THE

KINGDOM OF CHRIST,

AND THE

ERRORS OF ROMANISM.

BY THE

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ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

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THE

KINGDOM OF CHRIST

DELINEATED,

IN TWO ESSAYS ON

OUR LORD'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS PERSON,

AND OF

THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM,

AND ON THE

CONSTITUTION, POWERS, AND MINISTRY

OF

A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AS APPOINTED BY HIMSELF

BY RICHARD WHATELY, D. D.

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

Πᾶσα φυτεία ἣν οὐκ ἐφύτευσεν ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος ἐκριζωθήσεται.—MATT. XV. 13.

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1847.

TO THE CANDIDATES WHO RECEIVED

ORDINATION

AT CHRIST CHURCH, DUBLIN, NOVEMBER, MDCCCXL.

TO THE LORD BISHOP OF MEATH, WHOSE

CONSECRATION

TOOK PLACE IN THE SAME CHURCH, DECEMBER, MDCCCXL.

AND

TO THE BISHOPS AND CLERGY OF THE PROVINCE OF DUBLIN

WHO ATTENDED THE TRIENNIAL

VISITATION

HELD IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER, MDCCCXLI.

THIS VOLUME,

CONTAINING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISCOURSES DELIVERED

ON THOSE OCCASIONS, RESPECTIVELY,

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH EARNEST WISHES FOR THEIR PRESENT AND ETERNAL WELFARE,

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND AND FELLOW LABOURER,

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THE following Essays contain the substance of some Discourses not originally designed for the Press, but which I was strongly urged to publish by several of the persons to whom the Volume is inscribed.*

I have endeavoured to throw the materials into a form more suited for private perusal than that of the Discourses originally delivered. I fear, however, that in consequence of frequent interruptions during the preparation of the work for the Press, some defects may be found in the arrangement and comparative developement of the several topics, and other such imperfections in the compositions, which can only be effectually guarded against by means of a period of unbroken leisure beyond what I can ever reasonably expect.

But whatever may be thought of the Work as a Composition, I trust that, in respect of the *matter* of it, the reader will give me credit for being incapable of putting forth, on subjects so important, any views that have not been carefully considered.

In fact, among the subjects here treated of are some on which I have not only reflected much, but have written and published from time to time for above twelve years.

And it may not be impertinent here to remark, that in respect of some most important points now maintained, I may appeal (besides the arguments contained in the following pages) to the strongest of all external confirmations, the testimony of opponents. Not that I have ever written in a polemical form, or sought to provoke controversy; but by opponents, I mean those who have maintained, and who still maintain, opinions opposite to those I have put forth; but who have never, to the best of my knowledge, even attempted any refutation of the reasons I have adduced.

For instance, that the introduction into the Christian Religion of Sacrifices and Sacrificing Priests is utterly at variance with the whole System of the Gospel, and destructive of one of its most important characteristics; and, again, that the implicit deference due to the declarations and precepts of Holy Scripture, is due to *nothing else*, and that it is not humble piety, but profane presumption, either to attribute infallibility to the traditions or decision of any uninspired Man or Body of men, (whether Church, Council, Fathers, or by whatever other title designated,) or, still more, to acknowledge in these, *although fallible*, a right to fix absolutely the interpretation of Scripture, to be blended therewith, and to supersede all private judgment,—these are positions which I have put forth, from time to time, for many years past, in various forms of expression, and supported by a variety of arguments, in several different works, some of which have appeared in more than one edition. And though opposite views are maintained by many writers of the present day, several of them professed members of the Church of England, I have never seen even an attempted refutation of any of those arguments.

It cannot be alleged that they are not worth noticing: since whether intrinsically weak or strong, the reception they have met with from the Public indicates their having had some influence.

And again, if any one is averse to entering into controversy, and especially personal controversy, (a feeling with which I cordially sympathize,) this would not compel him to leave wholly unnoticed all the arguments that can be urged against his views. It would be absurd to speak as if there were no medium between, on the one hand, engaging in a controversy, and, on the other hand, passing over with-

* In the earlier part of the first Essay, I have been much indebted to a valuable Work which, for several years, I have been in the habit of recommending to divinity students,—"Wilson on the Interpretation of the New Testament," [published by Parker, West Strand.] In the first edition this notice, though referred to in a foot note to § 6, (as if inserted,) was accidentally omitted in this place.

out any notice at all, every thing that ever has been, or may be, urged on the opposite side. Nothing is easier or more common, and I should add, nothing more advisable, than to notice in *general* terms the opinions or arguments opposed to one's own, and without reference to any particular book or author: as by saying, for instance, "Such and such a doctrine has been held;"—"this or that may be alleged;"—"some persons may object so and so," &c. In this way, not only personal controversy may be avoided, without undue neglect of what may be said on the opposite side, but also the advantage is gained (to the cause of truth, I mean) of confining the reader's attention to the real merits of the case, independently of the extraneous circumstances,* which ought not to influence the decision.

It is true, no one should be required to notice every minor objection,—every difficulty relative to points of detail,—that may be alleged against any principle or system he is contending for; since there may be even valid objections against each of two opposite conclusions.† But this does not affect the present case; the arguments I am alluding to having relation to *fundamental principles*. Whatever any one may think of the soundness of those arguments, no one can doubt that, if admitted, they go to prove that the system contended against is (not merely open to objections, but) radically wrong throughout; based on false assumptions, supported by none but utterly fallacious reasoning, and leading to the most pernicious consequences.

And these arguments, though it is not for me to say that they are unanswerable have certainly been hitherto, as far as I know, wholly unanswered, even by those who continue to advocate opposite conclusions.

Should it be asked why they do not either abandon those conclusions, or else attempt a refutation of the reasons urged against them, *that* is evidently not a question for me, but for them, to answer. Else, an answer is not unlikely to occur to some minds, in the words of the homely proverb, "he that's convinced against his will, is of his own opinion still."

It is only, however, in reference to the subject-matter itself of the question under discussion—to the intrinsic soundness of the conclusions advocated—that the opinions and procedure of individuals can be worth the attention of the general reader. All that I wish to invite notice to is, the confirmation that is afforded to the conclusiveness of arguments to which no answer is attempted, even by those who continue to maintain doctrines at variance with them.

All that has been said in reference to the positions above alluded to (which are among those maintained in the second of these Essays) will apply equally to some of those maintained in the first Essay: for instance, that to attempt the propagation or support of Gospel truth by secular force, or by establishing in behalf of Christians, as such, a monopoly of civil rights, is utterly at variance with the true character of Christ's Kingdom, and with the teaching and practice of Himself and his Apostles;‡ and that to attribute to them any such design, is to impugn their character, not merely as inspired Messengers from Heaven, but even as sincere and upright men.

These conclusions have been maintained by arguments which have been as long before the Public § as the others above alluded to, and have remained equally unanswered.

If in these, or in any other points, I am in error, I trust I shall be found open to conviction whenever my errors shall be pointed out. In the mean time, I trust I shall not be thought to have been unprofitably employed, in endeavouring more fully to elucidate, and to confirm by additional arguments, what appear to me to be momentous truths, and in developing some of the most important of the practical conclusions which result from them.

In the present edition a few notes have been added in further illustration of the principles maintained; and here and there a sentence has been slightly altered in expression, in order to guard, as far as lies in myself, against all danger of misapprehension.

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* Ἐξω του πραγματος, Arist. Rhet. † See Logic, b. iii. § 17.

‡ See a very interesting pamphlet on the present condition of the Vaudois. (Murray, Albemarle Street.)

§ Particularly in the Essay "On Persecution," (Third Series,) and in Appendix E. and F. to the Essays "On the Dangers," &c., (Fourth Series.)

ESSAY I.

ON CHRIST'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS PERSON, AND ON THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM, AS SET FORTH AT HIS TWO TRIALS.

Οὐδὲ εὑρέθη ΔΟΛΟΣ ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ.

§ 1. To any one who is convinced of the divine origin of the Christian Religion,—who is satisfied that what is called in Scripture "the Kingdom of Heaven" does really deserve that title,—and who is inquiring into the personal character of its Founder, and into the nature of that Kingdom which He proclaimed and established, the most obvious and natural course would seem to be, to appeal, in the first instance, to that Founder himself, and to consider what account He gave of his own character and that of his kingdom. For to believe Him sent from God, is to believe Him incapable of either deceiving or being deceived, as to these points. He must have understood both his own personal nature, and the principles of the religion He was divinely commissioned to introduce. Having a full reliance therefore both on his unerring knowledge, and his perfect veracity, our first inquiry should be, as I have said, (without any disparagement of other sources of instruction,) into the accounts He gave of Himself and his religion; both in the various discourses which He delivered and declarations which He made, on sundry occasions, and, most especially, on the great and final occasion of his being tried and condemned to death.

We collect from the sacred historians that He underwent *two* trials, before two distinct tribunals, and on charges totally different; that on the one occasion He was found guilty, and on the other, acquitted; and that ultimately He was put to death under the one Authority in compliance with the condemnation which had been pronounced by the other.

He was tried first before the Sanhedrim, (the Jewish Council,) "for blasphemy," and pronounced "guilty of death." Before the Roman governor, Pilate, (and probably before Herod also,) He was tried for rebellion, in setting up pretensions subversive of the existing Government; and was pronounced not guilty. The Jewish rulers had the will, but not the power, to inflict capital punishment on Him; Pilate had the power, and not the will. But though he "found no fault in Him," he was ultimately prevailed on by the Jews to inflict *their* sentence of death. "*We** have a law," they urged, "and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

Of this most interesting and important portion of the sacred narrative, many persons, I believe, have a somewhat indistinct and confused notion; partly from the brevity, scantiness, and indeed incompleteness, of each of the four narratives, when taken alone; each evangelist recording, it may be supposed, such circumstances, as he was the most struck with, and had seen or heard the most of: and partly, again, from the commonly prevailing practice of reading the Scripture-histories irregularly, and in detached fragments, taken indiscriminately and without any fixed object, out of different books.†

This indistinctness a reader of ordinary intelligence may I think very easily clear away, by attentively studying and *comparing together* all the four accounts that have come down to us: and he will then find that this portion of the history so examined, will throw great light on some of the most important points of Gospel truth;—on those two great questions

* Ἡμεῖς is expressed in the original.

† The whole of the *New* Testament is read in this irregular mode, in the Second Lