do not take refuge in atheism. It is very plain, likewise, that the explanation of the way and manner in which God and men thus combine or concur in

producing these results, involves mysteries which never have been fully solved, and which, therefore, we are warranted in supposing, cannot be solved by men in their present condition, and with their existing capacities and means of knowledge. This difficulty consists chiefly in this, that when we look at the actual results,—including, as these results do, men's depravity by nature, sinful actions, and everlasting destruction,—we are unable to comprehend or explain how God and man can both be concerned in the production of them, while yet each acts in the matter consistently with the powers and qualities which he possesses,—God consistently with both His natural and His moral attributes,—and man consistently with both his entire dependence as a creature, and his free agency as a responsible being. This is the great mystery which we cannot fathom; and all the difficulties connected with the investigation of religion, or the exposition of the relation between God and man, can easily be shown to resolve or run up into this. This is a difficulty which attaches to every system except atheism,—which every system is bound to meet and to grapple with,—and which no system can fully explain and dispose of; and this, too, is a position which Archbishop Whately has had the sagacity and the candour to perceive and admit.⁴⁸

In the endless speculations which have been directed professedly to the elucidation of this mysterious subject, there has been exhibited some tendency to run into opposite extremes,—to give prominence to God's natural, to the comparative omission or disregard of His moral, attributes,—to give prominence to man's dependence as a creature, to the comparative omission or disregard of his free agency as a responsible being,—or the reverse. The prevailing tendency, however, has been towards the second of these extremes,—namely, that of excluding God, and exalting man,—of giving prominence to God's moral attributes, or rather those of them which seem to come least into collision with man's dignity and self-sufficiency, and to overlook His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom, and His sovereign supremacy,—to exalt man's share in the production of the results in the exercise of his own powers and capacities, as if he were, or could be, independent of God. Experience abundantly proves that the general tendency of men is to lean to this extreme, and thus to rob God of the honour and glory which belong to Him. This, therefore, is the extreme which should be most carefully

guarded against ; and it should be guarded against just by implicitly receiving whatever doctrine upon this subject seems to rest upon satisfactory evidence,—however humbling it may be to the pride and self-sufficiency of man, and however unable we may be to perceive its consistency with other doctrines which we also believe.

The pride and presumption, the ignorance and depravity, of man, all lead him to exclude God, and to exalt himself, and to go as far as he can in the way of solving all mysteries; and both these tendencies combine in leading the mass of mankind to lean towards the Arminian rather than the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject. But neither can the mystery be solved, nor can man be exalted to that position of independence and self-sufficiency to which he aspires, unless God be wholly excluded, unless His most essential and unquestionable perfections be denied, unless His supreme dominion in the government of His creatures be altogether set aside. The real difficulty is to explain how moral evil should, under the government of a God of infinite holiness, power, and wisdom, have been introduced, and have prevailed so extensively; and especially—for this is at once the most awful and mysterious department of the subject—how it should have been permitted to issue, in fact, in the everlasting misery and destruction of so many of God's creatures. It is when we realize what this, as an actual result, involves; and when we reflect on what is implied in the consideration, that upon any theory this state of things does come to pass under the government of a God of infinite knowledge and power, who foresaw it all, and could have prevented it all, if this had been His will, that we see most clearly and most impressively the groundlessness and the presumption of the objections commonly adduced against the Calvinistic scheme of theology; and that we feel most effectually constrained to acquiesce in the apostle's resolution of the whole matter, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever."49

XIV. Perseverance of Saints.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, or of believers is to be regarded as an essential part of the Calvinistic scheme of theology. That it is so is plain, from the nature of the case,—the obvious necessary connection of the different doctrines of Calvinism with each other,—and also from the fact that the doctrine has been held by all Calvinists, and denied by almost all Arminians. There are two apparent exceptions to this historical statement; and it may be proper to advert to them, as they are the cases of two no less important persons than Augustine and Arminius.

Augustine seems to have thought that men who were true believers, and who were regenerated, so as to have been really brought under the influence of divine truth and religious principle, might fall away and finally perish; but then he did not think that those persons who might, or did, thus fall away and perish belonged to the number of those who had been predestinated, or elected, to life. He held that all those who were elected to life must, and did, persevere, and thus attain to salvation. It was of course abundantly evident, that if God chose some men, absolutely and unconditionally, to eternal life,—and this Augustine firmly believed,—these persons must, and would, certainly be saved. Whether persons might believe and be regenerated who had not been predestinated to life, and who, in consequence, might fall away, and thereby fail to attain salvation, is a distinct question; and on this question Augustine's views seem to have been obscured and perverted by the notions that then generally prevailed about the objects and effects of outward ordinances, and especially by something like the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which has been, perhaps, as powerful and extensive a cause of deadly error as any doctrine that Satan ever invented. Augustine's error, then, lay in supposing that men might believe and be regenerated who had not been elected to life, and might consequently fail of ultimate salvation; but he never did, and never could, embrace any notion so irrational and inconsequential, as that God could have absolutely chosen some even to life, and then permitted them to fall away and to perish; and the negation of this notion, which Augustine never held, constitutes the sum and substance of what Calvinists have taught upon the subject of perseverance.

Arminius never wholly renounced the doctrine of the certain

perseverance of all believers, even after he had abandoned all the other principles of Calvinism, but spoke of this as a point on which he had not fully made up his mind, and which, he thought, required further investigation,—thus virtually bearing testimony to the difficulty of disposing of the scriptural evidence on which the doctrine rests. His immediate followers, likewise, professed for a time some hesitation upon this point; but their contemporary opponents⁵⁰ do not seem to have given them much credit for sincerity in the doubts which they professed to entertain regarding it, because, while they did not for a time directly and explicitly support a negative conclusion, the whole current of their statements and arguments seemed plainly enough to indicate that they had already renounced the generally received doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject. They very soon, even before the Synod of Dort, openly renounced the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, along with the other doctrines of Calvinism; and I am not aware that any instance has since occurred, in which any Calvinist has hesitated to maintain this doctrine, or any Arminian has hesitated to deny it.

This doctrine is thus stated in our Confession of Faith:⁵¹ " They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved." Little needs to be said in explanation of the meaning of these statements. The subject of the proposition is a certain class of persons who are marked out by two qualities,—namely, that God has accepted them in His Beloved, and that He has effectually called and sanctified them by His Spirit. This implies that they are persons on whose state and character an important change has taken place. As to their state, they have passed from that condition of guilt and condemnation in which all men lie by nature, into a condition of favour and acceptance with God, so that their sins are pardoned, and they are admitted into God's family and friendship, upon the ground of what Christ has done and suffered for them. As to their character, they have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by the operation of the Holy Ghost; their natural enmity to God, and their depravity, have been subdued; holy principles have been implanted in their hearts; and they have entered upon a course of new obedience. These changes are manifestly represented in Scripture as being, wherever

they have taken place, inseparably connected with faith in Christ Jesus; so that the persons here described are just true believers in Christ,—men who have been born again of the word of God, through the belief of the truth. Of all such persons it is asserted that they can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; that is, from the condition of acceptance with God, and of personal holiness, into which they have been brought, but shall certainly persevere therein,—that is, in the state or condition previously described,—and be eternally saved. It is asserted, not merely that none of these do, in point of fact, fall away, and that all of them, in point of fact, persevere and are saved; but that they cannot fall away,—some effectual and infallible provision having been made to prevent this result.

The statement, that they can neither totally nor finally fall away, has reference to a notion which has been broached, especially by some Lutheran writers, who taught that believers or saints might fall away totally, though not finally. The notion which these persons seem to have entertained was something of this sort,—that men who had once believed might sin so much as to forfeit and lose altogether the privileges of the condition, both as to state and character, into which they had been brought by believing,—so as to become, in so far as concerned the favour and acceptance with which God regarded them, and the moral principles by which, for the time, they were animated, as bad as they were before they believed; but that all such persons would be again brought, *de novo*, into a state of grace, and that thus they might fall away or apostatize, totally, but not finally. This notion of a total, but not final, falling away, is evidently derived much more from observation of what sometimes takes place in the church, than from the study of God's word. Cases do sometimes occur, in which believers fall into heinous sins; and the persons to whose views we are now referring, seem to think that such cases cannot be explained, except upon the supposition that these sins imply, or produce, a total falling away from a state of grace, while they so far defer to the general strain of Scripture as to admit, that all in whom faith and regeneration have been once produced will certainly be recovered from their apostasy, and will be eternally saved. It was in opposition to this notion that our Confession asserted that believers cannot fall away totally any more than finally,—meaning thereby, that

when a state of grace, as including both acceptance with God and the existence and operation of holy moral principles in a nature renewed, has been once produced, it is never again totally lost, so as that these persons are regarded and treated by God as aliens and enemies, like those who are still living in their natural condition of guilt, or ever become again as thoroughly depraved, in point of principle and motive,—as destitute of all holiness of nature and character,—as they once were, however heinous the particular sins into which they may have fallen.

This doctrine, of the perseverance of saints or believers, is evidently a necessary and indispensable part of the Calvinistic system of theology,—being clearly involved in, or deducible from, the other fundamental doctrines of the system, which we have already considered. If it be true that God has, from eternity, absolutely and unconditionally chosen some men, certain persons, to eternal life, these men assuredly will all infallibly be saved. If it be also true that He has arranged that no man shall be saved, unless upon earth he be brought into a state of grace, unless he repent and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness. He will assuredly give to all whom He has chosen to life faith and holiness, and will infallibly secure that they shall persevere therein unto the end. And as it is further taught by Calvinists, that God produces in some men faith and conversion in the execution of His decree of election, just because He has decreed to save these men,—and does so for the purpose of saving them,—the whole of what they teach under the head of perseverance is thus effectually provided for, and thoroughly established,—faith and regeneration being never produced in any except those whose ultimate salvation has been secured, and whose perseverance, therefore, in faith and holiness must be certain and infallible. All this is too plain to require any illustration; and Calvinists must of course, in consistency, take the responsibility of maintaining the certain perseverance of all believers or saints,—of all in whom faith and holiness have been once produced. It is not quite so clear and certain that Arminians are bound, in consistency, to deny this doctrine,—though the general spirit and tendency of their system are adverse to it. They might perhaps, without inconsistency, hold that it is possible, that all who have been enabled to repent and believe will, in point of fact, persevere and be saved; but as they teach that men, in the exercise of their own free-will, can resist and frustrate the grace of

God's Spirit, exerted in strength sufficient to produce faith and conversion, they could scarcely avoid maintaining the possibility, at least, of their throwing it off after it had taken possession of them, and thus finally falling away.

Their general practice is, to give much prominence, in discussion, to this subject of perseverance; and they think that this affords them a good opportunity of bringing out, in the most palpable and effective way, their more popular objections against the Calvinistic system in general, and also of supplying their lack of direct scriptural evidence upon the precise question of predestination, by adducing, in opposition to that doctrine, the proof they think they can bring forward from Scripture, that believers and saints—all of whom Calvinists regard as having been elected to life—may and do fall away, and perish.

We may advert to these two points,—namely, first, to the form in which, in connection with this doctrine, Arminians commonly put the objection against Calvinism generally; and, secondly, to the evidence against it which the scriptural statements upon this particular topic are alleged to furnish.

Their objection, of course, is, that if those who have been once brought into a state of grace cannot finally fall away and perish, then they may, and probably will—this being the natural tendency of such a doctrine—live in careless indifference and security, and be little concerned to avoid sin, since it cannot affect injuriously their everlasting condition. Now this objection is just a specimen of a general mode of misrepresentation, to which Arminians very commonly resort in this whole controversy,—that, namely, of taking a part of our doctrine, disjoining it from the rest, and then founding an objection upon this particular and defective view of it. The great general principle which we hold and teach, that the means are fore-ordained as well as the end, affords a complete answer to the objection. But we may now advert more particularly to the way in which this general principle bears upon the special aspect of the objection, as brought out in connection with the doctrine of perseverance. The perseverance which we contend for—and which, we say, is effectually provided for and secured—is just a perseverance in faith and holiness,—a continuing steadfast in believing, and in bringing forth all the fruits of

righteousness. Perseverance is not merely continuing for some time upon earth after faith and regeneration have been produced, and then being admitted, as a matter of course, to heaven, without any regard to the moral history of the intervening period; it is a perseverance in the course on which men have entered,—a perseverance unto the end in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness. This, we say, has been provided for, and will be certainly effected. The case of a man who appeared to have been brought to faith and repentance, but who afterwards fell into habitual carelessness and sin, and died in this condition, is not a case which exhibits and illustrates the tendency and effects of our doctrine of perseverance, rightly understood, and viewed in all its extent; on the contrary, it contradicts it; and if it were clearly established to have become a real case of faith and conversion, it would, we admit, disprove it. In regard to all such cases, it is incumbent upon us, not merely from the necessity of defending our doctrine against objections, but from the intrinsic nature of the doctrine itself, to assert and maintain that true faith and regeneration never existed, and therefore could not be persevered in. We simply look away from the partial and defective view of our doctrine given by our opponents,—we just take in the whole doctrine as we are accustomed to explain it; and we see at once, that the supposed case, and the objection founded upon it, are wholly irrelevant,—that our real doctrine has nothing to do with it. If our doctrine be true, then no such case could possibly occur, where true faith had once been produced, because that very doctrine implies that perseverance in this faith and in the holiness which springs from it, has been provided for and secured; and if a case of their falling away could be established with regard to a believer, then the fair inference would be, not that our doctrine produced, or tended to produce, such a result, but that the doctrine was unfounded.

As the objection derived from the alleged tendency of our doctrine thus originates in a partial or defective view of what the doctrine is, so, in like manner, any such abuse or perversion of the doctrine by those who profess to believe and to act upon it, must originate in the same source. They can abuse it, to encourage themselves in carelessness and sin, only when they look at a part of the doctrine, and shut out the whole,—when they forget that the means have been fore-ordained as well as the end,—that the thing which God has promised and provided for, is just

perseverance in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness; and that He has provided for securing this, just because He has established an invariable connection between perseverance unto the end in faith and holiness, as a means, and eternal salvation, as the end. The true way to judge of the practical tendency and result of a doctrine, is to conceive of it as fully and correctly understood in its real character, in its right relations, and in its whole extent,—to conceive of it as firmly and cordially believed, and as judiciously and intelligently applied; and then to consider what effect it is fitted to produce upon the views, motives, and conduct of those who so understand, believe, and apply it. When the doctrine of the perseverance of believers is tested in this way, it can be easily shown, not only to have no tendency to encourage men in carelessness and indifference about the regulation of their conduct, but to have a tendency directly the reverse. In virtue of the principle of the means being fore-ordained as well as the end, and of an invariable connection being thus established between perseverance in faith and holiness on the one hand, and salvation on the other, it leaves all the ordinary obligations and motives to steadfastness and diligence—to unshaken and increasing holiness of heart and life, and to the use of all the means which conduce to the promotion of this result,—to say the very least, wholly unimpaired, to operate with all the force which properly belongs to them. The position of a man who has been enabled by God's grace to repent and believe,—who is persuaded that this change has been effected upon him,—and who, in consequence, entertains the conviction that he will persevere and be saved, viewed in connection with other principles plainly revealed, and quite consistent with all the doctrines of Calvinism, is surely fitted to call into operation the strongest and most powerful motives derived from every consideration relating to God and to himself,—his past history, his present situation and prospects, all combining to constrain him to run in the way of God's commandments with enlarged heart. And then, it is further to be remembered, that the doctrine which he believes necessarily involves in it, as a part of itself,—or at least as an immediate consequence,—that he can have no good ground for believing that he is in a condition of safety, and warranted to entertain the assurance of eternal happiness, unless he is holding fast the profession of his faith without wavering,—unless he is continuing steadfast in the paths of new obedience, dying more and more unto sin, and living

more and more unto righteousness.

The objection, about the tendency of this doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers to encourage them to live in carelessness and sin, on the ground that their eternal welfare has been secured, further assumes that believers—men who have been brought, by God's almighty power, from darkness to light,—whose eyes have been opened to behold the glory of God in the face of His Son,—who have been led to see and feel that they are not their own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of God's own Son—are still wholly incapable of being influenced by any motives but those derived from a selfish and exclusive regard to their own safety and happiness. And even if we were to concede all this, and to descend, for the sake of argument, to the low moral level on which our opponents are accustomed to take their stand in discussing such questions, we could still present to believers sufficiently strong motives,—addressed exclusively to their selfishness,—to abstain from all sin, even without needing to urge that, by sinning, they would forfeit their eternal happiness; for our Confession teaches, in full accordance with the word of God, that though believers cannot totally and finally fall away, but shall certainly persevere and be saved, yet that "nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves,"⁵²—a statement which is true, in some measure, of all the sins which believers commit, and not merely of the "grievous sins" into which they sometimes fall.

But we shall not dwell longer upon this topic, and proceed to notice the other points to which we referred,—namely, the scriptural evidence bearing directly and immediately upon this particular doctrine. Calvinists contend that this doctrine, besides being necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the great truths which we have already considered and established, has its own proper, direct Scripture evidence, amply sufficient to establish it as a distinct and independent truth. They

undertake to prove, by direct and appropriate Scripture evidence, the position that those who have been brought by faith and conversion into a state of grace, cannot finally fall away from it, but shall certainly persevere to the end, and be eternally saved; and if this can be proved as a distinct and independent truth, it manifestly tends very directly and very powerfully to confirm the whole of the leading principles of the Calvinistic theology,—to swell the mass of evidence by which Calvinism is proved to be indeed the doctrine of the word of God. Arminians, however, as we have intimated, profess to produce from Scripture direct proof of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance, which, as we formerly explained, they scarcely profess to do in regard to the doctrine of election; and indeed they rest very much upon the proof they adduce of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance as the leading direct scriptural evidence they have to bring forward against the whole Calvinistic system. We are quite willing to concede to them, that if they can really prove from Scripture that any men who have once believed and been born again have fallen away and finally perished, or that they may fall away and perish,—no certain and effectual provision having been made by God to prevent this,—the doctrine that God, out of His own good pleasure, elected some men to everlasting life, must be abandoned; for we will not undertake to defend Augustine's position, that some men who believed and were converted might fall, though none who were elected could do so.

The Scripture evidence which Arminians produce in opposition to our doctrine, and in support of their own, upon this subject of perseverance, is much stronger than what they have been able to bring forward on any other topic involved in this whole controversy; and it must, in fairness, be allowed to possess considerable plausibility. There are passages in Scripture, which, taken in their most obvious sense, do seem to imply that men who once believed and were converted, did, or might, fall away and finally perish; and if these statements stood alone, they might perhaps be held sufficient to warrant the reception of this doctrine. We have, however, in Scripture, a large body of conclusive evidence in support of the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all believers,—evidence both direct and inferential,—evidence which cannot be answered and explained away,—evidence greatly superior in strength, extent, and explicitness, to any that can be adduced upon the other side.

The proper question, of course, is, What is the doctrine which Scripture really teaches upon this subject, when we take into account the whole of the materials which it furnishes, and embody the united substance of them all, making due allowance for every position which it really sanctions? Now, Calvinists undertake to establish the following propositions upon this subject: first, that Scripture contains clear and conclusive evidence of the certain, final perseverance of all who have ever been united to Christ through faith, and have been born again of His word,—conclusive evidence that they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life; secondly, that there is no sufficient scriptural evidence to warrant a denial of this doctrine, or to establish the opposite one; and that there is no great difficulty—no great force or straining being required for the purpose—in showing that the passages on which the Arminians found, may be so explained as to be consistent with our doctrine, while it is impossible—without the most unwarrantable and unnatural force and straining—to reconcile with their doctrine the scriptural statements which we adduce in support of ours.

I cannot notice the body of scriptural proof, derived at once from great general principles and from numerous and explicit statements, bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute, by which our doctrine is conclusively established; but I may briefly advert to the way in which we dispose of the evidence which is adduced by the Arminians on the other side, and which, at first sight, possesses considerable plausibility. It consists, of course, in general, of statements which seem to assert directly, or by plain implication, that men who have been brought into a state of grace,—under the influence of true faith and genuine holiness,—have fallen, or may fall, away from it, and finally perish. Now let it be remarked, what they are bound to prove in regard to any scriptural statements which they adduce for this purpose,—namely, first, that they clearly and necessarily imply that the persons spoken of were once true believers, had been really renewed in the spirit of their minds; and, secondly, that these persons did, or might, finally perish. They must prove both these positions; and if they fail in proving either of them, their argument falls to the ground. Both must be proved to apply, as matter of fact, or at least of undoubted actual possibility, to the very same persons. In regard to some of the passages they adduce, we undertake to show that

neither of these positions can be established in regard to the persons of whom they speak; but this is not necessary to our argument. It is quite sufficient if we can show that no conclusive evidence has been adduced, either that these persons were ever true believers, or else that they did or could finally perish. When either of these positions has been established, we are entitled to set the passage aside, as wholly inadequate to serve the purpose of our opponents,—as presenting no real or even apparent inconsistency with our doctrine. And, in this way, many of the passages on which the Arminians base their denial of the doctrine of perseverance, can be disposed of without difficulty.

There is, however, another class of passages from Scripture adduced by them, to which these considerations do not so directly apply. These are the warnings against apostasy, or falling away, addressed to believers, which, it is argued, imply a possibility of their falling away. Now we do not deny that there is a sense in which it is possible for believers to fall away,—that is, when they are viewed simply in themselves,—with reference to their own powers and capacities,—and apart from God's purpose or design with respect to them. Turretine, in explaining the state of the question upon this point, says: "Non quaeritur de possibilitate deficiendi a parte hominis, et in sensu diviso. Nemo enim negat fideles in se spectatos pro mutabilitate et infirmitate naturae suae, non tantum deficere posse, sed nihil posse aliud sibi relictos, accedentibus inprimis Satanae et mundi tentationibus. Sed a parte Dei, quoad ejus propositum, in sensu composito, et ratione ipsius eventus, quo sensu impossibilem dicimus eorum defectionem, non absolute et simpliciter, sed hypotheticè et secundum quid."⁵³ It is only in this sense—which we admit, and which is not inconsistent with our doctrine—that a possibility of falling away is indicated in the passages referred to; their proper primary effect evidently being just to bring out, in the most impressive way, the great principle of the invariableness of the connection which God has established between perseverance, as opposed to apostasy, as a means, and salvation as an end; and thus to operate as a means of effecting the end which God has determined to accomplish,—of enabling believers to persevere, or preserving them from apostasy; and to effect this in entire accordance with the principles of their moral constitution, by producing constant humility, watchfulness, and diligence.

In regard to apparent cases of the actual final apostasy of believers occurring in the church, we have no difficulty in disposing of them. The impossibility of men knowing with certainty the character of their fellow-men individually, so as to be thoroughly assured that they are true believers, is too well established, both by the statements of Scripture and by the testimony of experience, to allow us to hesitate about confidently applying the principle of the apostle, which indeed furnishes a key to solve many of the difficulties of this whole subject: " They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."54

The impossibility of believers falling away totally does not so directly result from principles peculiarly Calvinistic, which bear rather upon falling away finally, but from scriptural views of regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and of the relation into which they have been brought to God and Christ. To adopt the language of the Westminster Confession, "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof."55

XV. Socinianism—Arminianism—Calvinism.

We have now completed the survey of the Arminian as well as the Socinian controversies; and in surveying these controversies, we have had occasion to direct attention to almost all the most important departments of Christian theology. Socinianism is not only a denial of all that is most peculiar and fundamental in the system of revealed religion, but a positive assertion of a system of doctrine diametrically opposed to that which God has made known to us; while Arminianism is an attempt to set up a scheme intermediate between that which involves a rejection of almost all that the Bible was intended to teach, and the system of Calvinism, which alone corresponds with the scriptural views the guilt,

depravity, and helplessness of man,—of the sovereign supremacy and the all-sufficient efficacious agency of God,—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—in the accomplishment of his salvation. There are some general considerations naturally suggested by the survey we have taken of these three schemes of doctrine,—the Socinian, the Arminian, and the Calvinistic,—which seem fitted to assist us in forming a right estimate of the different views of the schemes of theology that have been maintained by men who all professed to believe in the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures. There are chiefly three considerations of this sort to which I would advert.

They are these: first, that in the scheme of Christian theology there is a class of doctrines which occupy a higher platform, or are possessed of greater intrinsic importance, than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism; secondly, that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, differs little, practically, from Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it were openly to deny the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the necessity of the special agency of the Holy Spirit; and, thirdly, that Arminianism, in its more evangelical form, besides being chargeable with important errors and defects, is inconsistent with itself, since the important scriptural truths which it embodies cannot be held consistently, except in connection with the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. I shall merely make an observation or two in explanation of these three positions.

The first is, that in the scheme of Christian theology there is a class of doctrines which may be said to occupy a higher platform than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism. The doctrines here referred to are, of course, those taught by orthodox Lutherans and by evangelical Arminians, as well as by Calvinists, concerning the depravity of man by nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification. The Bible was given us mainly to unfold to us the lost and ruined state of man by nature, and the existence, character, and operation of that provision which God has made for saving sinners. Everything which is taught in Scripture is equally incumbent upon us, as a matter of duty or obligation, to believe, as every statement rests equally upon the authority of God. But there is a

great difference, in point of intrinsic importance, among the many truths of different kinds and classes taught us in Scripture; and the general measure of their relative importance—though we are very incompetent to apply it, and should be very careful lest we misapply it—is just the directness and immediateness of the relation in which they stand towards that which we have described as the great leading object of revelation,—namely, making known the ruin and the recovery of mankind. The doctrines which directly and immediately unfold these topics occupy a position, in point of intrinsic importance, which is not shared by any others; and these doctrines are just those which tell us of the universal guilt and entire depravity of man,—of the sovereign mercy of God, in providing for men's salvation,—of the person and work of the Son, and the way in which His vicarious work bears upon the justification of sinners,—and of the operation of the Holy Spirit, in applying to men individually the benefits which Christ purchased for them, and preparing them for heaven, by producing faith in them, and by regenerating and sanctifying their natures.

Now there can be no reasonable doubt that there have been, and that there are, men who have entertained views upon all these subjects, which we must admit to be scriptural and correct,—because, in the main, the same as we ourselves believe,—who yet have rejected the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. The substance of what we assert is this,—that men who agree with us in holding scriptural views upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, do agree with us on subjects that are more important and fundamental, and that ought to occupy a more prominent place in the ordinary course of public instruction than those in which they differ from us. They hold the truth upon those points which it was the great leading object of revelation to teach us,—which bear most directly and immediately upon the exposition of the way of a sinner's salvation,—which ought to occupy the most frequent and the most prominent place in the preaching of the gospel,—and which God most commonly blesses for the conversion of sinners. Their consistency, in holding scriptural doctrines upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, is not at present the question; that will be adverted to afterwards: the fact that they do hold them is undoubted, and it ought to be fully admitted and fairly estimated.

It is not, indeed, strictly correct to say that they hold purely scriptural views upon all these most important topics. We have had occasion, in regard to every one of them, to point out something erroneous, or at least defective, in their sentiments or impressions; and we have often asserted that everything, however apparently insignificant, which either transgresses or comes short of what Scripture teaches upon these points, is sinful and dangerous. Such, indeed, is the harmony subsisting among all the branches of scriptural doctrine, that truth or error in regard to any one of them almost unavoidably produces truth or error, in a greater or less degree, in regard to the rest,—that, in short, none but Calvinists hold views which are, in all respects, scriptural, in regard to any of the leading doctrines of Christianity. Still the views of the men to whom we refer are, in regard to these fundamental points, accordant, in their main substance, with the teaching of Scripture; and their defects and errors come out chiefly when we enter into some of the more minute and detailed explanations as to the bearings and consequences of the particular doctrine, and the more distant and less obvious conclusions that may be deduced from it,—so that, in regard to almost any statement which we would make, in explaining our sentiments upon these points, for the purpose of practical instruction, they would fully agree with us. Arminius held some erroneous views upon the subject of justification, which his followers afterwards expanded into a subversion of the gospel method of salvation, and the establishment of justification by deeds of law. But he declared—and I have no doubt honestly—that he could subscribe to every statement in the chapter upon this subject in Calvin's Institutes. This, of course, affords no reason why anything that was really defective or erroneous in the sentiments of Arminius upon this point—however unimportant comparatively—should not be exposed and condemned; and still less does it afford any reason why we should not point out, in connection with this subject, the dangerous tendency of the admission of any error, however insignificant it may appear; but it surely affords good ground for the assertion, that Arminius himself agreed with Calvin in regard to the main substance and essential principles of his doctrine of justification.

Similar remarks might be made in regard to the views even of the soundest and most evangelical Arminians,—with respect to original sin,—

the nature of the atonement of Christ,—and the operation of the Spirit in renovating and sanctifying men's hearts; and, indeed, we have had occasion to point out the errors and defects of their views upon all these topics, and their tendency to lead to still greater deviations from sound doctrine. But while all this is the case, and should not be forgotten or overlooked, it is also true that there are men who deny the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, and may therefore be called Arminians, who would concur in the main substance and the essential principles of the doctrines which we believe to be taught in Scripture,—upon the depravity of human nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in converting and sanctifying. And these are doctrines to which greater intrinsic importance attaches, than to those on which they differ from us; just because they bear more directly and immediately upon the great objects of revelation, theoretical and practical,—namely, the exposition of the way of salvation,—the development of the truths which God ordinarily employs as His instruments in the conversion of sinners. I have pointed out, in the course of our discussions, all the defects and errors of Arminianism, even in its most evangelical form, as plainly and explicitly as I could, and with at least enough of keenness and severity; but I would like also to point out the extent to which the soundest portion of those who reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism agree with us in our views of Christian theology, and to realize the paramount importance of the doctrines in regard to which this agreement is exhibited, and the special prominence to which they are entitled.

Secondly: The second observation which I wish to make is this,—that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, is practically little better than Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it renounced a profession of those doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit, by which it appears to be distinguished from Socinianism. The Pelagian Arminians profess to believe in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit; but they practically omit these doctrines, or leave them wholly in the background, in the representations they usually give of the general substance and spirit of revealed truth, and of the way in which it bears upon the condition and character of men. Their ordinary views and sentiments upon the subject of the true nature and design of Christianity, and the

representations they commonly give of it for the instruction and guidance of others, are scarcely affected, to any material extent, by their professed belief in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit. These doctrines with them are mere words, which have no real value or significance, and might, to all practical purposes, be just as well discarded. The cause of this is to be found mainly in the extent to which they have denied and corrupted the scriptural doctrine concerning the guilt and depravity of man, and his consequent inability to save himself, or to do anything that is really fitted to effect his own salvation. Their radically erroneous views upon this subject lead them practically to regard the atoning work of Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit as unnecessary,—there being really no adequate object to be accomplished by such peculiar and extraordinary provisions. The merits of Christ and the assistance of the Spirit, are, with such persons, little or nothing more than mere words, introduced merely as if to round off a sentence, and to keep up some show of admitting the great features of the Christian revelation; while, practically and substantially, the general strain of their representations of Christianity seems plainly to imply,—either, that man does not need anything that can be called salvation,—or, that whatever he may need in this matter he is able to effect or provide for himself. This is just practically Socinianism; and it is the form in which Socinianism—or a rejection of all that is peculiar and fundamental in Christianity—commonly appears among the mass of irreligious and careless men, living in a community where an open and formal denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ might subject them to some inconvenience or disapprobation.

The work of Christ for men, and the work of the Spirit in men,—rendered necessary by their natural condition of guilt, and depravity, and helplessness, if they are to be saved, and indispensable to their salvation,—constitute the essential features of the Christian system, as revealed in the Bible. The Socinians openly and formally deny these fundamental principles; and the Pelagian Arminians, while admitting them in words, deprive them of all real significance and value, by leaving them out in all their practical views and impressions, in regard to the way and manner in which sinners are saved. This was the sort of theology that prevailed very extensively in the Established Churches of this country during a large

part of last century; and it is sure always to prevail wherever true personal religion has been in a great measure extinguished,—where the ministry is taken up as a mere trade,—and where men press into the priest's office for a bit of bread. Among such persons, the question, whether they shall retain or abandon a profession, in words, of the divinity and atonement of Christ, and of the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit, is determined more by their circumstances than by their convictions,—more by their courage than by their conscience. And it signifies little, comparatively, how this question is decided; for, whether they retain or abandon a profession, in words, of these great doctrines, they fundamentally corrupt the gospel of the grace of God, and wholly misrepresent the way of salvation.

This Pelagian form of Arminianism is usually found in connection with everything that is cold, meagre, and lifeless in practical religion,—in personal character,—or effort for the spiritual good of others. This, however, has not been always and universally the case; and we have had in our day, and among ourselves, a grossly Pelagian Arminianism, which manifested for a time a considerable measure of active and ardent zeal. These persons— popularly known by the name of Morrisonians— professed to have found out a great specific for the more rapid and extensive conversion of sinners; and they employed it with considerable zeal and activity, and with loud boastings of its extraordinary success. But their plan is as old at least as the time of Pelagius; for in itself it really differs in no material respect from that which he propounded, and which Augustine overthrew from the word of God. Pelagius did not deny either the atonement of Christ or the agency of the Spirit; but he practically left them out, or explained them very much away. And so it is with these modern heretics. The atonement, with them, is reduced to being little or nothing else oractically—however they may sometimes exalt it in words— than a mere exhibition and proof of God's love to men, fitted and intended to impress upon us the conviction that He is ready and willing to forgive; and it is supposed to operate mainly by impressing this conviction, and thereby persuading us to turn to Him; while the view they give of man's natural power to believe the gospel—to repent and turn to God,—or, what is virtually the same thing, in a somewhat more scriptural dress,—a so-called gracious assistance of the Spirit, imparted equally, or

at least sufficiently, to all men—contradicts the plain doctrine of Scripture concerning the depravity of human nature, and practically supersedes the necessity of the special efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit in the production of faith and conversion. The system, in short, is manifestly Arminianism in its most Pelagian form; and though accompanied in this case with much zeal and activity,—while Pelagianism has been more usually accompanied with coldness or apathy,—this does not affect the true character and tendency of the scheme of doctrine taught; while the character of that doctrine, judged of both by the testimony of Scripture and the history of the church, warrants us in regarding with great distrust the conversions which they profess to be making, and to cherish the suspicion that many are likely to prove like the stony-ground hearers, who had no root, who endured for a time, and then withered away.

Before leaving this general consideration, I would like to point out the lesson which it is fitted to teach as to the important influence which men's views about the guilt and depravity of human nature exert upon their whole conceptions of the scheme of divine truth, and the consequent necessity of rightly understanding that great doctrine, and being familiar with the scriptural grounds on which it rests. If doctrines so important and so peculiar in their character as the atonement of Christ and the special agency of the Spirit are admitted as true,—and we have not charged the Pelagian Arminians with conscious hypocrisy in professing to believe them,—it might be expected that they would exert a most extensive and pervading influence upon men's whole views of the scheme of divine truth, and the way of a sinner's salvation; and yet we see it abundantly established in the history of the church, that ignorance of the great doctrine of the universal guilt and entire depravity of men neutralizes practically all their influence, and leads those who admit their truth to conceive and represent the Christian system very much in the same way in which it is exhibited by those who believe Christ to be a mere man, and the Holy Ghost to have no existence. There are various gradations among Arminians,—as I have had occasion to point out,—from those who, in these important doctrines, substantially agree with Calvinists, down to those who differ little from the Socinians; but of all these various gradations, the distinguishing characteristic—the testing measure—may be said to be the degree in which the views of the different

parties deviate from the doctrine of Scripture in regard to the universal guilt and entire depravity of man by nature,—the real feature in his actual condition which rendered necessary, if he was to be saved, a special interposition of God's mercy,—the vicarious sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son,—and the effusion of His Holy Spirit.

Thirdly: Our third and last observation was, that Arminianism, in its more evangelical form,—besides being marked by important errors and defects,—is chargeable with inconsistency, inasmuch as the fundamental scriptural truths which it embodies can be held consistently only in connection with the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. It is chiefly in Wesleyan Methodism that we have this more evangelical form of Arminianism presented to our contemplation; and it is—as I have had occasion to mention—in Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes* that we have this view of the; scheme of Christian theology most fully and systematically developed,—corresponding, in almost every respect, with that taught by Arminius himself. The errors of the system are, of course, chiefly the denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism; and the defects, additional to the errors, are principally those shortcomings in the bringing out of the whole doctrine of Scripture, even in regard to those points on which, in the main, they agree with Calvinists, to which I referred under the first observation. Their inconsistency lies in this, that they admit either too much truth, or too little. They concede, on the one hand, what ought, in consistency, to drag them down to Pelagianism; and they concede, on the other, what ought, in consistency, to raise them up to Calvinism. And the worst feature of the case is, that the testimony of Scripture and the voice of experience concur in declaring that, in such a position, the tendencies downwards are commonly more powerful than the tendencies upwards. The Wesleyan Methodists have hitherto maintained at once a denial of Calvinism and a denial of Pelagianism. They have hitherto continued stedfast to views, in the main, sound and scriptural in regard to the depravity of man, the nature of the atonement, and the work of the Spirit in regeneration; and there can be no reasonable doubt that, in the proclamation of these great scriptural doctrines, both at home and abroad, God has been pleased to honour them with a large measure of success in the conversion of sinners.

But no church has ever continued long in this intermediate position; and the probability is, that they too will manifest a tendency towards one or other of the two extremes. It is earnestly to be hoped that it may be that one which will enable them to retain all the scriptural truth they at present hold, and to bring it; out more completely and consistently than they now do. They are accustomed to admit that Calvinism has been always held in combination with a great deal of important scriptural truth; and they are anxious to separate this truth from what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism,—which they sometimes represent as of no great importance,—and which they profess to dislike chiefly as neutralizing or obstructing the operation and effect of the truth which they and Calvinists hold in common. We do not deny that they hold many important fundamental truths, or that the truths in which they agree with us are more important than those in which they differ from us. But we hold that what they call the peculiarities of Calvinism are very important truths,—essential to a full and complete exposition of the scheme of Christian doctrine,—to an exact and accurate development of the whole plan of salvation; and, more particularly,—for this is the only point we can at present advert to,—that they do not follow out, fully and consistently, the scriptural truths which they hold, and that, if they did, this would certainly land them in an admission of all the fundamental principles of Calvinism.

I do not now enter into an illustration of this position. The materials for illustrating it have been furnished in the examination of the different doctrines controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians. In the course of this examination, we have repeatedly had occasion to show that the point in dispute really turned practically upon this question,—Whether God or man was the cause or the author of man's salvation. Socinians ascribe man's salvation—that is, everything needful for securing his eternal happiness—to man himself; Calvinists, to God; while Arminians ascribe it partly to the one and partly to the other,—the more Pelagian section of them ascribing so much to man, as practically to leave nothing to God; and the more evangelical section of them professing to ascribe it, like the Calvinists, wholly to God, but—by their denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism—refusing to follow out this great principle fully, and to apply it, distinctly and consistently, to the various

departments of the scheme of divine truth. They do this commonly under a vague impression, that when this great principle is followed out and exhibited, distinctly and definitely, in the particular doctrines of Calvinism, it involves results inconsistent with the free agency and responsibility of man,—just as if the creature ever could become independent of the Creator,—and as if God could not accomplish all His purposes in and by His creatures, without violating the principles of their constitution. All men who have ever furnished satisfactory evidence, in their character and conduct, of being under the influence of genuine piety, have not only professed, but believed, that the salvation of sinners is to be ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God,—that man can do nothing effectual, in the exercise of his own natural powers, for escaping from his natural condition of guilt and depravity,—and must be indebted for this wholly to the free grace of God, the vicarious work of Christ, and the efficacious agency of the Spirit. Now Calvinism is really nothing but just giving a distinct and definite expression and embodiment to these great principles,—applying clear and precise ideas of them to each branch of the scheme of salvation; while every other system of theology embodies doctrines which either plainly and palpably contradict or exclude them, or at least throw them into the background, and involve them in indefiniteness or obscurity, which can generally be shown to resolve ultimately into a contradiction or denial of them.

Evangelical Arminians profess to believe in the utter helplessness and moral impotency of man by nature to anything spiritually good. This great principle finds its full and accurate expression only in the doctrine of original sin, as explained and applied by Calvinists; while even the soundest Arminians usually find it necessary to introduce some vague and ill-defined limitation or modification, which they are not able very clearly to explain, of the universal and entire guilt and depravity of man. They all admit something which they call the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of sinners; and by the admission of this, they intend to deprive men of all ground of boasting, and to give God the whole glory of their salvation. But if the peculiar principles of Calvinism are denied, the sovereignty of God in determining the everlasting salvation of sinners is reduced to a mere name, without a corresponding reality; and whatever professions may be made, and whatever may be the intentions and

feelings of the parties making them, the salvation of those who are saved is not determined by God, but by men themselves,—God merely foreseeing what they will, in point of fact, do, and regulating His plans and His conduct accordingly. Evangelical Arminians profess to ascribe to the agency of the Spirit the production of faith and regeneration in men individually; and seem to exclude, as Calvinists do, the co-operation of man in the exercise of his natural powers in the origin or commencement of the great spiritual change which is indispensable to salvation. But whatever they may hold, or think they hold, upon this point, they cannot consistently—without renouncing their Arminianism, and admitting the peculiar principles of Calvinism—make the agency of the Spirit the real, determining, efficacious cause of the introduction of spiritual life into the soul; and must ascribe, in some way or other,—palpably or obscurely,—some co-operation to man himself, even in the commencement of this work. And if the commencement of the work be God's, in such a sense that His agency is the determining and certainly efficacious cause of its being effected in every instance, then this necessarily implies the exercise of His sovereignty in the matter in a much higher and more definite sense than any in which Arminians can ever ascribe it to Him. It is not disputed that, whatever God does in time, He decreed or resolved to do from eternity; and therefore men, in consistency, must either deny that God does this,—that the agency of His Spirit is the cause of the implantation of spiritual life,—of the commencement of the process which leads to the production of faith and regeneration in any other sense than as a mere partial concurring cause co-operating with man,—or else they must admit all the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism in regard to grace and predestination.

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that, as we lately remarked, some of the most eminent divines in Germany have recently been led to see and admit the inconsistency of the denial of Calvinism with the admission of the scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran symbols in regard to depravity, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit; and that some of them have been led, though apparently chiefly upon the ground of consistent philosophical speculation, to take the side of Calvinism. And there are few things more earnestly to be desired, with a view to the promotion of sound doctrine and true religion in our own land, than that the Wesleyan

Methodists should come to see the inconsistency in which their peculiar doctrines upon these points involves them; and be led to adopt, fully and consistently, the only scheme of theology which gives full and definite expression and ample scope to all those great principles which all men of true piety profess to hold, and in some sense do hold, and which alone fully exhibits and secures the glory of the grace of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in the salvation of sinful men.⁵⁶

Endnotes:

Spanhemii Elenchus, p. 238. Ed. 1701.

Basnage, Histoire de la Religion des Eglises Réformées, P. iii. c. iv, tome ii. p. 262.

C. xvii. s. xii. tom. iv. p. 528.

Lib. iv. c. iv. Q. 4.

Basnage, P. iii. c. v.

See Hottinger and Weisman.

Amesii Coronis, p. 285.

Acta Synodi Nationalis, p. 263. Ed. 1620.

Scott on Synod of Dort; Historical portion.

Amesii Coronis, Art. iii. p. 170.

Vide Scott's Remarks on Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism, vol. i. pp. 105-6.

C. iii. pp. 129, 130. Ed. 1850.

Vide Owen, Spanheim, Stapfer, Molinaei Anatome.

This was denied by Arminius himself, Orat. de Objecto Theologiae quoted in Edwards' Veritas Redux, p. 432.

Limborch, Theol. lib. iv. c. xi. p. 363. ed. 1686.

Others have supposed that God may extend their probation beyond this life. Scot's Christian Life, quoted in Edwards' Veritas Redux, p. 444.

Turretin., Loc. xv. Qu. ii. sec. xiv.

Hottingeri Fata Doctrinae de Predestinatione et gratia Dei Salutari. excitatio ii. pp. 495 et seq.

Nicols' Life and Writings of Arminius, vol. i. p. 600. Arminii Opera, p. 98.

Nichols' Calvinism and Arminianism Compared.

C. x. s. iv.

Turretin., Loc. xv. Qu. vi.; Maastricht, lib. vi. c. iii.

C. ix. s. 1.

C. iii. sec. iii.

Secs. v. vi.

Sec. vii.

See *The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation*, p. 538, etc.—EDRS.

"De Reprobatione nos non sumus admodum solliciti, nisi quatenus consequitur ex Electione. Positiva autem reprobatio ad exitum, sine consideratione ullius inobedientiae, non sequitur ex Electionis doctrina."—*Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta*, p. 37.

Confession, c. i. sec. vi.

Turretin., Loc. iv. Qu. ix.

Turretin., Loc. iv. Qu. ix. sec. vii.

This topic is more fully illustrated in *The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation*, p. 358.—EDRS.

So the Remonstrants in their *Acta et Scriptura Synodalia*. *Amesii Antesynd. Script.* p. 11.

Copleston's *Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination*, Preface, and Discourse iii.

Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, P. ii. sec. xii. quoted by Copleston, *Dis. i.* pp. 39, 40. Edwards *Remarks on important Theological Controversies*, c. iii. sees, vi, xvii.

The unsatisfactoriness of this answer is virtually admitted by Archbishop Whately. *Essays on Difficulties in St. Paul's Writings*, *Ess. iii.* sec. iv. pp. 141-2, 5th ed. 1845.

Act. et Script. Synod. P. ii. p. 5; *Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta*, p. 11.

Censura in Confessionem, c. ii. sec. viii. p. 39; *Apologia*, pp. 43-4; *Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta*, pp. 14-16; *Limborch's Theologia Christiana*, lib. ii. c. viii. sec. xxvii.

Institutio, lib. ii. c. vii. p. 53.

Walaei Enchiridion Religionis Reformatae, Opera, tom. i. p. 66. See also *Walaei Loci Communes, Opera*, tom. i. p. 332, where he gives quotations on this point from Calvin and Beza.

Augustini Enchiridion, c. 98. *Opera*, tom. vi. p. 170. Edit. Benedict.

Turretin., Loc. iii. Qu. xv. and xvi.

Part iii. c. iii. sec. 145.

Essays, pp. 135, 139 of fifth edition, 1845.

Whateely has pointed out this difference between his views and Dr. Sumner's, in the Introduction to the fifth edition of his Essays, pp. xxiii, xxiv.

Davenant's Animadversions on Hoard's God's Love to Mankind, p. 49. Dr. Gill's Doctrine of Predestination stated in answer to Wesley, pp. 21-2. Works, vol. x. p. 204. For a full discussion of the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, see The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 531, etc. etc.—EDRS. See also Amesii Medulla Theologiae, lib. i. c. xxv. Mastricht (who copies Ames), lib. iii. c. iv. sec. vi. p. 304. Turretin., Loc. iv. Qu. xiv. secs. i.-xvii. tom. i. Davenant's Animadversions, passim. Davenant, De Praedestinatione et Reprobatione, pp. 113-14, 137, 172-3, 182-8, 196-8, 201-2. Gill's Cause of God and Truth, Part iii. chaps. i. and ii. Gill's Doctrine of Predestination, Pictet, La Theologie Chretienne, liv. viii. c. vii. p. 557. De Moor, Commentarius, c. vii. secs. xxix.-xxxvi. tom. ii. pp. 96-115. Edwards' Remarks on Important Theological Controversies, c. iii. secs. xxxv.-vii. See The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 458.—EDRS. Whately on Difficulties in St. Paul's Writings, Essay iii. sec. iv. pp. 144-7, fifth edition, 1845.

Essays, 5th edition, p. 146.

Rom. xi. 33-36. See this subject referred to in The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 468, etc.—EDRS.

Amesii Coronis, p. 285. Antisynodalia, p. 292.

C. xvii. s. i.

C. xvii. s. iii.

Loc. xv. Qu. xvi. s. iv., De Perseverantia Fidei.

1 John ii. 19.

C. xvii. sec. ii. For the practical application of the doctrines of Calvinism, see The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 525.—EDRS Knapp's Lectures on Christian Theology, pp. 116 and 411; (Wood's Notes). Hagenbach's History of Doctrines, vol. ii. pp. 448-52. Wegscheider's Institutiones, pp. 466-483.

XXVI. Church Government

I. Presbyterianism

The leading general questions which have been broached in connection with the subject of church government are these: —Is the ordinary administration of the affairs of the church vested in the body of the members of the church, collectively and indiscriminately, or in a select number, who, in virtue of their office, are invested with a certain measure of authority in the management of ecclesiastical affairs, and of control over the ordinary members of the church? And if the latter be the truth, —as the Reformers in general believed it to be, —then such questions as these naturally arise: What are the different classes or divisions of the office-bearers of the church, and what are their different functions respectively? Are there any of them priests, possessed of a proper priestly character, and entitled to execute priestly functions? Is there any divinely-sanctioned class of functionaries in the church superior to the ordinary pastors of congregations? And if not, is there any other class of office-bearers, in some respect inferior to them, but entitled to take part along with them in the government of the church? Most of these questions were fully investigated and discussed at the period of the Reformation, and were then settled on grounds which have ever since commended themselves to the great body of the Reformed churches. "With a partial exception, —to be afterwards noticed, —in the case of Luther, the Reformers generally held that the ordinary right of administering the affairs of the church was vested, not in the body of the members, but in select office-bearers.

Most of them held that the church, collectively, —which they usually defined to be *coetus fidelium*, —was vested by Christ with such entire self-sufficiency, such full intrinsic capacity with respect to everything external, for the attainment of its own ends and the promotion of its own welfare by means of His ordinances, as to be entitled, in extraordinary emergencies, to do anything, however ordinarily irregular, that might be necessary to secure these results. This is the great general principle that is

indicated in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down the position, that, “to the catholic visible church, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children, Christ has given the ministry, the oracles, and the ordinances of God.” The Reformers made use of this important principle to defend, against the Romanists, the validity of their own vocation to the ordinary work of the ministry, and the special work of reformation. But they did not regard it as at all inconsistent with the following truths, which they also generally maintained, as founded upon the word of God, —namely, that the church is bound, as well as entitled, to have office-bearers, and just the kinds and classes of office-bearers which are sanctioned by the sacred Scripture; that Scripture contains plain enough indications as to the way in which these office-bearers should be appointed and established, —indications which should be implicitly followed as far as possible, and in all ordinary circumstances; and that these office-bearers, so appointed and established, become, in virtue of their office, vested with authority to administer the ordinary government of the church, subject to no other jurisdiction or authoritative control than that of Christ Himself speaking in His word.

The Church of Rome had extensively corrupted the teaching of Scripture in regard to the government of the church as a society, no less than in regard to the great principles that determine the salvation of men individually. The leading features of the Romish system of government, which the Reformers assailed upon Scripture grounds, may be comprehended under the heads of the Priesthood, the Papacy, and the Prelacy. By the priesthood, we mean the ascription of a proper priestly character, anti the exercise of proper priestly functions, to some of the ecclesiastical office-bearers; or, in substance, what is sometimes discussed in the present day under the name of the hierarchical principle. The leading considerations that demonstrate the anti-scriptural and dangerous character of this principle, we have already had occasion to advert to, in discussing the sacramental principle. The Papacy and the Prelacy, —the supremacy of the Pope and the authority of diocesan bishops, —we considered in our former discussions. At present we can give only a few historical notices of the way in which they were discussed at the period of the Reformation, and of the use that has since been made

of the discussion which they then received.

The Romanists contend that the government of the church, as settled by Christ, is monarchical, —one supreme ruler being set over the whole church, and being, *jure divino*, invested with the highest authority in the regulation of all its affairs. There is, indeed, a difference of opinion among Romanists themselves— and the point has never been settled by any authority to which all Romanists yield submission— upon this important question, Whether this supreme ruler of the church is, *de jure*, an absolute or a limited monarch, —some of them contending that the Pope has unlimited power of legislation and jurisdiction, and that all other ecclesiastical functionaries are merely his delegates, deriving their authority from him, and wholly subject to his control in the execution of all their functions; while others maintain that even the Pope is subject to the jurisdiction of a general council, and bound to regulate his decisions by the canons of the church, —and allege, moreover, that bishops derive their authority from Christ, and not from the Pope, though they are subject, under certain limitations, to his control in the ordinary execution of their functions. Still all Romanists acknowledge that the Pope is the supreme ruler and universal monarch of the church, while they vest the ordinary administration of the affairs of particular churches in bishops, as a distinct order from presbyters or ordinary pastors, —ascribing to them — when they are assembled in a general council, and thus represent, as they say, the universal church— the privilege of infallibility.

Luther first discovered that the Pope has no right to govern the church *jure divino*; and then, as he proceeded with his investigations, he found out that the Pope has no good right to the crown and the sceptre as monarch of the church even *jure humano*. As he continued to study the word of God, he was soon led to see that there is no warrant in Scripture for “those falsely denominated bishops”— to use his own language in the title of one of his treatises, —and became convinced that ordinary presbyters or pastors are fully competent to the execution of all the functions which are necessary in discharging all the ordinary duties, and in carrying on the ordinary operations, of a church of Christ. Neither Luther, however, nor his more immediate followers, directed much attention to the formation of a scriptural system of church government.

Indeed, Luther seemed at one time to have perverted and misapplied the scriptural principle, that all believers are in some sense priests, and to have deduced from this principle the conclusion, that believers indiscriminately had a right to administer all God's ordinances, and to take part in regulating all the affairs of His church, —the appointment and setting apart of individuals to labour in what are usually reckoned the functions of the ministry being regarded by him, at that period, rather as a matter of convenience, suggested by the obvious advantages of the plan, than as a matter of necessary scriptural arrangement. He came afterwards, however, to see more clearly the scriptural authority of a standing ministry, and of fixed office-bearers as distinguished from the ordinary members of the church; but he and his followers continued, as I have explained, to have rather loose views of the necessity of positive scriptural warrant for everything that might be established as a part of the ordinary government and worship of the church, and ascribed to the church itself a certain discretionary power of regulating these matters as might seem best and most expedient at the time. Luther himself never held or claimed any higher office than that of a presbyter; and yet he considered himself entitled to execute, and did execute, all the functions necessary for conducting the ordinary operations of a church of Christ, and preserving a succession in the ministry. Nay, on one or two occasions, he assumed and exercised the authority of ordaining a bishop or prelate,!— that is, of investing a man with a certain measure of control over other pastors; and some Prelatic controversialists, in their eagerness to get some countenance from the Reformers, have been rash and inconsiderate enough to appeal to this fact as a proof that Luther held their principles, while, indeed, it proves the very reverse. It is very certain that no mere presbyter, who held Prelatic principles, would have assumed to himself the power of making a bishop, as the assumption and exercise of such a power by a presbyter plainly involves an explicit denial of the scriptural authority of the episcopate as a distinct and higher order; and the denial or assertion of this embodies, as I have repeatedly had occasion to explain, the true status quaestionis in the controversy between Presbyterians and Prelatists. Luther's conduct upon the occasion referred to certainly proves that he did not think it to be positively sinful, or even unlawful, for one pastor to be invested by common consent, when particular circumstances seemed to render it expedient, with a certain

measure of control over other pastors. It proves this, but nothing more; while his conduct upon that occasion, the whole tenor of his life and history, and the express statements contained in his writings, all concur in proving that he held, in common with all the other Reformers, that the episcopate, as a permanent, necessary order of functionaries in the church, has no warrant or authority in Scripture.

It is to Calvin, however, that we are indebted for the fullest and most accurate exposition of the scriptural scheme of government, as well as of the scriptural system of doctrine. His leading principles were these: That a separate ministry is a standing ordinance appointed by God, provision being made in His word for preserving and perpetuating it in the church in a regular manner; and that ministers who have been duly and regularly set apart to the work are alone warranted, in all ordinary circumstances, to administer God's ordinances of public preaching and the sacraments; that presbyters, or ordinary pastors of congregations, are fully authorized to discharge all the ordinary duties necessary in the administration of the affairs of the church, —including, of course, the ordination of other pastors; that the episcopate, as a permanent necessary institution, is wholly unsanctioned by Scripture, and is therefore, upon principles formerly explained, by plain implication forbidden; and, finally, that a distinction between the office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church is established by Scripture, and ought to be permanently observed, while, at the same time, the power of ruling in the church, or presiding in the administration of its affairs, as connected with the holding of office, is not limited to pastors as the authorized administrators of solemn ordinances, but ought to be exercised by them in common with the office-bearers duly chosen and set apart for that purpose. It was chiefly in denying the lawfulness of the assumed jurisdiction of the Pope and of bishops, and in asserting the parity of all ministers of the word or pastors of flocks, and the propriety of others, not pastors, taking part along with them in the administration of the ordinary affairs of the church, that Calvin set himself in opposition to the scheme of ecclesiastical government that existed in the Church of Rome. And his doctrines upon these subjects were adopted, and in substance acted upon, by almost all the Reformers, and in almost all the churches of the Reformation, with the limitation which has been already explained in the

case of the Lutheran churches, and with a somewhat similar, though rather greater, limitation in the case of the Church of England. I cannot at present enter upon an exposition of the scriptural grounds by which Calvin's scheme of church government can be established, but must content myself with adverting to a few historical circumstances connected with the discussions to which it has given rise.

As the whole Popish scheme of church government, including the offices and functions of popes and prelates, was assailed by the Reformers, this subject came under discussion in the Council of Trent, which was held for the professed purpose of giving an authoritative and infallible decision upon all the various questions raised by the Reformers; and in the proceedings of the council, and, indeed, in Popish works generally, it is taken up, so far at least as Prelacy is concerned, under the head of the "Sacrament of order." On this, as on many other subjects, there were considerable differences of opinion among the members of the council, and great difficulty was experienced in drawing up the decrees. A very interesting account of these difficulties, of the discussions and intrigues to which they gave rise, and of the views of the different parties concerned in them, is to be found in the seventh book of Father Paul's History of the Council of Trent. The leading points decided by the council in their decrees and canons upon the sacrament of order, so far as we are at present concerned with them, are these: that there is a proper visible priesthood under the New Testament, or a distinct body of men who are truly and properly priests, and whose special characteristic is, that they have the right to consecrate and offer the true body and blood of the Lord, and of retaining and remitting sins; that there are other orders of clergy in the church besides the priesthood, both major and minor, through the latter of which men rise to the priesthood; that there is a hierarchy appointed by divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters, and deacons; and that bishops are superior to presbyters, and have the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining. This is the substance of the authorized doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, as settled by the Council of Trent; and it will be observed that, in addition to what is peculiar to Romanists, it contains an explicit assertion of the leading distinguishing principles of Prelatists, —indeed, a much fuller and more explicit assertion of Prelatic principles than has ever been

given by the Church of England. It is true that there was much discussion in the Council of Trent upon the question, whether the superiority of bishops over presbyters, at least as to the potestas juried id ionis, was jure divino or not; and that, through the strenuous exertions of the Pope and his creatures, the council abstained from declaring formally and expressly that it was. As some Episcopalian controversialists endeavour to draw from this circumstance a presumption in favour of their views, and as the fact itself is curious, it may be proper to give some explanation of it.

Presbyterians have been accustomed to assert that the views and practice of Episcopalians upon the subject of the hierarchy are the same as those of the Church of Rome, and to regard this, when combined with the fact that they were rejected by the great body of the Reformers, as a strong presumption against their truth. That the views of Prelatists are identical with those of the Church of Rome, is too plain to admit of any doubt; for what is Prelacy, as a doctrine, but just the maintaining that the hierarchy consists of three distinct orders, —bishops, presbyters, and deacons, — and that bishops are superior to presbyters, being possessed of the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining? And all this is explicitly asserted, totidem verbis, by the Council of Trent as the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Prelatists, indeed, do not regard confirmation and ordination as sacraments, as the Church of Rome does; but they agree with Romanists in holding that the administration of both these ceremonies forms a necessary part of the ordinary business of the church, and one which cannot be transacted by presbyters, but only by bishops. But notwithstanding this clear and full accordance, some Prelatists have alleged that the Church of Rome is no friend to Prelacy, and have brought forward the fact already referred to in proof of this. Now, it is quite plain that no such fact as this can in the least invalidate or neutralize the manifest accordance between the decisions adopted and promulgated by the Council of Trent, and the principle held by Prelatists, —especially as it is certain that all Popish writers, ever since the Council of Trent, have been zealous supporters of the leading views for which Prelatists, as such, contend.

There were two causes, of very different kinds, that produced division and disputation in the preliminary discussions in the Council of Trent on

the subject of the *jus divinum* of the superiority of bishops over presbyters. As there were a few men in the council who seem to have honestly held scriptural views upon the subject of justification and predestination, so there appear to have been some who honestly doubted whether the superiority of bishops over presbyters, as a distinct higher order of functionaries, could be fully established from Scripture or the traditions of the early church. It was openly asserted by one of the most eminent theologians of the council, that not AErasmus alone, as Prelatists commonly allege, but also that Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Sedulius, Primasius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, OEcumenius, and Theophylact, —all of them eminent fathers, —had maintained, more or less explicitly, the identity of bishops and presbyters. Many plain traces and testimonies of this original identity were to be found, as Presbyterians have often proved, down till the period of the Reformation. It may be sufficient, as a specimen of this, to refer to the important facts, that the original identity of bishop and presbyter is expressly asserted both in the Decree of Gratian, and in the Sentences of P. Lombard, who both flourished in the twelfth century, —the one the great oracle of the Church of Rome in canon law, and the other in theology'. It is a curious indication of the same general state of sentiment, combined with the results of the revived study of the Scriptures, that in the books put forth by public authority in England, in the reign of Henry VIII., and under the superintendence of Archbishop Cranmer, —after the authority of the Church of Rome had been thrown off, but before the Protestant system was very well understood, —it should be declared that the New Testament makes explicit mention only of two orders of ecclesiastical office-bearers, —namely, presbyters and deacons. Prelacy had universally prevailed for many centuries in the Church of Rome; but a latent and probably unconscious regard to scriptural authority and early tradition had still so much influence, that some eminent writers, of almost all periods down till the Reformation, were disposed to look upon the episcopate and the presbyterate not as two distinct orders, but merely as two different degrees (*gradus*) in one and the same order, and to regard the great difference between them, which was exhibited in the actual government of the church, as based only upon comparatively modern practice and ecclesiastical law, —views, in substance, the same as those held by the generality of the English Reformers.

The classification of the different orders of the clergy still common, or rather universal, among Romish writers, may be fairly regarded as affording a sort of involuntary and unintentional testimony to the same general idea. When it is found that Romish writers make no fewer than seven different orders of clergy, —all of them clerici, as distinguished from laic; some authorities, like Bellarmine, making the ordination of each distinct order a sacrament, —it might, perhaps, not unnaturally be supposed, that these seven orders are popes, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, presbyters, and deacons. This, however, would be an entire mistake. The priesthood is the highest of the seven orders of clergy, and comprehends presbyters and bishops, and all the various ranks above them. The other six orders of the clergy are all inferior to the priesthood, and go down through the various gradations of deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, and readers, to doorkeepers (ostiarii) inclusive. Now, this universal practice of the Romish writers in making the priesthood or presbyterate the highest of the seven orders of clergy, may be fairly regarded as something like an unintentional admission of there being some foundation in Scripture and primitive antiquity for the great doctrine of the Reformers upon this subject, —namely, that presbyters, or pastors, are really competent to execute all, even the highest, functions necessary in the ordinary business of the church. And there is no reason whatever why we may not legitimately attach some weight, in this as in other matters, even to the faint indications of primitive doctrine and practice preserved in the Church of Rome, — indications which are just entitled to the more weight, because they point to a state of things opposed to what is now, and has long been, the authorized doctrine and practice of the church which has preserved them.

The few more honest men, however, who were somewhat influenced by these considerations, would not have been able to have thrown any serious difficulty in the way of the Council of Trent deciding more fully and explicitly in favour of the jus divinum of Prelacy, more than the few men who held sounder views upon other points were able to prevent the council from condemning them, had not another influence come into play. Those members of the council, chiefly Spanish bishops, joined afterwards by a few French ones, who pressed for an explicit decision in favour of the jus divinum of Prelacy, were men who were anxious to see a

thorough reformation of abuses, —disposed to curb the power of the Pope, —and likely to employ whatever authority might be assigned to bishops in prosecuting objects, and in effecting results, to which the Pope was decidedly opposed. This, of course, was quite a sufficient reason why he should resist a formal declaration of the *jus divinum* of the episcopate, in order, if possible, to keep the bishops more dependent upon his own control in the ordinary execution of their functions. And this result, accordingly, was effected by a vigorous application of the ordinary system of fraud, intrigue, and intimidation, by which, in almost every instance, the Court of Rome contrived to manage the council at its discretion, and at least to prevent the adoption of any deliverance to which it was opposed.

It ought to be observed, also, what was the exact position taken by the generality of those in the council who opposed a formal declaration of *jus divinum* of Prelacy. They did not deny the *jus divinum* of a superior *potestas ordinis*, —that the episcopate, in general, as a distinct superior office or class of functionaries, rested upon a *jus divinum*, —but merely that individual bishops held their office, and possessed an inherent right to execute all its functions, *jure divino*. The office of a bishop or prelate, they admitted, was established by Christ, and could not be abrogated or abolished even by the Pope; but they contended that each individual holding the office derived his personal authority from the Pope, and was wholly subject to his control in the execution of his functions, —that he held this *jure pontificis*, and not *jure divino*. *Nolo*, all this might be held without affecting the fundamental principle of Prelacy, —without leading to a denial of the *jus divinum* of Prelacy in the sense in which it forms a subject of controversy between Presbyterians and high church Prelatists. The Pope did not urge the Council to decide explicitly in favour of his view upon the point, and contented himself with preventing an explicit denial of it.

This is the whole history of the matter, and it is plainly quite inadequate to serve the purpose for which it is sometimes adduced by Episcopalian controversialists. It remains unquestionably true, that the Church of Rome holds, as a fundamental part of her system of church government, —which she maintained in opposition to the scriptural arguments of the

Reformers, —all the leading principles of Prelacy, and that she has asserted them much more fully and explicitly than the Church of England has ever done. The Council of Trent has established it as an article of faith, that bishops are superior to presbyters, and possess the exclusive power of confirming and ordaining; while the utmost length which the Church of England has ventured to go on the subject, is exhibited in the following declaration, contained in the Preface to the Ordinal: “It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s church, —Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” Now, this declaration is very vague and ambiguous. It contains no explicit assertion of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, as a distinct higher order. It assigns to bishops no peculiar functions necessary in the ordinary administration of the affairs of the church, which presbyters are incompetent to perform. It does not assert that these orders existed in the apostles’ time, but only that they existed from the apostles’ time; and the general reference to the holy Scripture, as concurring with ancient authors in affording materials for establishing the general conclusion of the existence of these orders as a matter of fact, is very far from amounting to an assertion of a proper *jus divinum* in favour of each of the orders, as distinct from the others. This is the only thing like a doctrinal deliverance the Church of England has ever given on the subject of Prelacy, —the great distinctive feature of its form of government, —and it comes far short, in point of clearness and fulness, of that given by the Council of Trent. The cause of this great vagueness and ambiguity in the only thing like a doctrinal deliverance the Church of England has ever given on the subject of Prelacy, is the same in substance as that which prevented the Council of Trent from explicitly deciding in favour of the *jus divinum* of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, in the sense in which we have explained it. The leading men connected with the reformation of the Church of England did not believe or maintain the *jus divinum* of Prelacy. The original defenders of the Prelacy of the Church of England took, on this subject, much the same ground as they did in vindicating the rites and ceremonies which they retained, —namely, that there was nothing unlawful or sinful about it, and that when it was established by the concurrence of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities it was right to submit to it. There is then, at least, as good ground for

alleging of the Church of England as of the Church of Rome, that it is no good friend to Prelacy; and it is hopeless for Prelatists to escape, by this or by any other process, from the odium of concurring in the doctrine and practice of the great apostasy upon this subject.

It is not enough, however, as we have had occasion to explain, to warrant us in designating any doctrine or practice as Popish, in any sense which affords a legitimate presumption against its truth, unless we can show that, besides being taught and maintained by the Church of Rome, it was always condemned and rejected by the great body of those whom, at the era of the Reformation, God raised up and qualified for restoring His truth; and to the testimony of the Reformers we must now proceed to advert.

II. Testimony of the Reformers as to Presbyterianism

Episcopalians are in the habit of boasting, that for the space of fifteen hundred years, from the time of the apostles till the Reformation, Prelacy prevailed over the whole Christian church; and they adduce this as a very strong presumption in its favour; nay, they sometimes represent it as a proof that it was established by the apostles themselves. There are ample materials, as I have had occasion to show, for cutting off at least the first two of these centuries; and these are by far the most important, —indeed, the only ones that are possessed of any real importance. It is an important fact, that ought never to be forgotten, that the only two productions we have of men who personally associated with the apostles, the genuineness and integrity of which is free from reasonable suspicion, are, the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians; and that these epistles contain satisfactory evidence that, in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, the churches of Corinth and Philippi, at least, —and we have no reason to suppose that there was anything peculiar in their case, —were governed upon Presbyterian, and not upon Prelatic, principles. But even if Prelatists could justly boast of the consenting practice of the whole church after the age of inspiration and infallibility, we would not hesitate to oppose to it,

upon the field of human authority, —for in neither case does it rise higher, —the unanimous testimony of the Reformers.

We ascribe authority, properly so called, in religious matters, only to God, who is Lord of the conscience. We submit implicitly to men only when they can prove that they speak in His name, and under His guidance. We receive nothing as certainly coming from Him, and therefore imperatively binding upon us, except what is found recorded in His written word. And it is of the last importance to distinguish accurately at all times between what is properly authoritative and what is not, —between what at once imposes an obligation upon our understanding, and what merely affords a presumption or probability. But there is a reasonable deference due to the opinion of men, in certain circumstances, which may be regarded as affording some presumption, or indicating some probability, in favour of the scriptural truth of the views which they profess. And estimated by the dictates of right reason upon this point, we have no hesitation in regarding as superior in weight and value to that of any other body of men who could be specified, the testimony of those whom God, at the era of the Reformation, honoured as His special instruments, in bringing out and pressing upon the attention of the world the scriptural method of salvation revealed in His word. Everything about the men, —their general character and history, —the mode in which they ground their opinions, —the source from which they derived them, —and the gifts and graces which God bestowed upon them, —the success He vouchsafed to them in bringing out and diffusing the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology, —all combine in giving probability to the conclusion, that the doctrines which they taught concerning the constitution and government of the church of Christ are in accordance with the sacred Scriptures. It is well known, that most of those men whom God raised up during the middle ages, as witnesses for Himself and His truth, amid the deep darkness of Popery, derived from the study of the Scriptures the leading principles of Presbyterianism on the subject of church government. And if, in addition to this, we find that the great body of the Reformers deduced Presbyterian principles from the same source, —and if this, again, be confirmed by the fact, that the Council of Trent condemned them, and that they now stand anathematized in the Church of Rome, —we have the largest accumulation of probabilities in their favour that can

be derived from any mere human testimony. Now, all these positions can be conclusively established; and they form a much stronger presumption in favour of Presbyterian, than can be adduced in favour of Prelatic, principles.

With respect to the first of them, it may be sufficient at present to mention, that when Archbishop Bancroft published, in 1588, the sermon which, from its high Prelatic strain, gave so much offence to the Reformed churches, an answer to it was written by Dr John Reynolds, who was regarded at that time as the most learned man in the Church of England, in which, among other things, he asserted and proved, u that all they who have for five hundred years last past, endeavoured the reformation of the church have taught, that all pastors, whether they be called bishops or priests, are invested with equal authority and power.” It is perfectly certain, from the quotations formerly given, that the Council of Trent explicitly condemned the Presbyterian principles which they ascribed to the Reformers, and explicitly asserted, in- opposition to them, the fundamental principles of Prelacy. And we have now to add, with reference to the remaining one of these three positions, that the Council of Trent were right in ascribing Presbyterian principles to the Reformers, and in regarding them as doctrines of the Reformation.

It cannot, indeed, be proved, that all the Reformers held that it was sinful or unlawful to introduce into, or to continue in, the church, all pre-eminence or superiority of one pastor over another. But the toleration which some of them manifested upon this point, did not arise from their holding anything like the proper principle of Prelacy; but solely from their not having, as I have shown was the case with Luther and his immediate followers, any clear perception of the unlawfulness of introducing, as a permanent arrangement, into the government of the church, anything which has not the positive sanction of Scripture. It can be proved, however, that the great body of the Reformers, including Luther and his followers, denied the fundamental principle of Prelacy, and maintained that there is nothing in Scripture which requires or sanctions the permanent existence in the church of a distinct order of functionaries higher than ordinary' pastors, —nothing which proves that there is any ordinary function of the church, anything ordinarily

necessary to be done in the administration of its affairs, to the execution of which presbyters are not fully competent. The Reformers were unable to find any evidence in Scripture of the apostles having indicated any intention that they should have successors in the apostolic office, though this is the position which many Episcopalians assign to their prelates, and though this idea is perhaps their most plausible mode of accounting for the non-appearance of prelates in the New Testament. The Reformers could see no trace in Scripture of the apostles having made, or enjoined, or sanctioned the appointment of any regular permanent order of functionaries for the service of the church, except presbyters and deacons. And they thought it perfectly certain, and beyond the reach of all reasonable doubt, that the New Testament uniformly ascribed the same names, and the same functions or duties, to those whom it calls indiscriminately bishops and presbyters. They professed themselves utterly unable to account for this remarkable fact, so different from anything to be found in the writings of more modern times, except upon the assumption, that the inspired writers used bishop and presbyter as two different names for one and the same class of functionaries; and that by this practice they intended to indicate to us in what way, and by what orders of persons, the government of the church was to be permanently administered. That these were the views which were deduced from Scripture, with respect to the government of the church, by the great body of the Reformers, Lutheran and Calvinistic, can be easily and conclusively established from their writings. And, indeed, I think there is no impropriety in saying, that this is a question on which there is not room for an honest difference of opinion among men who have really examined it.

Yet it is well known that it is the general practice of Episcopalian controversialists, to assert that the Reformers in general, and even Calvin and Beza, were favourable, or at least were not unfavourable, to Prelacy. The process by which they usually attempt to establish this position, is in substance this: they overlook or conceal all those parts of the writings of the Reformers in which they discuss the subject of church government formally and of set purpose; and then they lay hold of incidental expressions, which, taken by themselves, may be somewhat ambiguous, and present them in a garbled and mutilated form, and without the light

which the context and scope of the passage cast upon the meaning. Abundant illustrations of these statements might be easily produced from the writings of Episcopalian controversialists. The only excuse— and it is a very imperfect one— for the unwarrantable and discreditable course which many of them have pursued in this matter, is, that they have just copied their extracts from their predecessors, without taking the trouble of examining them in the writings of the authors from whom they were quoted. And I could produce, were it worth while, some curious instances, in which this long continued process of successive copying at second hand has worn away the traces of Presbyterianism which attached to some even of those passages when they were first brought forward for Prelatic purposes. The first collection of these garbled extracts to prove that the Continental Reformers were not unfavourable to Prelacy, was made by Archbishop Bancroft, who, as we have seen, was the first to break the peace among the Reformed churches. This he did chiefly in a very insolent and dishonest book, published in 1593, and entitled, “Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline,” — that is, of course, of the Presbyterian views of government and worship advocated by the Puritans of that period. The book is intended and fitted merely to excite prejudice — without fairly discussing the subject upon its merits. The leading object is, by misrepresentation and garbled extracts, to create an impression, that the leading defenders of Presbytery were dishonest, ignorant, and inconsistent, —that they had no fixed principles, and were at utter variance among themselves, as to the grounds on which their cause should be defended. He does not, indeed, deny that Calvin had advocated and established Presbyterianism; and he pretends to give a minute account of the invention of Presbyterian church government by Calvin, and openly asserts that Presbyterianism was the mere result of external circumstances, or rather that it was fabricated by Calvin for selfish and ambitious purposes. But then he asserts that the chief impugners of bishops had begun to relent; and in proof of this position he adduces most of those passages from Calvin, Beza, and other Reformers, which the generality of Episcopalian controversialists have ever since, down even to the present day, been accustomed to quote, for the purpose of proving that they were favourable to Prelacy.

Another expedient that has been extensively employed by Episcopalian

controversialists to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers in favour of Presbyterian, and in opposition to Prelatic, principles, is to represent them as setting up Presbyterian government from necessity, and as apologizing for their conduct in doing so by pleading the difficulties of their situation, —the great difficulty, if not impossibility, of doing anything else in the circumstances in which they were placed. In connection with this topic, some of them have made a very becoming display of their great charity, by pleading this excuse of necessity in behalf of the Continental Reformers; taking good care, at the same time, to aggravate by the contrast, the conduct of those unreasonable Nonconformists in our own country, who, without the plea of necessity, have refused to embrace and submit to the apostolic form of government, as it is called, which is established among them.

This notion is very often brought forward in Episcopalian works. This mode of treating the subject may be admitted to indicate a somewhat kindlier spirit and temper than the course adopted by those sterner Episcopalians, who really unchurch all the churches of the Reformation. But the only thing that can be said of it with truth is, that it is a pure fabrication, without any evidence whatever to rest upon. The Reformers never pleaded necessity in their own behalf, and they never condescended to apologize on that, or on any other, ground, for their approving and establishing Presbyterian church government. They always believed, and they openly and unhesitatingly maintained, that in doing so they were following the guidance of the sacred Scriptures, —that, in the arrangements they adopted and established with regard to the government of the church, they were only removing the corruptions which had been introduced into it, and were regulating it according to the mind and will of God revealed in His word. This is the uniform and consistent testimony which/ the Reformers gave on the subject in their writings; and there is not the slightest ground, in anything they ever said or did, for doubting its sincerity. Nay, several of the Reformed churches have introduced into their Confessions of Faith an explicit assertion of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, as a portion of the unchangeable truth of God revealed in His word, and imposed by His authority upon the faith and practice of the church. This attempt, then, to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers upon the subject of church

government, —though in some respects well meant, —is altogether unsuccessful.

The only thing else of any moment which Episcopalians have brought forward in order to break the force of the testimony of the Reformers against Prelacy, and to soften the singularity of the position of the Church of England among the churches of the Reformation, is the existence of bishops in the churches of Denmark and Sweden, and of superintendents in some other Lutheran churches. The Episcopacy of Denmark and Sweden is but a slight deviation from the general uniformity of the Reformed churches as a whole; and, besides, the Protestant bishops set up in these countries at the Reformation were not the regular successors of men who had been consecrated to the episcopal office, but derived their ordination and authority from Luther, and the presbyters who were associated with him, —so that they were incapable of maintaining proper Prelatic principles, and thus resembled very much the present bishops of the Methodist Church in the United States, who derive their authority from John Wesley, and two other presbyters through Dr Coke, whom Wesley and his associates appointed a bishop. As to the superintendents in other Lutheran churches, this institution affords no testimony in favour of proper Prelacy. These superintendents are not regarded as holding a distinct higher office, superior to that of presbyters, and investing them simply as holding that office with jurisdiction over ordinary pastors, but merely as presbyters raised by the common consent of their brethren to a certain very limited control for the sake of order. This institution is no proof that the Lutheran churches hold the doctrine of Prelacy, but merely that they hold the lawfulness of a certain limited pre-eminence or superiority being conferred by presbyters upon one of themselves. Indeed, the doctrine of Presbytery, as opposed to Prelacy, was not only held, as we have seen, by Luther and his associates, but was distinctly declared in the articles of Smalcald, which is one of the symbolical books of the Lutheran church. There it is set forth, that all the functions of church government belong equally of right to all who preside over the churches, whether called pastors, presbyters, or bishops; and this general principle is expressly applied to ordination, as proving that ordination by ordinary pastors is valid.

The whole doctrine of the Lutheran church upon this subject is thus laid down by Buddaeus, —and there cannot be a doubt that his statement fairly embodies what has always been held by the generality of Lutheran divines: “Si jus divinum spectes, ministri ecclesiae omnes inter se, intuitu dignitatis et officii, sunt aequales. Discrimen enim, quod deinceps inter episcopos et presbyteros intercessit, tempore apostolorum ignotum fuit. Interim nihil obstat, quo minus ecclesia muneris et dignitatis quamdam inaequalitatem introducat, modo non ex docentibus imperantes fiant, et, quod humana auctoritate factum est, jure divino constitutum credatur.” It has always been one of the leading general arguments which Romanists have adduced against the Reformers and their successors in the Protestant churches, that, though mere presbyters, they assumed functions which belonged only to bishops, —and especially that, as mere presbyters, they were incapable of preserving a succession of pastors in the church, since bishops alone had the power of ordaining to the ministerial office. And this, of course, is the same objection which is commonly adduced against us by Prelatists. The substance of the answer which has always been given by Presbyterians to this objection, whether adduced by Romanists or by Prelatists, is this, —that, according to the standard of God's word, there is no higher permanent office in the church of Christ than the presbyterate, and that presbyters are fully competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions. These two positions confirm and strengthen each other. If Christ has not appointed any higher permanent office in the church than the presbyterate, then presbyters must be competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions; and, on the other hand, if they are competent to the execution of all necessary ecclesiastical functions, this is, at least, a very strong presumption that no higher office, with peculiar and exclusive functions, has been established. The functions which are assigned exclusively to the episcopate by the Council of Trent, and by Prelatists in general, and represented as at once its distinguishing characteristics, and the proofs of its necessity, are confirmation and ordination; and with respect to these two functions, the Reformers, and Protestants in general, have maintained and established these two positions: first, that confirmation is not a necessary ecclesiastical function, —not a process which there is any reason to believe that Christ intended to be carried on wherever he has a church, in the ordinary administration of affairs; and,

secondly, that though ordination, or the solemn setting apart of men to the pastoral office, is necessary, and forms an indispensable part of the ordinary permanent business of the church, there is nothing in Scripture which throws any doubt upon the perfect competency of presbyters to ordain, —nay, that there is quite enough to establish positively, not only the validity, but the regularity, of the ordination which is performed, as Timothy's was, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

These were the leading doctrines deduced from the sacred Scriptures by the whole body of the Reformers upon the subject of the government of the church; and their most unequivocal and decided testimony in favour of Presbyterian principles may well enable us to regard with perfect indifference the anathemas of the Council of Trent, and the denunciations of high church Prelatists, who stigmatize Presbyterian ministers as unwarranted and profane intruders into sacred offices and functions, and who consign the members of Presbyterian churches to what they call “uncovenanted mercies.”

III. Popular Election of Office-bearers

While the Papists contended that the government of the church was monarchical, in this sense, that it had permanently a visible head upon earth, vested *jure divino* with a right to govern it in all its affairs, —namely, the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter, —the Reformers maintained that it was monarchical only in this sense, that Christ was its head and ruler, —its only head and ruler, —and contended that it had no visible head upon earth. And with reference to the administration of the affairs of the church as a visible organized society existing upon earth, the Reformers were accustomed to contend, in opposition to the Romanists, that the government which Christ had appointed for His church was a combination of aristocracy and democracy. The aristocratic principle in the government of the church— taking the word, of course, not in the popular sense in which it is commonly employed among us, but in its proper philological meaning, as denoting the exercise of the power of government, by a comparatively small and select body of those who are regarded as best fitted for the discharge of the duty— is based upon the

clear distinction made in Scripture between the rulers or office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church, —the warrant given to the former to exercise a certain kind and decree of authority, and the obligation imposed upon the latter to render a certain measure of obedience and submission to those who are set over them. The nature and extent of this authority, and of the correlative submission, —the principles by which they are regulated, and the classes or orders of persons in whom the authority is vested, —we have already considered. We have now to advert to the views maintained by the Reformers, in opposition to the Church of Rome, with respect to the democratic element, as embodied to some extent in the constitution of the church of Christ.

The position maintained by the Reformers, —that the democratic principle was exhibited in the constitution of the Christian church as well as the aristocratic, —involved this general idea, that the ordinary members of the church had some standing or influence, greater or less, direct or indirect, in the regulation of its affairs; and this general position they thought fully warranted by what is said in Scripture concerning the church of Christ. The church, in its strict and proper sense, they were unanimous in defining to be the *coetus fidelium*, —the company of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the visible church they regarded as comprehending all these, though containing also usually many who, while professing to believe in Christ, were believers only in name. The church, most strictly and properly so called, consisted of converted men, —of men, every one of whom had been elected from eternity to everlasting life, and every one of whom had been born again by the mighty power of God, —created again in Christ Jesus unto good works; and the catholic visible church comprehended in its embrace all the persons to whom this description applied existing at any one time upon earth. Now, this church is represented in Scripture as the spouse of Christ, the bride, the Lamb's wife; and glorious things are spoken of her. The great object of Christ's assuming human nature, and suffering and dying, was, that He might purchase to Himself this company as His peculiar property, and that He might make full and effectual provision for gathering them out of the world, and preparing them for sitting down with Him on His throne in heaven. It was for the purpose of calling these

persons out from among the mass of men, and fitting them for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, that He established a visible church upon earth, —appointed ordinances, —and made all the other arrangements of an external kind, by which His visible church is characterized. These arrangements were all directed to the welfare of His church, —they may be all regarded as privileges which He has conferred upon it; and they are so regulated, that the manner in which the visible church— including the various sections and divisions of which it may consist— discharges its duties and executes its functions, exercises the powers and improves the privileges He has conferred upon it, affects materially the great end of His coming, and suffering, and dying.

Papists are accustomed to identify the church on earth with Christ, its head, in the sense of its being not merely His representative, but clothed with all His power and authority, and entitled to act— especially through its visible head— as He might and would have acted had He been present. Protestants see no warrant in Scripture for this mode of representing the church, and are always careful to distinguish between the head and the body. The church is not Christ, but only the Lamb's wife, invested with no discretionary power over the house, but bound to be guided in all things by the commands and directions of her Lord. Still the company of believers, and the catholic visible society, which contains or includes them, is invested with great dignity, and with exalted privileges. Even the ministry was appointed and established for its sake, and with a view to its welfare; and is, therefore, to be regarded as, in a certain sense, occupying a place subordinate to the church. The whole Popish system of doctrine, upon the subject of the government of the church, is based upon the opposite idea, as if the establishment of a church was intended for the object of providing subjects for ecclesiastical rulers; while Protestants have always regarded the ministry but as a means to an end, appointed and established for the sake of the church.

It is this great principle of the Reformation that is indicated, as I formerly mentioned, in the statement of our Confession of Faith, —namely, that to this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, the ordinances, and the oracles of God. Christ has given these things to the visible church, and, therefore, they belong to it, —occupying thus, according to their

respective natures and objects, a place, in some sense subordinate, as property is to its possessor. It was upon this general idea of the church, as represented to us in Scripture, —the place it occupies, and the powers and privileges conferred upon it, —that the Reformers pleaded the general sentiment of there being something democratic in its constitution, —that is, of the great body of the members composing it being entitled to exert some influence in the regulation of its affairs. They held, indeed, that the church was bound, by a regard to Christ’s authority, to have office-bearers, and could not lawfully or beneficially continue without them, if it was possible to get them; and they held, also, that the ordinary exercise of the power of the keys— the right of ordinarily administering the necessary business of the church— was vested in these office-bearers. Still they also held, in general, that all the power and authority necessary for the church executing its functions and attaining its objects, lay radically and fundamentally in the church itself, —in the company of believers; so that, when necessity required, churches might provide and establish office-bearers for themselves, and do whatever might be needful for securing all the objects connected with their own welfare, which they were bound to aim at, and the enjoyment of all the ordinances which Christ had appointed. It was upon this ground that the Lutherans laid down, in the Articles of Smalcald, —one of their symbolical books, —the following positions: “Ubicunque est Ecclesia, ibi est jus administrandi Evangelii. Quare necesse, est Ecclesiam retinere jus vocanch, eligench, et ordinandi ministros. Et hoc jus est donum proprie datum Ecclesiae, quod nulla human a auctoritas Ecclesiae eripere potest. Ubi est vera Ecclesia, ibi necesse est esse jus eligench et ordinanch ministros.”

These are positions which Calvin and the other Reformers would not have disputed in the abstract, though Calvin, with his usual comprehensive wisdom, was more careful, in expounding this subject, to lay down, at the same time, the doctrine which he believed to be also taught in Scripture as to the necessity of ministers and other office-bearers, *ex necessitate praecepti*, though not *ex necessitate medii*, —the obligation of every church to have ministers and office-bearers, to leave to them the ordinary administration of all divine ordinances, and to submit, with the limitations formerly explained, to the exercise of their authority in the execution of the functions of their office. The great general principle

taught by the Reformers upon this subject, and generally held by Presbyterian divines, is thus expressed by Turretine: “Ecclesiis data est potestas clavium. . . . Christus dat Ecclesie potestatem ligandi et solvendi. . . . Fateor Ecclesiam hoc jus exercere per Rectores suos. Sed in eo Pastores exercent jus quod competit corpori, tanquam illud repraesentantes, ita ut jus illud radicaliter pertineat semper ad corpus, et illi proprium sit; ad Pastores vero quoad usum et exercitium, quod nomine corporis fieri debet.” Notwithstanding the general admission of this principle, there are indications among the Reformers of differences of opinion as to the way in which the practical application of it ought to be followed out, —some applying it more democratically than others, — just as men have differed, and may honestly differ, in some of their views upon this subject, who concur in holding the general principle laid down in our Confession, that Christ has given the ministry, ordinances, and oracles to the catholic visible church.

But there was one point on which the Reformers were of one mind, and on this mainly they usually rested their general position, that the government of the church exhibited a combination of the democratic principle with the aristocratic; and it was this, —that the ordinary members of the church, or Christian congregations, had a right to choose their own pastors and other office-bearers; and that, of course, a fortiori, they were fully entitled to prevent any pastor from being intruded upon them, —that is, placed over them without their consent, or against their will. This doctrine was taught by all the Reformers; and it was based by them, not only upon those portions of the New Testament which bear directly upon the election of ecclesiastical office-bearers, but also upon all the general views taught there concerning the functions and privileges of the church, and the rights and duties of individual Christians. This position, as to the views of the Reformers, has been disputed; but I have no hesitation in saying, as I said in regard to the subject formerly discussed, that this is not a question where there is room for an honest difference of opinion among competent judges, and that those who deny the position may, without injustice, be regarded either as asserting what they do not believe, or as being, on some ground or other, —whether it be ignorance, or want of sense or sobriety of judgment, —incompetent to form an opinion upon the point, i do not mean to enter into a detailed

exposition of the evidence which might be adduced upon the subject: but I must make a few observations upon the import of the doctrine, and the general grounds on which we ascribe the maintenance of it to the Reformers, and regard the denial of it as Popish.

The Reformers were Presbyterians, and, of course, understood the position in a Presbyterian, and not in an Independent or Congregational, sense, —that is, they understood it with a due regard to the scriptural distinction between the position, powers, and functions of the rulers, and of the ordinary members of the church, —in other words, they did not exempt the people, in exercising the power of election, from the ordinary control and censure of the church courts; they ascribed to the ordinary office-bearers the right of presiding and moderating in elections, with full power to prevent faction, confusion, and tumult; and they ascribed also to those in whom the right of ordaining was vested ordinarily the right of judging for themselves whether or not the person chosen by the people should be ordained, and, of course, of refusing to ordain when they thought the choice a bad one. All this their principles as Presbyterians required of them to maintain; and all this they openly asserted; and when these considerations are kept in remembrance, no person of ordinary intelligence and discernment will find any difficulty in disposing of the evidence that has sometimes been produced to show, that some of the Reformers denied the right of the Christian people to the election of their own office-bearers, and sanctioned the right of their ecclesiastical rulers to intrude pastors upon them against their will.

There is one other consideration to be kept in view in judging of the meaning of their statements, —namely, that they often used the word election in the wider sense of vocation, as comprehending the whole process by which men were made ministers, and became qualified and authorized to execute the functions of the ministry; and, accordingly, they sometimes ascribed the election of pastors to the office-bearers, and sometimes to the ordinary members, since both had a share in it; and as the most important departments of the general subject of the vocation of pastors, —including the process we commonly call licensing, the whole judgment on qualifications, and the ultimate ordination, —belonged, upon Presbyterian principles, to the office-bearers, it was not unusual to

ascribe the election to them, and to speak of the place and function of the congregation in the matter— though it really comprehended the whole of what we commonly understand by election in the more limited sense— under the names of their consenting or approving. All this is conclusively established by an examination of the First Book of Discipline of our own church, and it is in full accordance with the sentiments and language of the Reformers in general.

It is also to be remembered, that the question is not, What was the mode of appointing ministers that actually prevailed in the Reformed churches? but, What were the doctrines and opinions of the Reformers as to the way and manner in which they ought to be appointed? It is not to be assumed that the Reformers always succeeded in getting their views on these points fully carried into effect. The Church of Scotland, though from the beginning decidedly opposed to lay patronage, never succeeded— except during the few years between 1649 and the Restoration— in getting it entirely abolished; and we have complaints from some of the Continental Reformers of the civil authorities interfering unwarrantably in this matter, and depriving congregations of their just and scriptural rights. To ascertain the doctrines of the Reformers on this point, we have to examine their confessions, and those portions of their writings in which they formally expound and discuss the subject, —especially their commentaries upon those passages of Scripture which have been usually regarded as bearing upon it; and a careful and deliberate examination of these establishes beyond all reasonable or honest doubt, that the Reformers maintained, as a scriptural principle, in opposition to the Church of Rome, the right of the Christian people to the choice of their own pastors and office-bearers. The doctrine of the Lutheran churches is explicitly declared in the extract we have quoted from the Articles of Smalcald. That of the Reformed churches is set forth with equal clearness in the following extract from the Second Helvetic Confession, which was formally approved by most of them: “*Vocentur et eliguntur electione ecclesiastica et legitima in ministri ecclesiae: id est, eliguntur religiose ab ecclesia, vel ad hoc deputatis ab ecclesia, ordine justo, et absque turba, seditionibus et contentione.*” These are statements which can have but one meaning, which by no process of trickery can be evaded or explained away. Calvin’s views upon the subject are embodied in the following

explicit and emphatic declaration: “Est unquam ecclesiae spoliatio, quoties alicui populo ingeritur episcopus, quem non petierit, vel saltern libera voce approbarit.” It is utterly impossible to explain away this statement, and it is in full accordance with the uniform and consistent teaching of Calvin upon the subject in all his works. Not a single sentence has ever been produced from him which contradicts, or seems to contradict, the principle which is here so explicitly and emphatically declared; and no evidence has ever been produced, that on this, or on any other, occasion he has used, or seemed to use, the principal words which occur in this sentence in any other sense than that which they naturally and universally bear.

The sum and substance of all that has been alleged in order to prove that the Reformers did not teach, as a scriptural principle, the right of the Christian people to choose their own office-bearers, just amounts to this, —that by election and consent they did not mean election and consent, but something totally different; and that, in discussing this subject, they used these words in a sense in which they never were used by any other writers, or upon any other occasion. As this is really the sum and substance of the only artifice by which it has been attempted to evade the testimony of the Reformers upon this subject, it ought, in common fairness, to be laid down as a distinct and definite proposition, and proved by suitable and appropriate evidence. If this were attempted, —as it ought to be, but as it never has been, —the deplorable deficiency of the proof would become palpable to every one; and no man of ordinary intelligence and integrity would be able to resist the conclusion, that, if it be possible to embody in words an unequivocal assertion that the Christian people are entitled, upon scriptural grounds, to choose their own pastors, the Reformers have done so, and have held up this as an important truth, in opposition to the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome.

This is, in substance, the same artifice by which Popish writers have attempted to evade the evidence adduced to prove that the early church adopted and acted upon the principles of popular election and non-intrusion; but the artifice is less discreditable when attempted in the case of the early church than in that of the Reformers. The evidence that the

early church held the same views upon this subject as the Reformers did, is satisfactory and conclusive; and the Reformers were accustomed to appeal to this evidence in opposing the Romanists upon this point, just as we do. But the evidence of the doctrine of the early church, at least upon the point of election, —for the proof that, even so late as the fifth and sixth centuries, the principles of non-intrusion in the natural, legitimate, and honest sense of it was the law of the church, is altogether beyond the reach of cavil, and has accordingly been admitted both by Papists and Episcopalians, —is less explicit than that of the Reformers; and the reason is, that in the early church the subject was not discussed, just because no controversy had arisen regarding it; whereas the Reformers had to oppose and refute the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon the subject, and were thus led to be more full and explicit in their statements. Indeed, even if their particular statements had been much less explicit than they are, no one who has an intelligent acquaintance with the status quaestionis in the controversy between them and the Romanists on the subject, can have any doubt that they maintained the principle of popular election and non-intrusion. It is perfectly certain, and does not admit of any dispute, that the Church of Rome conceded then, and concedes still, in doctrine and argument, as large an amount of influence to the people in the appointment of their pastors as is at present enjoyed by congregations in the Established Churches of this country; and that the grounds taken in argument by the defenders of the state of things which prevails in these institutions, are precisely, in all respects, those which have been taken by Popish writers, at least in defending intrusion. This being the case, it is plain, that if the Reformers had held the views which have been sometimes ascribed to them, there would not, and could not, have been any controversy between them and the Church of Rome upon this point. It is utterly impossible for the defenders of these views to point out any material distinction between them, and those which are held by the Church of Rome, and have been defended by all Popish writers. And yet we not only know that there was a controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists; but we can easily prove that the views which we hold were those maintained by the Reformers in this controversy, and that the views of the Romanists were precisely, and in all respects, those held by our opponents.

It is true of this subject of election and consent, as of the identity of bishop and presbyter formerly discussed, and perhaps still more fully in this case than the former, that traces and evidences of the scriptural primitive practice continued to subsist, and subsist still, in the Church of Rome, very much in the same way as the form of a call subsists in the Established Church, where the reality is gone. The doctrine of the necessity of the election or consent of the people in the appointment of ministers, as a doctrine unquestionably taught by the Reformers, was taken up in the Council of Trent, and discussed, and condemned there; and F. Paul has recorded a very curious speech made there on that occasion by a canon of Valentia, in which— after admitting that popular election prevailed in the early church, but alleging that this was merely a special indulgence granted for a time, and afterwards very properly taken away by the Popes; and after denouncing the audacity of the modern heretics, —that is, the Reformers, —in reviving this most dangerous heresy, which was fitted to ruin the church— he not only urged that the council should condemn it, but, further, that they should erase from their liturgical books a number of passages which had been handed down from ancient times, and which plainly suggested and proved the ancient practice of the election and consent of the people, and thus afforded a strong handle to heretics. The council adopted the first part of his proposal, and anathematized the Protestant heresy of the necessity of the people's consent; but they did not venture to adopt the second. They would, no doubt, have been very glad to have got quit of the passages which the worthy canon quoted from the Pontificale, and which afforded clear indications of the ancient practice, and plainly condemned their own; but they thought it more prudent to let the passages stand, and to leave to the heretical defenders of the necessity of the people's consent, the handle of having these passages to quote, than the handle of their having been erased.

The only thing possessed of plausibility that has been produced in opposition to the assertion, that the Reformers held the doctrine of popular election, is a letter of Beza's, which has been subjected of late to a good deal of discussion; and I refer to it at present, not because I can discuss its meaning, —this I have done fully in another form, —but because it is connected with the important historical fact, that in 1562,

and again in 1572, these views of church government, which have since been called Independent or Congregational, having been broached by Morellius, or Morely, were brought under the cognisance of the Protestant Church of

France, and were condemned by its supreme judicatory, with the general concurrence of the Reformed churches. Beza, like Calvin, has most unequivocally and explicitly asserted the right of the Christian people to choose their own pastors; but one or two vague and ambiguous expressions occur in this letter, and in another passage of his works, which have been eagerly laid hold of as grounds for evading his express declarations, and ascribing to him the doctrine of the Church of Rome, as opposed by Calvin and himself and the other Reformers. Some importance has been justly attached, in examining the statements produced from this letter of Beza, to the question, Whether the direct and primary subject of the letter was the election of office-bearers, or the whole power and authority ascribed to the people in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs by Morellius and the Independents. It is only upon the supposition that the proper primary subject of the letter is popular election, and not the whole power ascribed to the people by the Independents, —including, of course, popular election, —that the arguments of those who would represent Beza as sanctioning the Popish principle of intrusion, are possessed of anything like plausibility. Now, the evidence is perfectly conclusive, and cannot fail to be seen and felt by any one who is at all acquainted with the nature of the controversy which Morellius excited in the Reformed Church of France, that Beza's letter was directed not against the principle of popular election, in the sense in which it has been generally held by Presbyterians, but against the whole power ascribed by the Independents to the people in the regulation of all ecclesiastical affairs, —including, of course, the election of office-bearers, but comprehending a great deal more. And this affords a satisfactory explanation of one or two vague and ambiguous expressions in the letter, which might otherwise have had the appearance of being scarcely reconcilable with the clear and explicit declarations made by Beza, when treating of the subject of election, formally and of set purpose. The assertion which has been recently made, that the problem there mooted is limited exclusively to the share which the congregation at large ought

to have in the election of pastors,” and that “all has reference to this single point alone,” is one of those astounding declarations of which one does not know well what to say, and which almost compel us, whether we will or not, to doubt either the common sense or the common honesty of the men who make them.

But the important point to which I wish to direct attention, is, that the Protestant Church of France— and the Church of Geneva and the other Reformed churches cordially concurred with them in the matter— did, while condemning the Independent views of Morellius, as involving an extension of the democratic principle beyond what the Scripture warranted, continue to assert and maintain, as a scriptural doctrine, the principle of popular election, and the necessity of the people’s consent. The principle of non-intrusion, in the natural and legitimate sense of it, was set forth in the discipline of the Reformed Church of France, both before and after their condemnation of Morellius, so clearly and explicitly as to preclude the possibility of an honest attempt to dispute it. And, what is peculiarly important, the right of the people to choose their own pastors is openly maintained in a work written for the express purpose of refuting Morellius, at the command of the National Synod, and published in their name by Sadeel or Chandieu. This fact is perfectly conclusive upon the question, and lies altogether beyond the reach of cavil or evasion. And this important general consideration holds true equally of the Scottish Presbyterians at the time of the Westminster Assembly, — namely, that while strenuously opposing the views of the Independents in regard to the general subject of church government, they continued to assert the great Reformation principle of the scriptural right of the people to the election of their own office-bearers. Some of the English Presbyterians, indeed, of that period yielded to the perverting influence of their controversy with the Independents, and of the circumstances of their country, and gave some indications of sacrificing or compromising this doctrine of the Reformation. But the Scotch Commissioners in the Westminster Assembly, and the Church of Scotland in general, acted a steadier and more consistent part, —adhering faithfully to the scriptural views of the Reformers, and transmitting them to us, to be asserted and maintained, as a portion of God’s revealed truth, and intimately connected— as experience has abundantly proved— with the best

interests and the real welfare of the church of Christ.

IV. Congregationalism, or Independency

In discussing the subject of the Council at Jerusalem, I entered with some detail into the leading points of difference between Presbyterians and Congregationalists on the subject of church government. For this reason, I do not intend now to dwell upon this topic at any length, but merely to put together a few observations regarding it.

Presbytery occupies the golden mean between Prelacy on the one hand, and Congregationalism on the other; holding some principles in regard to the government of the church in common with Prelatists against the Congregationalists, and others in common with Congregationalists against the Prelatists. The chief points in which Presbyterians agree with Prelatists, in opposition to Congregationalists, are these: in denying that each congregation possesses ordinarily a right, and a divine right, to entire and absolute independence in the regulation of all its affairs; in ascribing the ordinary power of government in each congregation to the office-bearers, as distinguished from the ordinary members; and in maintaining the lawfulness and propriety of such a union or organization of different congregations together, as affords warrant and ground for the exercise of a certain measure of authoritative control by ecclesiastical office-bearers over a number of associated congregations.

Prelatists and Presbyterians concur in maintaining, in opposition to Congregationalists, these great general principles. They do not consider themselves called upon to concede to the whole body of the ordinary members of a congregation the right of ultimately deciding all questions relating to its affairs, and entire sufficiency for the regular performance of every function needful for the preservation of the church, and the administration of all necessary ecclesiastical business; and they refuse to concede to each congregation, regarded collectively and as one body, entire independence of all authority or control, exercised by any but its own members. They hold that the right, or rather, the ordinary exercise of the right, of administering the necessary business of each congregation, is vested, not in the whole members of the congregation, but in its office-

bearers (though Presbyterians— not Episcopalians— have generally held, that each congregation has the right of choosing these office-bearers); and that a wider association of office-bearers is entitled to exercise jurisdiction over each and every one of the congregations which may be directly or indirectly represented in it. These general views may be said to be held both by Prelatists and Presbyterians, in opposition to Congregationalists; and are regarded by them as sanctioned by scriptural statements and apostolic practice, and as much more accordant than the opposite views with the scriptural representations of the character and constitution of the church of Christ, —and especially with the representations given us there of the church as a united, combined, organized body, whose different parts or sections should be closely and intimately linked together.

Presbyterians and Congregationalists concur in holding, in opposition to Episcopalians, that the apostles established only two orders of office-bearers in the church, —namely, presbyters and deacons; while modern Congregationalists usually regard as unwarranted the distinction which Presbyterians make among presbyters or elders, by dividing them into two classes, one of whom only rule, and the other both teach and rule. Presbyterians may thus be said to have the concurrence of Episcopalians in the leading points in which they differ from the Congregationalists, and the concurrence of the Congregationalists in the leading points in which they differ from the Episcopalians. The only subject of any material importance affecting the government of the church on which Episcopalians and Congregationalists generally concur in opposition to Presbyterians, is with respect to the scriptural warrant for the office of what we commonly call ruling, as distinguished from teaching, elders; and the weight due to this concurrence, in opposition to our views, — looking at it simply as a question of authority, —is very greatly diminished by the fact that the most eminent of the early defenders of Congregational principles, —such as Thomas Goodwin, John Cotton, and the great Dr John Owen, —were decidedly in favour of the scriptural authority for this office; and that Owen has declared of the principal passage on which the Presbyterian doctrine on this subject is founded, that it is a text “of uncontrollable evidence” (in support of the office of ruling elder), “if it had anything to conflict withal but prejudices and

interest.”

The two leading points in which Congregationalists differ from Presbyterians and Episcopalians upon the subject of church government, are sometimes represented as expressed or indicated by the two principal designations by which they are usually known, —namely, “Congregationalists” and “Independents.” The word Congregationalist, under this idea, indicates more immediately that they hold that the body of the ordinary members of the church possesses the right of regulating all the affairs of the congregation, as distinguished from the office-bearers, to whom this right is ascribed by the Presbyterians; while the word “Independents” indicates more immediately their other leading principle, —namely, that each congregation, viewed collectively as one body, including the office-bearers, is independent of all external authority or control, —fully adequate of itself for preserving and perpetuating all church offices, and executing all church functions, and subject to no control from any other body whatever. This distinction is at least useful and convenient, as assisting us in conceiving rightly, and in remembering readily, the leading points in which, as Presbyterians, we differ in opinion from this section of the church of Christ.

These peculiar and distinctive principles of modern Independents or Congregationalists were not explicitly professed, and, of course, were neither formally defended nor assailed in the early church. As a subject of controversial discussion, they are wholly of modern origin. They seem to have been first publicly and distinctly broached, as exhibiting the scriptural views of the constitution and government of the church, by J. B. Morellius or Morely, who was connected with the Reformed Church of France, and whose work on the subject, entitled “*Traicte de la Discipline et Police Chretienne*,” was published at Lyons in 1561, and was soon thereafter condemned by the National Synod at Orleans in 1562, and again at Nismes in 1572. They were embraced also by Ramus, the celebrated philosopher, who was killed in the massacre of St Bartholomew; but they made no permanent impression upon the French Protestants. It was not till about twenty or thirty years later, near the end of the sixteenth century, that these views were brought out and practically acted upon in this country, by some persons who might be considered as

offshoots of the true original English Puritans, and who were known for a time under the name of Brownists. These views have not been embraced to any considerable extent among the churches of Christ, and indeed scarcely by any except the descendants of those who first broached them in this country, and who are a more numerous body now in the United States than in Great Britain.

It is true, indeed, also, that we have not much controversial discussion in regard to Episcopacy and Presbytery before the Reformation; but we have at least a pretty full and formal statement of the argument in favour of these two systems as early as the fourth century, —of the scriptural argument in favour of Presbytery by Jerome, usually regarded as the most learned of the fathers, —and of the argument in favour of Prelacy by Epiphanius in reply to AErius. And it may be worth while to observe, in passing, that Jerome's scriptural argument for Presbytery is still generally regarded by Presbyterians as a conclusive and unanswerable defence of their cause; while the earliest defence of Prelacy, by Epiphanius, has been admitted by some of the ablest defenders of Prelacy— such as Cardinal Bellarmine, De Dominis, Archbishop of Spalatro, and Hooker— to be weak and unsatisfactory, though they have not, I think, been able to devise anything that was greatly superior to it.

There is not much connected with the history of the original publication and maintenance of Independent views of church government to commend them to a favourable reception. They were, however, taken up in substance in the seventeenth century by some men who are entitled to the highest respect, and they were embraced and defended very ably in their leading principles, as we have stated them, by Dr Owen, —certainly one of the very weightiest names in the history of the church, —though he did not carry them out so far as most modern Independents have done. It is true, likewise, that, in the history of modern ecclesiastical literature, there is a good deal to which Independents may not unreasonably refer, as affording pretty strong presumptions, so far as mere authority goes, in favour of their peculiar views. I allude here particularly to the fact, that several very eminent investigators of the history of the church, who did not themselves make a profession of Congregational principles, have conceded that the practice of the early church, from the time immediately

succeeding that of the apostles, was either wholly or in a great measure in accordance with that of Congregationalists. Instances of this are Sir Peter King, afterwards Lord Chancellor, Mosheim, Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, and Neander. These men have all made statements in regard to the constitution and government of the primitive church, which Independents are fairly entitled to plead, as affording some countenance to the peculiar views which they hold in opposition to Presbyterians, though, at the same time, it should be noted, as holding true of all these men, that they did not regard even apostolic practice upon this subject as binding upon the church in succeeding ages. Still, the opinion they expressed as to the general practice of the church in the first and second centuries, must be admitted to lend some countenance to the views commonly held upon this subject by Congregationalists, and to be well fitted, at once from the general eminence of the men, and their ecclesiastical relations, to prepossess men's minds in favour of Independency. These eminent men have, more or less fully and explicitly, asserted, that, for the first century at least, each congregation— that is, the whole members of it, and not merely its office-bearers— transacted in common the whole of the ordinary necessary ecclesiastical business, including the exercise of discipline, and that each congregation was wholly independent of every other, and subject to no control from any party beyond or without itself.

The fundamental argument in favour of Congregational principles is the position, that the only two senses of the word church in the New Testament, —the only two ideas which it warrants us in attaching to that word, —are either a single congregation, or the whole collective body of Christ's people, real or professed; and Dr Campbell, though he continued all his days a minister of the Church of Scotland, and was a most assiduous and ostentatious proclaimer of his own integrity and candour, has distinctly conceded this to them. I had formerly occasion to explain this point, in discussing the general subject of the Scripture doctrine concerning the church, and to illustrate the grounds on which Presbyterians generally deny this position, and maintain that, while no doubt these are the most usual and ordinary meanings in Scripture, there is also sufficient scriptural warrant for applying the word ἐκκλησία, in the singular number, to a plurality of congregations associated together and

represented as a church, —that is, as one church, because subject to one Presbyterian government. It must be remembered, that if this proposition be established, which is laid down in our Form of Church Government, — namely, “That the Scripture doth hold forth that many particular congregations may be under one Presbyterian government,” — the chief medium of its probation being this, that the Christians at Jerusalem, who must have consisted of many congregations, are still called “a church” in the singular, and as a church had elders and rulers in common, —then the question between Presbyterians and Congregationalists is settled, in so far as concerns that leading principle of the latter, which has given origin to the name Independents. Another case of the application of ἐκκλησία, in the singular, to a number of churches collectively, is to be found in the reading adopted in Acts ix. 31, by Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles. The Congregationalists do not deny that the Christians at Jerusalem and Ephesus are spoken of as a church, —that is, as one church; but they deny that they consisted of several distinct congregations. The evidence of this, however, is, we think, in the case of Jerusalem, overwhelmingly conclusive, and in the case of Ephesus, sufficient and satisfactory; and, on this particular point of the existence of a plurality of congregations in Jerusalem, Mosheim is, as I formerly mentioned, very decided in favour of the common Presbyterian view.

I have likewise had occasion to show, in examining the Council of Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, and illustrating the lessons it teaches us in regard to the government of the church and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, that there is there a marked distinction exhibited between the position and functions of office-bearers and of ordinary members in deciding upon ecclesiastical questions, and a clear sanction given to two important principles vitally affecting the subject we are now considering, —namely, first, that the proper judicial power of determining questions which arise in the church is vested in the office-bearers, and not in the ordinary members; and, secondly, that an assembly of office-bearers may lawfully possess and exercise authoritative control over particular congregations, and may authoritatively determine questions which may have arisen in any of the congregations over whom they have jurisdiction. I need not now go back upon these points; but would merely remark, that Presbyterians contend

that these principles are in accordance with all that is taught us in the New Testament, concerning the general character of the functions of the church, and the principles by which its affairs ought to be regulated, — concerning the rights, functions, and duties of office-bearers, and the relation between them and the ordinary members of the church, —and are not contradicted by anything taught there upon these subjects. Presbyterians have generally held that there is not sufficient scriptural warrant for ascribing to the members, as distinguished from the office-bearers of the church, any proper judicial authority in deciding the questions that may arise in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs. But they have also generally held, and, as they think, in perfect accordance with this principle, first, that congregations have a right to choose their own office-bearers; and, secondly, that they ought to be consulted in regard to the more important acts of ecclesiastical discipline by which they are affected; and that their consent and concurrence in them should be laboured for in the exercise of all appropriate means, and should, if possible, be obtained. Both Papists and Congregationalists have accused them of inconsistency, in denying to the people all judicial authority, on the one hand, and conceding to them the election of their own office-bearers on the other, —Papists saying, that since Presbyterians reject the one, they ought, in consistency, to reject both; and Congregationalists— using the same medium of probation— arguing that, since they concede one, they ought to concede both. But it is easy enough to show, in opposition to these two different classes of adversaries, that these two things are by no means identical, and that the one which is conceded does not by any means infer the one which is denied, in the nature of the case. And in regard to the scriptural evidence bearing upon these two subjects respectively, Presbyterians have always contended that there is sufficient evidence of the one and not of the other, —that the Scripture assigns to the ordinary members of the church a definite and influential place in the appointment of their own office-bearers, which it does not assign to them in any other department of ecclesiastical affairs.

We likewise contend, in opposition to Congregationalists, and to the high authorities formerly referred to, that there is nothing, in what has come down to us of the history and documents of the primitive church, which assigns to congregations a higher or wider power or influence in the

regulation of the affairs of the church, than Presbyterians, as above stated, concede to them on scriptural grounds. So far as the Congregational principle is concerned, as distinguished from the Independent, according to the explanation formerly given, there is nothing in primitive antiquity which shows that the people had at that time any greater standing or influence in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs than what is fully provided for, and exhausted by, the Presbyterian principles, —that they have a right to choose their own office-bearers, and that their consent and concurrence were sought, and usually obtained, in all the decisions and important acts of discipline which affected them. It is plain enough, that the actual amount of prominence and influence which the fair application of these Presbyterian principles, without the Congregational one, would give to congregations in the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, might vary considerably in its outward manifestations, according to the general condition and circumstances of the church; and it is also plain, that the whole condition and circumstances of the primitive church were such as tended powerfully to give to congregations a larger amount of prominence and influence than what might be theoretically or doctrinally assigned to them. Keeping this consideration in view, it becomes, we think, very plain, that there is nothing in the records of primitive antiquity which affords any proof that the people generally had more influence or authority in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs than is consistent with Presbyterian principles.

Mosheim says, on this subject, “It was the assembly of the people, which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others.” This is true; Clement’s Epistle proves it, and Presbyterians concede it. “But” Mosheim goes on to say, “the same people rejected or confirmed by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the church, restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges, passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power.” Now, I have never seen anything like evidence of this statement

produced. As the statement is applied to the first century, the only source from which evidence of it could be derived is the writings of the apostolic fathers; and there is certainly nothing in their works from which conclusions so strong and sweeping can be legitimately deduced. The truth is, that we have no evidence of any such disputes or dissensions arising during this period as were likely to produce or to indicate anything precise or definite as to the rightful limits of competing jurisdictions; and no amount or extent of mere de facto concurrence between office-bearers and congregations in the regulation of ecclesiastical matters, can afford any valid objection to our Presbyterian principles.

As to the other peculiar principle held by Congregationalists, —that which is more immediately indicated by the name Independents, —it is commonly put in this form: that in the primitive church all the churches or congregations were independent of each other; that they all possessed equal rights; and that no one congregation possessed any jurisdiction or control over any other. This statement is undoubtedly true; but there is nothing in it inconsistent with Presbyterian principles, though many Congregationalists seem to regard it as virtually identical with their peculiar view upon this subject. Presbyterians maintain, that as all pastors are equal, so all congregations are equal; that as no one pastor has any jurisdiction over any other, so this holds equally true of congregations; that they are all possessed of equal rights and authority. The party to whom they ascribe a certain measure of control over a congregation, is not another congregation or its representatives, but a body which comprehends in it, virtually and representatively, many congregations, including the particular congregation whose affairs may be the immediate subject of consideration. The Council of Jerusalem is not supposed by Presbyterians to exhibit the Church of Jerusalem as exercising jurisdiction over the church at Antioch, but as being a body met at Jerusalem, which, in virtue of the elements of which it was composed, represented, and was entitled to exercise jurisdiction equally over, the particular churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, and indeed, as many believe, over other churches represented by it. This general principle pervades all Presbyterian arrangements. Each pastor, each congregation, each classical assembly, and each synodical assembly, is

equal to, and independent of, any other one of the same species or degree. They all possess equal rights. A classical assembly, or presbytery, possesses jurisdiction over a number of pastors, and a number of congregations, just because it comprehends or includes, virtually or representatively, all these pastors and all these congregations; and the same principle applies to synods, or other superior church courts, in relation to presbyteries. It is not to the purpose, then, to allege and to prove, that in the primitive church all congregations were equal to, and independent of, each other, —possessed of equal authority or jurisdiction. There is nothing in this which is in the least inconsistent with the principles and the practice of Presbyterians, or which furnishes any countenance to the views of the Independents. And yet we believe that this is all that has been, or can be, proved, in regard to the general state or condition of the primitive churches.

Mosheim, after asserting the independence and equality of all the congregations in the first century, goes on to say, what is more relevant to the subject we are now considering, —“Nor does there even appear in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin.” now, the extent and the regularity to which congregations may be associated under presbyterial government and arrangements, must of course depend, to some extent, upon the condition of the church in general, in the particular age and country, and on the general condition of the community. The condition of the church and of the world, in the apostolic age, and in that immediately following it, was certainly not favourable to the general diffusion of the detailed development of Presbyterian organization and arrangements. We have no doubt, that a congregation of professing Christians may be so placed in providence, as to be warranted, upon the ground of the general principles taught in Scripture concerning the rights and prerogatives of the church, to organize itself in Independency, without actual subjection to Presbyterial government, and to provide within itself for the execution of all ecclesiastical functions, and for its own perpetuation; and we do not dispute that such churches or congregations existed in early times; but if the general principle of such association and organization is sanctioned by Scripture, and if some specimens of it are set before us there, in apostolic practice, —and this,

we think, Presbyterians have satisfactorily established, —then we are entitled to say, that this associated and organized condition is the complete, normal, and perfect state of the church, which ought ever to be aimed at, and, as far as circumstances and opportunities admit of it, carried out and exhibited in practice. And there is nothing in the records of primitive antiquity, which affords any ground for denying that this scriptural and Presbyterian principle was exhibited and acted upon as far as the general condition of the church and the world rendered this practicable; and, on the contrary, there is not a little which favours the idea that this was aimed at, and was to some extent accomplished. It is not, of course, contended, that Presbyterian organization and arrangements, in their complete and detailed development, were universally diffused in the primitive church: but there is good ground to believe that our fundamental principles, as indicated in Scripture, were acted upon as far as circumstances admitted of it, —and that very soon, as the natural and appropriate result of scriptural sentiment and feeling prevailing among Christians as to the general character and constitution of the church, as to the right relation of particular churches to each other, and as to the consequence of filling up and following out arrangements which the apostles had sanctioned, the church in general became, in its leading features and arrangements, and continued to be, until the original government of the church was changed by the gradual growth of Prelacy, substantially Presbyterian.

XXVII. The Erastian Controversy

I. The Civil Magistrate and Religion

The general subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the state and the church, or between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, had been discussed before the Reformation, usually under the designation of the controversy *inter imperium et sacerdotium*; and I have had occasion to give some account of the very defective and imperfect manner in which the topic was then commonly treated: the one party defending the Popish extreme of the subjection of the civil to the ecclesiastical, and the other the opposite extreme of the subjection of the ecclesiastical to the civil, — which came afterwards to be commonly called among Protestants by the name of Erastianism; while scarcely any had a clear perception of the true scriptural Presbyterian doctrine of the mutual independence of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, —of the supremacy of each in its own province, —or of the true principle of connection between them, as described by the expressions, a co-ordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons.

I have already pointed out the dear and definite line of demarcation between Popish principles upon this subject, and those which have been usually maintained by Presbyterians as scriptural; and exposed the weakness and unfairness of the common Episcopalian and Erastian plan of dealing with the arguments in support of the only points in which Papists and Presbyterians agree, —namely, the unlawfulness of the civil authorities assuming and exercising jurisdiction or authoritative control in ecclesiastical matters, —the plan just consisting in evading the arguments upon the merits, and attempting, as a substitute, to make something, as a means of exciting prejudice, of the mere fact, that thus far, and upon this point, Presbyterians and Papists do agree. I wish now to make some remarks on the way in which this subject was stated and discussed at the period of the Reformation.

The circumstances in which the Reformers were placed in providence,

while such as naturally and necessarily led them to speak and write on the subject of the civil magistrate's interfering in religious and ecclesiastical matters, were not by any means favourable to the object of their forming precisely accurate and definite opinions regarding it. In the Church of Rome the two jurisdictions were wholly confounded, —the civil magistrate being deprived of all independent authority, and being required or obliged to act as the mere servant of the church, the executor of her sentences, irrespective of his own judgment or conviction, —or the clergy themselves having assumed, and exercising, civil as well as ecclesiastical power and functions. The Reformers were, on this account, exposed, like the ante-Reformation defenders of the rights of the empire against the priesthood, to some temptation to extend unduly the rights of the magistrate in religious matters. They had, besides, generally speaking, more to expect in the way of protection and support to themselves, and of countenance and encouragement to the truth which they proclaimed, from the civil than from the ecclesiastical authorities. "When any of the civil rulers did espouse the cause of the Reformation, there was, in consequence of the thorough mixing up of things civil and things ecclesiastical, and the entire subjection of the former to the latter, which had previously obtained, a necessity for their doing a great deal, and making many important alterations, in ecclesiastical matters, in opposition to the existing ecclesiastical authorities; and this the Reformers would scarcely fail to approve and defend. All this produced very naturally a tendency, on the part of the Reformers, to state the powers and rights of the civil magistrate with respect to religious matters in the fullest and strongest terms. On this account, it would not be in the least surprising if the first Reformers, especially in the early part of their labours, when some of the civil authorities began to exert themselves in the cause of the Reformation, had spoken of the power of civil rulers in these matters in somewhat wide and incautious terms; and also that, as this general topic did not become at that period a subject of full and formal controversial discussion, some of them had never attained to perfect precision and accuracy in their opinions regarding it. Now, this, we find, was to some extent the case; and on this account we cannot appeal with the same confidence to what may be called the testimony of the Reformers upon this subject, as upon some other topics connected with the government of the church and the regulation of ecclesiastical

affairs. It can scarcely be proved that, upon some of the points involved in what has since been called the Erastian controversy, there was any very explicit and harmonious testimony given by the Reformers as a body; and I certainly do not consider myself warranted in saying, in regard to this matter, what might be said in regard to the subjects of Presbyterian church government and popular election, —namely, that the question as to what were the views of the Reformers concerning it is not one where there is room for an honest difference of opinion.

The Reformers all strenuously asserted the lawfulness, the advantages, and the divine institution of civil magistracy; and this general position may be confidently maintained concerning them, that they usually assigned to the civil authorities, at least all the powers and prerogatives, and imposed upon them at least all the obligations, which can be shown to have any sanction from the sacred Scriptures. They were led to give considerable prominence to their general views on the subject of civil magistracy, not only because the Church of Rome had depressed civil rulers beneath their proper place, and deprived them of their rightful and independent jurisdiction, but also because the Anabaptists condemned all civil magistracy as unauthorized and unlawful under the Christian dispensation, and denied that Christians should either exercise or acknowledge it. These facts, too, furnish the reasons why magistracy was commonly introduced as the subject of a chapter or section in the confessions of the Reformed churches, and why it has generally continued to form a distinct head for discussion in the systems of theology.

Under the general head of the civil magistrate, or of civil magistracy, — that is, in the exposition of what is taught in Scripture concerning the functions and duties of the supreme civil authorities of a nation, whatever be its form of government, —the Reformers were unanimous and decided in asserting what has been called in modern times the principle of national establishments of religion, —namely, that it is competent to, and incumbent upon, nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, or in the exercise of their legitimate control over civil matters, to aim at the promotion of the honour of God, the welfare of true religion, and the prosperity of the church of Christ. This principle, which

comprehends or implies the whole of what we are concerned to maintain upon the subject of national establishments of religion, we believe to be fully sanctioned by Scripture; and we can appeal, in support of it, to the decided and unanimous testimony of the Reformers, —while the Anabaptists of that period seem to have been the first, if we except the Donatists of the fifth century, who stumbled upon something like the opposite doctrine, or what is now-a-days commonly called the Voluntary principle.

The “Voluntary principle” is, indeed, a most inaccurate and unsuitable designation of the doctrine to which it is now commonly applied, and is fitted to insinuate a radically erroneous view of the status quaestionis in the controversy. The voluntary principle properly means the principle that an obligation lies upon men to labour, in the willing application of their talents, influence, and worldly substance, for the advancement of the cause of God and the kingdom of Christ. Of course no defender of the principle of national establishments of religion ever questioned the truth of the Voluntary principle in this its only proper sense. The true ground of difference is just this, —that we who hold the principle of national establishments of religion extend this general obligation to nations and their rulers, while those who are opposed to us limit it to individuals; so that the Voluntary principle, in the only sense in which we reject and oppose it, —and in the only sense, consequently, in which it forms a subject of fair and honourable controversy, —is a mere limitation of the sphere of this obligation to promote the cause of God and the kingdom of Christ— a mere negation that the obligation in this respect which attaches to individuals, extends also to nations and their rulers. We have no intention, however, at present of discussing this question. We have merely to advert to the unanimous and decided testimony of the Reformers in support of the general doctrine, as a portion of scriptural truth, —that the civil magistrate is bound, in the exercise of his legitimate authority, of his rightful jurisdiction over national affairs, to seek to promote, as far as he can, the welfare of true religion, and the prosperity of the church of Christ.

It has been often alleged, in order to neutralize the testimony of the Reformers in support of this doctrine, that as they maintained some great

errors upon this general subject, and more especially as they ascribed to civil rulers an authoritative control in the affairs of the church, such as would now be called Erastian, —and as they approved of intolerance and persecution upon religious grounds, —their sentiments about the power and duty of the civil magistrate in regard to religion are entitled to no respect. As to the first of these allegations, we do not admit, but deny, that the Reformers in general held Erastian principles, or ascribed to civil rulers an authoritative control over the affairs of the church; though it is true, as we have admitted, that there were some of them whose views upon this subject were not very well defined, or very accurately brought out. As to the second allegation, we admit that they held erroneous views upon the subject of toleration, and ascribed to the civil magistrate a power of punishing upon religious grounds, which is now universally rejected by Protestants; but we do not admit that their undoubted error upon this point deprives their general testimony, in support of the scriptural duty of nations and their rulers, of all weight or claim to respect.

There is an essential difference between the general duty or obligation alleged to be incumbent upon nations and their rulers, with reference to the promoting true religion and the welfare of the church of Christ, and the specific measures which they may be warranted and called upon to adopt in the discharge of this duty, for the attainment of this end. The question as to what particular measures the civil magistrate may or should adopt in this matter, and with a view to this object, is, comparatively speaking, one of detail, or at least of inferior importance, and of greater difficulty and intricacy. Men who concur in asserting the general duty or obligation as a portion of scriptural truth, may differ from each other about the measures which it may be lawful or incumbent to adopt in discharging it. And errors in regard to the particular way in which the duty ought to be discharged ought not, in fairness, to prepossess men's minds against the general truth that such a duty is binding. The first question is this, Does an obligation to promote the welfare of true religion, and the prosperity of the church of Christ, attach to nations, as such, and to civil rulers as representing them, and as regulating their affairs? And if this question be settled in the affirmative, as we think it ought to be, then we have next to consider, In what way or

by what means ought the duty to be discharged? Upon this second question there is room for considerable difference of opinion, both with respect to what may lawfully be done with that view, and what is naturally fitted as a means to effect the end; while it is also plain, that, in regard to some of the topics comprehended in the general subject, the particular condition of the nation or community at the time may very materially affect or determine both what it is practicable and what it is expedient to do in the matter.

There are, indeed, some general principles upon this subject, which may be easily enough discovered and established from Scripture, reason, and experience, and which are now generally admitted; and these both of a positive and of a negative kind, —that is, setting forth both what civil rulers ought to do, and what they ought not to do, in the discharge of this duty, and for the attainment of this end. It is with the negative principle alone that we have to do at present, in considering the value of the testimony of the Reformers in support of the general obligation. And the two most important of them certainly are these: First, that civil rulers, in seeking to discharge their duty in regard to religion, must not assume any jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of the church of Christ; and, secondly, that they must not inflict upon men civil pains and penalties, —fines, imprisonment, or death, —merely on account of differences of opinion upon religious subjects. What is shut out by the first of these principles, is what is commonly understood by Erastianism; and it is precluded or rendered unlawful by what is revealed in Scripture concerning the character, constitution, and government of the church of Christ, —concerning the principles, the standard, and the parties by which its affairs ought to be regulated. What is shut out by the second of these principles is intolerance or persecution; and it is precluded or rendered unlawful by the want of any scriptural sanction for it, —by God's exclusive lordship over the conscience, —and by the natural rights and liberties which he has conferred upon men. These essential limitations of the right of interference on the part of civil rulers in religious matters seem to us very plain; but they have not been always seen and appreciated by those who have contended for the scriptural duty of nations and their rulers. There is nothing, indeed, in the maintenance of the general principle of the obligation of nations and their rulers,

which, either by logical sequence or by natural tendency, leads men to advocate either Erastianism or intolerance; and it is unwarranted and unfair to attempt to burden the general principle with the responsibility of rejecting or excluding either of the two negative positions above laid down. It is also true, however, that the first of them is still to this day disregarded and trampled upon in every Protestant established church in the world; for there is not now one in which the state has not sinfully usurped, and the church has not sinfully submitted to, Erastian domination. The second, which excludes as unlawful all intolerance or persecution, has been always denied and rejected by the Church of Rome; and as the denial of it seemed to have some countenance from Scripture, most of the Reformers continued to retain, in a greater or less degree, the sentiments upon this point in which the Church of Rome had instructed them.

Practically, it is a worse thing, —more injurious to the interests of religion and the welfare of the community, and more offensive to the feelings of Christian men, —that civil rulers should Erastianize the church, which they profess and design to favour, and should persecute those who dissent from it, than that they should, in fact, do nothing whatever in regard to religion, and with a view to its promotion. But it does not follow from this, that theoretically, as a matter of doctrine or speculation, it is a less error, —a smaller deviation from the standard of truth, —to deny altogether that any such duty is incumbent upon nations and their rulers, than to maintain some erroneous notions as to the way in which the duty ought to be discharged. We are firmly persuaded that all Erastianism and all intolerance are precluded as unlawful, —as sinfully interfering with the rights of the church and the rights of conscience; but still we are disposed to regard it as being quite as obvious and certain a truth, that a general obligation to aim at the promotion of the welfare of true religion and the prosperity of the church of Christ, attaches to nations and their rulers, as that everything which might be comprehended under the head of Erastianism or intolerance is precluded as unlawful. And it is very much upon this ground that we refuse to admit that the error of the Reformers, if sanctioning to some extent the Popish principle of intolerance and persecution, and especially in pressing the right of civil rulers to inflict punishment upon account of errors in religion beyond

what the word of God warrants or requires of them, is to be regarded as wholly neutralizing the weight of their testimony, —so far as human testimony is entitled to any weight in a matter of this sort, —in support of the doctrine as to the obligations attaching to nations and their rulers, with reference to true religion and the church of Christ. The general subject of the principles by which civil rulers ought to be guided, in the discharge of their duty with respect to religion, was not then carefully investigated. It was too commonly assumed, that the general obligation being once established, anything that had a *prima facie* appearance of possessing, or was at the time usually supposed to possess, any tendency or fitness to promote the end, might, and must, be tried in the performance of the duty. Both those who defended Erastianism and those who defended persecution, were accustomed to act upon this assumption, and to imagine that they had established their Erastian and intolerant principles respectively, when they had really done nothing more than establish the great general duty of the magistrate, without having proved the lawfulness or the obligation of those particular modes of discharging it.

A striking illustration of this may be found in the writings of Beza and Grotius, —two very eminent men. Beza wrote an elaborate treatise in defence of intolerant and persecuting principles, with special reference to the case of Servetus, entitled, “*De Haereticis a civili Magistratu puniendis.*” His leading object in this work is to prove that heretics and blasphemers may be lawfully put to death by the civil magistrate; and that Servetus, being a heretic and blasphemer, suffered only the merited punishment of his crimes; but all that he really does prove, so far as the general question is concerned, is only this, —that civil magistrates are entitled and bound, in the exercise of their authority, to aim at the promotion of the honour of God and the interests of truth, and, of course, at the discouragement of blasphemy and heresy. He proves this, and he proves it conclusively; in other words, he proves the scriptural authority of the great general principle from which the abstract lawfulness of national establishments of religion may be deduced. But he proves nothing more than this: he does not prove that, under the Christian dispensation, civil rulers are warranted, and much less bound, to inflict the punishment of death upon heretics and blasphemers; and neither

does he prove that putting heretics and blasphemers to death has any real tendency or fitness, in the long run, as a means to discourage heresy and blasphemy.

Grotius, in like manner, wrote an elaborate treatise in defence of principles which were thoroughly Erastian, entitled, “*De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra*.” In order to accomplish this object, he just begins, as Beza had done, by establishing the general principle of the obligation of civil rulers to aim at the promotion of the welfare of religion and the prosperity of the church, and then virtually assumes that this settled the whole of the general question, leaving for subsequent investigation only the extent to which civil rulers ought to interfere authoritatively in the regulation and administration of the different departments of the ordinary business of the church. He proves satisfactorily, as Beza had done, the right and duty of civil rulers to aim at the promotion of the welfare of true religion and the prosperity of the church; but in establishing this position, he adduces nothing which really concludes in favour of the Erastian control over the church, which he assumed to be involved in it. A power, indeed, *circa sacra*, —the expression which Grotius employed in the title of his work, — Presbyterian and anti-Erastian divines have usually conceded to the civil magistrate; and, indeed, this is necessarily involved in the general principle to which we have so often referred, and which implies that his obligation to aim at the promotion of true religion entitles and requires him to employ his legitimate authority, or rightful jurisdiction, in civil things with a view to the advancement of the interests of religion. But a mere power, *circa sacra*, affords no sufficient warrant for the Erastian domination over the church, which it was the great object of Grotius's book to establish. Erastianism is a power not merely *circa sacra*, but in *sacris*, —a right to exercise proper jurisdiction or authoritative control in the actual regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, in the administration of the ordinary necessary business of the church, as an organized society; and this power is not only not involved in, or deducible from, the general principle of the duty of civil rulers to aim at the welfare of the church, but is precluded by all that Scripture makes known to us concerning the church, its relation to Christ and to His word, and the whole provision which He has made for its government.

These cases illustrate the distinction that ought to be made between the general principle that an obligation attaches to nations and their rulers, to aim at the promotion of true religion and the prosperity of the church of Christ, and the adoption of any particular theory as to the means which may, or should, be employed for that purpose. All this tends to show that it is unwarrantable to burden the general principle with the particular applications that have often been made of it; while it also tends to afford a very strong presumption in favour of the clearness and certainty of the grounds, derived both from Scripture and reason, on which the general principle itself can be established.

It is right to mention, before leaving this branch of the subject, that the Reformers in general did not retain the whole of the intolerant and persecuting principles which they had been taught by the Church of Rome. They saw and acknowledged the unlawfulness and absurdity of the Popish principle of employing force or persecution for the purpose of leading men to make an outward profession of the truth. And, accordingly, they never gave any countenance to those wholesale persecutions which form so characteristic a feature of the great apostasy. The principal error on the subject of the magistrate's power with respect to religion which retained a hold of the minds of the generality of the Reformers, and perverted their sentiments and their conduct upon this whole subject, was the notion of the right and duty of civil rulers to punish men, and even to inflict the punishment of death, on account of heresy and blasphemy. They admitted the general principle of the right of civil rulers to inflict pains and penalties on account of heresy and blasphemy, though they would have restricted the punishment of death to those who were doing extensive injury in leading others into the commission of these sins. Now, this was a notion which, though it had no solid foundation to rest upon, and was both erroneous and dangerous, was not altogether destitute of something like plausible countenance in some scriptural statements, and especially in a natural enough misapplication of some considerations derived from the judicial law of Moses. The subject, indeed, is not free from difficulties; and it is not to be wondered at, that the notion above stated should have retained some hold of the minds of the Reformers. The question continued to perplex the minds of theologians for several generations; and it cannot be denied

that, during nearly the whole even of the seventeenth century, Protestant divines in general ascribed, in speculation at least, to civil rulers, a power of inflicting punishment on account of heresy, which is now universally rejected, except by the adherents of the Church of Rome.

Luther seems to have become convinced, that in his earlier writings he had spoken too loosely and too widely of the right of civil rulers to interfere in the regulation of the affairs of the church; though it ought to be mentioned, to his honour, that from the first he restricted their right to inflict punishment, on account of heresy or serious religious error, within narrower limits than almost any one of the Reformers. It may be worth while here to refer to two remarkable passages from Luther's later works, in the first of which he denies to civil rulers all right of authoritative interference or control in the regulation of the affairs of the church, and does so in language resembling, both in its substance and meaning, and in its tone and spirit, what our forefathers were accustomed to employ when contending, in opposition to the usurpations of the civil powers, for Christ's sole right to reign in His own kingdom, and to rule in His own house; and in the second of which he expressed his strong apprehension of the grievous injury which was likely to accrue to the Protestant church from the Erastian control which civil rulers were claiming and usurping over the regulation of its affairs, in return for the protection and assistance which they rendered to it. In a paper, addressed to Melancthon, and published in his "Consilici" Luther, after denying the right of bishops to exercise domination over the church, proceeds to say: "Episcopus, ut Princeps, multo minus potest supra Ecclesiam imponere quidquam; quia hoc esset prorsus confundere has duas Potestates, . . . et nos si admitteremus, tam essemus paris sacrilegii rei. Hic potius est moriendum, quam hanc impietatem et iniquitatem committere. Loquor de ecclesia, ut Ecclesia, distincta jam a civitate politica." The other passage is too long to quote, but it very emphatically expresses Luther's deep apprehensions of great injury to religion from the growing interference of civil rulers in the affairs of the church. It can be easily proved that Melancthon fully shared in Luther's apprehensions of mischief and danger from this quarter. And, indeed, there are plain enough indications that the apprehensions which Melancthon entertained of injury to the Protestant church, and to the interests of true

religion, from the interference of the civil authorities in the regulation of its affairs, was one of the considerations which weighed heavily upon his mind, and had some influence in producing that strong desire of an adjustment with the Church of Rome, and that tendency to the compromise of truth, or something like it, which formed so prominent a feature in his history. And we think it abundantly manifest, from a survey of the history of Protestantism for a period of three hundred years, that these apprehensions of Luther and Melancthon about the injurious tendency and effect of the authoritative interference of civil rulers in the regulation of the affairs of the church have been fully realized. The civil authorities, in most Protestant countries, aimed at, and succeeded in, getting very much the same control over the church which they professed to favour and assist, as the Pope had claimed and exercised over the church at large; and this has proved, in many ways, most injurious to the interests of true religion. Of all Protestant countries, England is the one where this claim of civil supremacy over the church was most openly put forth, most fully conceded, and most injuriously exercised; while our own beloved land— Scotland— is that in which it has all along been most strenuously and successfully resisted. Indeed, it was only in the year 1843 that the civil power fully succeeded in acquiring an Erastian control over the Presbyterian Establishment of Scotland, and reducing it to the same state of sinful subjection to which all other Protestant ecclesiastical establishments had long before bowed their necks.

Calvin, though he did not rise above the prevailing sentiments of his age in regard to the civil magistrate's right to punish heresy, manifested his usual comprehensive soundness and penetrating judgment in grasping firmly and accurately the true scriptural principle that ought to regulate the relation of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, so far as concerns the ordinary administration of the church's affairs, in opposition to all Erastian encroachments of the civil power. Mosheim's account of Calvin's sentiments upon this subject is undoubtedly correct, though, as we have had occasion to explain, he gives an erroneous representation of those of Zwingli. His words are worth quoting in the original, because they are more precise and definite than Murdock's, and much more than Maclaine's translation of them. Mosheim says: "Calvinus magistratum in res religionis potestate in angustiis circumscribebat

finibus, atque ecclesiam sui juris” (spiritual independence) “esse, seque ipsam per collegia Presbyterorum et Synodos seu conventus Presbyterorum, veteris ecclesiae more, regere” (self-government) “debere adseverabat, tutela tamen et externa cura ecclesiae magistratui relicta.”

The sentiments here ascribed, and justly ascribed, to Calvin, embody, with accuracy and precision, the sum and substance of all that has been usually contended for by Presbyterians, in opposition to Erastian claims and pretensions; and though Calvin was not called in providence to develop fully, and to apply in all their details, the principles which he professed upon this subject, yet the principles themselves, as he has stated them, and the practical applications which he did make of them to some questions of church discipline controverted between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities of Geneva, establish, beyond all reasonable doubt, what side he would have taken in those subsequent speculations and practical proceedings, which may be said to constitute what is called the Erastian controversy.

II. Erastus and the Erastians

Thomas Erastus, who has given his name to this controversy, did not publish his sentiments till after the first generation of Reformers had been removed to their rest, he was a physician at Heidelberg, then the capital of the dominions of the Elector Palatine, and the head-quarters of Calvinism, as distinguished from Lutheranism, among the German churches; and seems to have been held in high estimation on account of his talents, acquirements, and general character. In 1568, an attempt was made to introduce into the churches of the Palatinate a more rigorous discipline with respect to the admission of men to the sacraments, —a subject which in that, and in one or two other Reformed churches, had hitherto been very much neglected. Erastus set himself to oppose this attempt at the reformation or purification of the church, and prepared, upon the occasion, a hundred theses or propositions, —afterwards reduced to seventy-five, —directed to the object of showing that Scripture did not sanction the claim of the church, as a society, or of its office-bearers, to excommunicate or exclude from the sacraments, on account of immoral conduct, men who made a profession of Christianity, and

desired admission to the ordinances. These theses were not published, but were sent in manuscript to Beza, as the most influential man in the Reformed church after the death of Calvin. Beza wrote a full and able reply to them, and sent it to Erastus, who, soon after, in 1570, drew up a very full and elaborate answer to Beza, in six books, which he called "Thesium Confirmatio." Bullinger and Gualther, at that time the leading divines of Zurich, —the former the immediate successor, and the latter the son-in-law, of Zwingli, —were, to some extent, favourable to Erastus's view in regard to discipline and excommunication. They strenuously exerted themselves to prevent a public controversy upon the subject, and they succeeded in prevailing upon both parties to abstain from publishing their works. Thus matters remained until after Erastus's death, when, in 1589, his widow, who had removed to England, where such a project was sure to gain countenance, published at London, at the instigation and under the patronage of Archbishop Whitgift, both the Theses and the Confirmation of them, with some recommendatory letters of Bullinger and Gualther subjoined to them, and with fictitious names assigned both to the place of publication and the printer. When this work reached Beza, he at once published, in 1590, his original answer to Erastus's theses, under the title of "Tractatus pius et moderatus de Vera Excommunicatione et Christiano Presbyterio," with a very interesting preface, in which he gave some account of the history of this matter, —animadverted upon the sentiments of Bullinger and Gualther, —and declared his intention, though he was now seventy years of age, of preparing and publishing a full answer to the Confirmation, —an intention, however, which he did not carry into effect.

The works both of Erastus and Beza are chiefly occupied with a discussion of the subject of excommunication, —that is, with the investigation of the question, whether Scripture warrants and sanctions the exercise, by courts of ecclesiastical office-bearers, of the power of excluding from the participation of the sacraments professing Christians who are guilty of immorality, —Beza affirming this, and Erastus denying it, and arguing elaborately and ingeniously in support of his position, though obliged, from its intrinsic absurdity and palpable falsehood, to perpetrate some very considerable inconsistencies, as is explained in the first chapter of the second book of Gillespie's "Aaron's Rod Blossoming,"

where there is a very interesting history of the origin and growth of Erastianism. Erastus's name, however, could not probably have been generally employed to designate a controversy which for more than two centuries has been commonly regarded and spoken of among Protestants as comprehending a discussion of the whole subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, if he had confined himself rigidly to the one topic of excommunication, and to the examination of the scriptural grounds on which the right of excommunication is alleged to rest. And, accordingly, we find that, in the preface, and in the conclusion to his Theses, and still more fully in the first chapter of the third book of the Confirmation, he has distinctly entered upon the wider field above described, as embraced by the controversy which has since been called after his name. He has there explicitly ascribed to the civil magistrate a general jurisdiction, or right of authoritative control, in the regulation of the affairs of the church, and has denied that Christ has appointed a distinct government in the church for the administration of its ordinary necessary business; and these are the points on which the whole of what is usually understood to be comprehended in the Erastian controversy, and the whole subject of the authority of civil rulers in regard to religion and the church of Christ, really turn. Erastus has not only ascribed to the civil magistrate jurisdiction or authoritative control in ecclesiastical matters, and denied the appointment by Christ of a distinct government in the church; but he has indicated some of the leading arguments by which these views have ever since been, and continue to this day to be, defended. He has distinctly declared his concurrence in the general principle which both Papists and Erastians have always been accustomed to adduce in support of their opposite views upon this subject, —namely, the absurdity of what they call an imperium in imperio, or, what is virtually the same thing, the necessity of there being one power and government which has supreme and ultimate jurisdiction over all matters, both civil and ecclesiastical, — Papists, of course, vesting this supremacy in the church, or in the Pope, as representing it; and Erastus, and all who have since been called after his name, vesting it in the civil magistrate. It is thus manifest, that though Erastus's book is chiefly occupied with the subject of excommunication, he really laid the foundation among Protestants of what is usually called the Erastian controversy, and indicated the leading grounds which have

commonly been taken by those who have since held what Presbyterian divines have always been accustomed to designate Erastian views, on the whole subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities.

Erastus admits, indeed, that the civil magistrate, in administering ecclesiastical affairs, is bound to take the word of God as his only rule and standard; and in this he is less Erastian than some who, in modern times, have been ranked under that designation, —not, perhaps, without some injustice to him, but most certainly without any injustice to them, — inasmuch as the persons to whom we refer have asserted principles, and pursued a course of conduct, which led, by necessary logical sequence, to the conclusion that the law of the land, as such, —that is, irrespective of its accordance with the word of God, —is a right and proper standard for regulating the affairs of the church. But while Erastus admits that the word of God is the only rule by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated, he denies to ecclesiastical office-bearers the right of judging authoritatively as to the application of scriptural statements to the decision of the questions which must arise occasionally wherever a church exists, and makes the civil magistrate the supreme and ultimate judge of all those questions connected with the administration of the affairs of the church, which require to be judicially or forensically determined.

There is one important point on which Erastus deviated further from the opinions commonly entertained than most of those who have been usually called after his name. Most of those who have been described— and, upon the grounds already explained, justly described— by Presbyterian divines as Erastians, have admitted a distinction of functions, though not of government, in relation to civil and ecclesiastical affairs; in other words, while they have in general contended, more or less openly and explicitly, that all judicial or forensic questions about the admission of men to office and ordinances must be ultimately, and in the last resort, decided by the civil magistrate, —thus denying a distinct government in the church, —they have usually conceded that ecclesiastical office-bearers alone can legitimately administer these ordinances, —thus admitting a distinction of function between

magistrates and ministers. Even the Church of England expressly excludes the civil magistrate from a right to administer the word and sacraments. But Erastus has plainly enough indicated his opinion that the civil magistrate might warrantably and legitimately administer these ordinances himself, if his other duties allowed him leisure for the work: “Quod addis, non licere Magistratui, re ita postulante, docere et Sacramenta administrare (si modo per negotia possit utrique muneri sufficere), id verum non est. Nusquam enim Deus vetuit.”

As Erastus has plainly asserted all the views which we have ascribed to him, so Beza has opposed and refuted them all, except, of course, the position which, as we have seen, Erastus conceded, —namely, that the word of God is the only rule or standard by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated: and in the opposition which he made to them, he had the decided and cordial concurrence of the generality of the Reformed divines, and of all sound Presbyterian theologians in every age.

Erastians, in modern times, have sometimes appealed to the Reformers in support of their opinions, and have professed to derive some support from that quarter; and I have admitted that the testimony of the Reformers is not so full, explicit, and conclusive, as upon the subject of Presbyterian church government, and the popular election of ecclesiastical office-bearers, —and explained the reason of this. Still it can be shown, —and I think I have produced sufficient materials to establish the conclusion, —that the testimony of the Reformers in general is not for, but against, Erastian views of the powers and rights of civil magistrates in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. We may briefly advert to some of the principal grounds on which Erastians have claimed the testimony of the Reformers, or some of them, in favour of their opinions.

First, they appeal to some rather strong and incautious statements of Luther and Zwingle, in instigating and encouraging— the one the Elector of Saxony, and the other the magistrates of Zurich— to zeal and activity in exercising their power to overturn the Popish system, and promote the cause of the Reformation. We admit that some of the statements referred to indicate, to some extent, a want of clear and accurate conceptions of the line of demarcation between the provinces of the civil and the

ecclesiastical authorities; but we have already said enough to show that this fact is not one of much importance or relevancy, and to prove that Erastians have no right to appeal to the mature and deliberate testimony of Luther and Zwingli.

Of a similar kind, though of still less real value, is the reference sometimes made to certain statements made by our own Reformer, John Knox, especially in his Appellation or appeal to the nobility of Scotland against the sentence of death pronounced upon him by the ecclesiastical authorities. There is really nothing so objectionable or inaccurate in any statement they have been able to produce from Knox, as in some of those made by Luther and Zwingli. Knox had the benefit of the light thrown upon this subject by the comprehensive and sagacious mind of Calvin; and he has not been betrayed into any statement distinctively Erastian, — any statement implying a denial of a distinct government in the church, or an ascription to civil rulers of jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs. His appeal, primarily and directly, respected a matter which was in its own nature purely civil, and lay within the province of the magistrate, — namely, a sentence of death which had been pronounced upon him by the ecclesiastical authorities; and in calling upon the civil powers to reverse this sentence, and to preserve him from its consequence, he did not need to ascribe, and he has not ascribed, to them any jurisdiction over the affairs of the church. His more general exhortations to them to exercise their power in opposition to the Papacy, and for the promotion of Protestant truth, are all resolvable into the general principle as to the duty of nations and their rulers, which we have already explained and illustrated, — a principle held by all the Reformers. In short, no statements have been produced from Knox which favour Erastianism; and in the view's laid down in the first Scotch Confession, which he prepared, upon the subject of the church, its constitution, and the principles on which its government ought to be conducted, there is enough to exclude everything which could be justly comprehended under that designation, — everything which subsequent Presbyterian divines would have refused or hesitated to adopt.

Secondly, Another consideration usually founded on by modern Erastians, is the measure of countenance and approbation which

Bullinger and Gualther gave to the writings of Erastus. Their approbation, however, seems to have been extended only to what was the direct and primary subject of Erastus's Theses, —namely, excommunication, —without including his peculiar opinions about the powers of the civil magistrate generally. And even in regard to the subject of excommunication, Beza has shown, in the preface to his answer to Erastus, by extracts which he produces from their writings, that they were very far from concurring in all his views upon this point; and, especially, that they did not adopt his interpretation of those passages of Scripture which bear upon the subject of excommunication.

The only other topic adduced by modern Erastians, in order to procure some countenance for their views from the Reformers, is the fact, that two or three other divines of that period, in addition to Bullinger and Gualther, —though not any one of the first rank, or of great name and authority, —gave some sanction to this notion, that when there was no Christian magistrate in the church, ecclesiastical office-bearers should themselves exercise all the functions of discipline, including excommunication; but that when there was a Christian magistrate, exercising his authority in protecting and assisting the church, the exercise of discipline should be left to him, and should not be assumed by ecclesiastical office-bearers. We admit that this was an unreasonable and ill-founded notion, and that the men who held it entertained defective and inaccurate views in regard to the rights and functions of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. But it did not prevail among the divines of that period to such an extent, —viewed either with reference to their number or their standing, —as to affect the import of the testimony of the Reformers as a body. It is a notion which has been often since mooted, more or less explicitly, by Erastian writers, who, in their want of argument, seem to think that this pretence may be conveniently employed for the purpose of palliating, if not justifying, some degree of authoritative civil interference in ecclesiastical affairs. It is at bottom very similar to the distinction that has been sometimes set up in our own day, —though its authors have never ventured to make any very distinct or explicit application of it, —between a church of Christ, absolutely considered, and an established church.

But the falsehood of the distinction, and of everything approaching to it or resembling it, and its utter inadequacy to afford any countenance to any authoritative interference of civil rulers in ecclesiastical affairs, have been, centuries ago, demonstrated by Presbyterian writers, by establishing the two following positions: First, that the civil magistrate does not, by becoming a Christian and a member of the church, —by taking the church under his protection, and exerting his authority and influence for promoting its prosperity, —by conferring upon it any temporal favours or privileges, —acquire any new right or power in addition to what is competent to him simply as a magistrate, and, more especially, that he does not thereby acquire any right to assume any ecclesiastical function or jurisdiction, or to interfere authoritatively in the regulation of any ecclesiastical matters; and, secondly, that the church and its office-bearers not only are not bound, but are not at liberty, to delegate or concede, for any reason or in any circumstances, to any party, the discharge of any of the duties which Christ has imposed upon them, —the execution of any of the functions which He has bestowed upon them, —but are bound at all times, in all circumstances, and at all hazards, to do themselves the whole necessary business of Christ's house, on their own responsibility, subject to Him alone, and according to the standard of His word. These positions can be conclusively established, —they go to the root of the matter, —they overturn from the foundation all Erastian encroachments upon the rights and liberties of the church of Christ, and all the pretences by which they have been, or can be, defended, —they fully vindicate the struggles and contendings of our forefathers against the interference of the civil authorities in ecclesiastical matters, —they fully warrant the proceedings on the part of those who now constitute the Free Church of Scotland, which led to the Disruption of the ecclesiastical establishment of this country, —and they establish not only the warrantableness, but the obligation and the necessity, of those steps by which we have been brought, under God's guidance, into the position we now occupy.

III. Erastianism During the Seventeenth Century

To the Erastian controversy I have already had occasion to advert in our earlier discussions. I have had to notice the controversy between the emperors and the popes of the middle ages, about the respective provinces and functions of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, or, as it was then commonly called, the contest inter imperium et scicerdotium; and I took the opportunity then of explaining fully the distinction between the Popish doctrine upon this subject, and that held by the Presbyterians, which is often— from ignorance or something worse — confounded with it; while, in connection with the sixteenth century, I had to give some account of the views of Erastus himself, who has had the honour of giving his name to this controversy, and of the controversy in England during Elizabeth's reign.

The seventeenth century, however, was the principle era of this important controversy about the principles that ought to regulate the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, and to determine their respective provinces and functions, —the era at which the real merits of the whole subject, and of all the topics involved in it, were most fully developed, and the most important works on both sides were composed. The subject has been revived in our own day; and it is now possessed of at least as much practical importance as ever it had, and must always be peculiarly interesting to every one connected with the Free Church of Scotland. I shall only mention the principal occasions when this subject gave rise to controversial discussion, and the most important works which these different branches of the controversy produced.

The earliest discussions upon this subject, in the seventeenth century, were connected with the rise and progress of the Arminian controversy in Holland, and arose out of the interference of the civil authorities in the theological disputes which the views of Arminius and his followers produced, —so much so, that it has been said that this might be regarded as a sixth point or article in the Arminian controversy. The Arminians generally adopted Erastian views, —that is, of course, they ascribed a larger measure of jurisdiction or authority to the civil magistrate in religious and ecclesiastical matters, than Calvinists and Presbyterians generally have thought warranted by the word of God. The cause of this was partly, no doubt, because they found that, during the earlier stages of

the controversy, previous to the calling of the synod of Dort, the civil authorities generally favoured them, and were disposed to promote their views; while the ecclesiastical authorities the church courts— decidedly opposed their innovations. But their leaning to Erastianism had a deeper foundation than this, in the general character and tendency of their doctrinal views, —especially in their latitudinarianism, which implied or produced a want of an adequate sense of responsibility connected with the discovery and the maintenance of all God’s truth; and thus tended to dispose them towards an allowance or toleration of the interference of a foreign and incompetent authority in the decision of religious controversies, and in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs.

In 1614, the States of Holland, under Arminian influence, issued a decree imposing great limitations, amounting virtually to a prohibition, upon the public discussion of the controverted points, —very similar, indeed, both in its substance and in its object, to the declaration afterwards issued by royal authority, in England, under Laud’s influence. The orthodox divines — especially Sibrandus Lubbertus, professor at Franeker— attacked this decree, at once as requiring what was sinful in itself, that is, a neglect or violation of a duty which God had imposed, —and as involving a sinful assumption of authority on the part of the civil powers. Grotius defended this decree, and the principles on which it was based, in several pieces contained in the sixth volume of his theological works; the principal of which, entitled a *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Pietas*,” contains a good specimen of the combination of Erastianism with the most latitudinarian views in regard to doctrine. He wrote, about the same time, his famous treatise, “*De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra*,” which I have had occasion to mention, —an elaborate defence of a system of the grossest Erastianism, such as some even of his Prelatic correspondents in England could not digest. This work was not published till 1647, two years after its authors death. Another branch of the same controversy originated in a work of Utenbogard, minister at the Hague, a very zealous and influential supporter of Arminianism, published in Dutch in 1610, on the authority of the Christian magistrate in ecclesiastical matters. This was answered, in 1615, by Walanis, afterwards professor of theology at Leyden, in a very valuable treatise, entitled “*De munere Ministrorum Ecclesiae, et Inspectione Magistratus circa illud*,”

contained in the second volume of his collected works, which also include some important treatises on the Arminian controversy, especially in defence of Molinreus's "Anatome Arminianismi" against Corvinus. Utenbogard's treatise was defended, and TV alaaus s answered, by two men of very superior talents and learning— Gerhard John Vossius and Episcopius. Vossius was a man of great learning, and leaned very much to Arminianism, though he did not fully embrace the whole of that system of theology. His answer to Walaeus was written in 1616, in the form of a letter to Grotius; and it is contained in a very curious and interesting work, entitled, "Praestantium ac Eruditorum Virorum Epistolae Ecclesiasticae et Theologicae," — a work published by Limborch, and designed to advance the cause of Arminianism. It was also published separately in a small quarto, in 1669, under the title of "Dissertatio Epistolica de jure Magistratus in rebus Ecclesiasticis." Episcopius's defence of Utenbogard was published in 1618, entitled, "De jure Magistratus circa Sacra," and is contained in the second volume of his works. The controversy upon this subject between the Calvinists and the Arminians continued, without any material change of ground, after the Synod of Dort, in 1618-19; and there is some discussion of it, on the one side, in the "Censura" of the Leyden divines, on the Confession of the Remonstrants; and, on the other, in Episcopius's "Apologia pro Confessione," in reply to the "Censura."

A somewhat different aspect was given to the controversy, by the publication, in 1641, of a small work by Vedelius, entitled, "De Episcopatu Constantini Magni." Vedelius was a Calvinist, professor of theology at Franeker, and had written a valuable book, which was very galling to the Arminians, entitled, "De Arcanis Arminianismi," and was answered by Episcopius. He professed to reject the doctrine of the Arminians, in regard to the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate with respect to religious matters, and to assign to him much less authority, —a much more limited right of interference, —than they had done; but his views did not satisfy the generality of orthodox divines, who still thought them somewhat Erastian, and maintained that, in opposing Popish errors, he had gone too far to the other extreme, and had ascribed to the civil power too much authority in religious matters. From the very modified views held by Vedelius upon this subject, his opponents, in answering him, were led to

deal more closely than had ever been done before, with the real intricacies and difficulties of the question, and with the minuter distinctions which are necessary for the more full development and the more exact elucidation of the different topics which it involves; and their works, in consequence, have usually been regarded by sound Presbyterian divines, as exhibiting the most complete and accurate view of the principles involved in what has been commonly called the Erastian controversy. The principal answers to Vedelius's work were these three, —all of them valuable works, and well worthy of being perused by those who wish to understand this question thoroughly, —Revius's "Examen Dissertationis Vedelii;" Triglandius's "Dissertatio Theologica de Civili et Ecclesiastica Potestate and Apollonius's "Jus Majestatis circa Sacra," — all published immediately after Vedelius's work, and just about the time of the meeting of the Westminster Assembly. Voetius also, professor of divinity for many years at Utrecht, —a man of prodigious learning, —was a zealous opponent of Erastianism, and wrote largely upon this subject at different periods of his life, and in opposition to different opponents, especially in the first and last parts of his great work, "Politica Ecclesiastica," — the first published in 1663, and the last in 1676. His principal antagonist upon this subject was Lewis du Moulin, or Ludovicus Molinicus, a son of the famous Molinreus, who took so active a part in the Arminian controversy, and was long the leading divine in the Protestant Church of France. Lewis settled in England, and obtained a chair in Oxford during the Commonwealth. He adopted Independent, or Congregational, views on church government, chiefly, it would appear, because he thought them more favourable to Erastianism than Presbyterian principles, —a notion for which he could plead the authority of Congregational divines of the highest eminence, —namely, the five dissenting brethren, as they were called, in the Westminster Assembly. They, in their "Apologetical Narration," had asserted that they gave as much, or, as they thought, more, power to the civil magistrate in religious matters than the principles of Presbyterians would allow them to do, —a declaration which, whether it be regarded as made honestly or hypocritically, has been very galling to those who have succeeded them in the maintenance of Congregational principles. Du Moulin wrote at least four books in defence of Erastianism, —one in English, entitled, "Of the Right of Churches, and of the Magistrate's Power over them and three in

Latin, the first and most important entitled, “*Paraenesis ad aedificatores imperii in imperio*,” — the allegation, that scriptural and Presbyterian views about the independence of the church of Christ establish an *imperium in imperio*, having been always, as I have explained, the favourite argument of Erastians; and the other two entitled, “*Jugulum causae*” and “*Papa Ultrajectinus*,” — the pope of Utrecht being Yoetius, and the title being intended to insinuate, as is often done still, that the principles of Presbyterians upon this subject are the same as those of the Church of Rome.

I have gone on to notice Voetius and his antagonist Du Moulin, that I might finish what I had to say about this controversy, as it had been conducted in Holland during the seventeenth century. I now turn to Great Britain, where the Erastian controversy broke out at the time of the Westminster Assembly. A very excellent account of the controversy, as then conducted, will be found in the fourth chapter of Dr Hetherington’s very valuable “*History of the Westminster Assembly*.” I can only mention, that the two principal works produced at this period in defence of Presbyterian, and in opposition to Erastian, principles, are Gillespie’s “*Aaron’s Rod Blossoming*,” and Rutherford’s “*Divine Right of Church Government*,” both published in 1646, — Gillespie’s work being much more luminous, and much better digested, than Rutherford’s; and the second book of it being, perhaps, upon the whole, the best work to be read, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the principles of the Erastian controversy. The chief Erastian book of this period is Selden, “*De Synedriis*,” which is directed to the object of assailing Presbyterian principles, with materials derived from the Old Testament and the Jewish polity, — materials which are discussed in the first book of Gillespie’s “*Aaron’s Rod Blossoming*.”

There was little discussion upon this subject in England after the Restoration. The controversy was then transferred to Scotland, where the Presbyterian Nonconformists, in defending their refusal to submit to the ecclesiastical establishment then imposed upon the nation, not only objected to the intrinsic unlawfulness of the things imposed, but to the sinful usurpation of the rights of Christ, and of His church, exhibited by the civil authorities in imposing them, and were thus led to expound the

principles by which the interference of the civil authorities, in regard to religious matters, ought to be regulated. The principal works in which their views upon this subject were set forth are— Brown of Wamphray's "Apologeticall Relation," published in 1665; the "Apology for the Oppressed, Persecuted Ministers and Professors of the Presbyterian Reformed Religion," in 1677; and Forrester's "Rectius Instruendum," etc., in 1684. There has not, from that period till our own day, been much discussion upon this subject in Scotland. Brown of Wamphray, while in exile in Holland, published, in 1670, an important and valuable work on this subject, entitled, "Libertino-Erastianae Lamberti Velthusii Sententiae, de Ministerio, Regimiue, et Disciplina Ecclesiastica Confutatio," which is well worthy of perusal.

These are the chief eras or occasions of the discussion of the Erastian controversy, or of the principles that ought to regulate the provinces, functions, and duties of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, and of their relation to each other; and these are the principal books from which a knowledge of these subjects, and of the way in which they have been discussed, ought to be derived. There are several other interesting departments of the controversy, a knowledge of which tends to throw some light upon it, but to which I can merely allude: such as, first, the controversy in France during the seventeenth century, on the subject of the Gallican Liberties, in which Richer, Fleurv, Dupin, and Bossuet, being preserved by their Popery from the opposite extreme of Erastianism, but being occupied in establishing the entire independence of the civil upon the ecclesiastical, that they might refute the Pope's claims to temporal jurisdiction, direct or indirect, arrived at the same general conclusions as Presbyterians, —though they advanced to them from an opposite direction, —as to the proper relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical; secondly, the discussions carried on in England after the Revolution by the Nonjurors, especially Leslie, Hicke, Dodwell, and Brett, in which, though greatly hampered by their admission of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, as set forth in the Articles and Canons of the Church of England, they made a fair approach to scriptural and Presbyterian principles about the independence of the church of Christ, —advocating views similar to those put forth in our own day upon this subject by the Tractarians; and, lastly, the thoroughly Erastian views

advocated in the end of the seventeenth century, and the early part of the eighteenth, upon philosophical, political, and historical grounds, by some eminent German lawyers and jurists, who were profoundly skilled in ecclesiastical history, especially Thomasius, Boehmer, and Puffendorf.

IV. Free Church of Scotland

This controversy has been revived in our own day, and in its practical consequences proved the immediate cause of the Disruption of the ecclesiastical establishment of this country, and of the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. The precise cause or ground of the Disruption was this, —that the civil authorities required of us to do, in the execution of our functions as ecclesiastical office-bearers, or in the administration of the ordinary necessary business of Christ's church, what was inconsistent with the word of God and the recognised constitution of the church; and that we refused to do what was thus required of us, —first, because the things required to be done were in themselves wrong, sinful, opposed to the mind and will of God as revealed in His word, and to the interests of true religion; and, secondly, because to have done them on the ground on which obedience was required of us, —namely, submission to the alleged law of the land, —would have been an aggravation, instead of a palliation, of the sin, as it would have involved, in addition, a sinful recognition of the sinful usurpation, by civil authorities, of a right to interfere in Christ's house, and to substitute their laws instead of His in the administration of the affairs of His kingdom. On these grounds we were compelled, for conscience sake, to abandon our connection with the State, and our enjoyment of the temporalities of the Establishment; and we could not have preferred any other ground on which we might have been called upon to testify for Christ's truth, and to suffer for His name's sake, than just that great principle which God in His providence seems to have specially committed to the custody of the Church of Scotland, —namely, the principle of Christ's sole right to rule in His own house, —to reign in His own kingdom, —to govern all its affairs by His own laws, and through the instrumentality of His own office-bearers. It is important to understand the principles on which the Free Church of Scotland is based, so that we may be able to intelligently explain and defend them; and to

take care that, in so far as we are concerned, they shall be fully maintained, duly honoured, and faithfully applied.

The Free Church of Scotland having been formed in this way and upon this ground, was naturally led, while adhering to the whole standards and principles of the Church of Scotland, and asserting her right to that designation in opposition to the present ecclesiastical establishment, to introduce into her Formula? for license and ordination a more explicit reference to her peculiar standing and testimony; and to this point I would now, in conclusion, briefly advert. The principal changes which, since the Disruption, have been made upon the Formulae are these: first, the substitution of the word Erastian for the word Bourignian in the third question, and the introduction of the fifth question bearing more immediately upon the causes and grounds of the Disruption, and the special standing and testimony of the Free Church. By the old Formula), originally adopted in 1711, and still used in the Establishment, probationers and ministers are required to renounce all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Bourignian, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions contrary to the Confession of Faith. As Mrs Antonia Bourignon is now almost wholly forgotten, we did not think it necessary to retain a renunciation of her errors, and have, in consequence, substituted Erastian in this question instead of Bourignian, as we consider it an important branch of present duty to bear public testimony against Erastianism, and think we can easily prove that Erastian tenets, contrary to the Confession of Faith, are held by many in the present day who have subscribed it.

The fifth question, introduced into the Formula for the purpose above mentioned, is this, "Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to, civil government, and that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction, or authoritative control, over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church? And do you approve of the general principles embraced in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of ministers, and elders, and commissioners from presbyteries to the

General Assembly, read in presence of the Royal Commissioner on the 18th May 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the word of God, and the standards of this church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only Head, and to His word as her only standard?"

I can only add one or two explanatory notes on this question. It consists of two parts: the first asks assent to certain doctrines in regard to the constitution of Christ's church and the relation between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities; and the second, to the general principles embodied in certain documents. It is expressly laid down in the Confession of Faith, that "Christ, as King and Head of the church, has therein appointed a government, in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." We know, from the explicit testimony of Baillie, that this statement was introduced into the Confession for the express purpose of condemning Erastianism. The able and learned Erastians of that age saw, and admitted, that it cut up Erastianism by the roots, and, in consequence, exerted themselves, and successfully, to prevent the English Parliament from sanctioning that part of the Confession. It was often found, in the recent controversies against the Erastians of our day, —who are neither able nor learned, —that they must either renounce the views they entertained and the course they pursued, or else abandon this doctrine of the Confession, which they had subscribed. We still regard this great truth as warranting the whole course which we pursued in our contest with the civil authorities, as it is sanctioned by the law of the land as well as the word of God; and we still proclaim it to be the ground and basis of our peculiar standing and testimony in regard to the spirituality and freedom of the church, and its relation to Christ as its only head. The additional matter introduced into the statement of doctrine in the first part of this question, we regard as implied in, or deducible from, that doctrine of the Confession which forms the basis of it, and as fitted only to bring out more fully and explicitly its import and application as subversive of all Erastianism. If the government which Christ has established in His church be distinct from civil magistracy, it cannot be subordinate in its own province to civil government. The distinctness of the two naturally implies the non-subordination of the one to the other; and this of itself must be held to be

conclusive upon the point, unless it could be proved that Christ has expressly subordinated the one to the other, —a position which, though it is the only legitimate foundation of frank and honest Erastianism, was never openly maintained by those Erastians with whom we have had to contend.

The non-subordination to civil government of the distinct government which Christ ¹ms established in His church, naturally leads to the next position in the question, which is just an extension or amplification of what goes before, pointing it more directly and specifically against the proceedings that produced the Disruption, —namely, that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church. It is also explicitly and formally asserted, in another position contained in the Confession, — namely, that the civil magistrate may not assume to himself the “power of the keys,” — a phrase which, according to the usage of divines, might include the administration of the word and sacraments, but which, when distinguished from these, as it evidently is in the Confession, must mean the exercise of jurisdiction in the regulation of the affairs of the church. Jurisdiction, or authoritative control, of course means a right to make laws for the regulation of the affairs of © o the church, which are to be obeyed from regard to the authority that enacted them, or to pronounce decisions which are to be obeyed, because pronounced by one to whom obedience in the matter is legitimately due. When any civil magistrate assumes such jurisdiction or authoritative control in the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church, he is guilty of sin; and when the church submits to the exercise of such jurisdiction, she too becomes a partaker of his sin, and is involved in all the guilt of it.

The Claim of Rights of 1842, and the Protest of 1843, —the two documents described in the second part of the question, —consist, to a large extent, of the proofs and evidences, that the interferences of the civil authorities with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs were violations of the constitution of the country, and of the laws of the land; and, therefore, it is only to the general principles embodied in them that assent is required. And these general principles are just those which are set forth in the first part of the question; while the reference to these

documents at once connects together scriptural doctrines, constitutional principles, and important historical transactions, —all combined in setting forth the distinctive standing and testimony of the Free Church of Scotland, and in fully vindicating the position she now occupies, and the general course of procedure, on her part, which led to it. These are the only very material changes which have been introduced into our Formula; for license and ordination, subsequently to, and in consequence of, the Disruption. They are directed solely to the object of bringing out more fully and prominently our distinctive principles and our peculiar testimony; while both by what we have retained, and by what we have changed and added, we at once declare and establish our claim to be regarded as the true Church of Scotland, —the inheritors and possessors both of the principles and the rights of those by whom that church was reformed, first from Popery, and then from Prelacy and the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown.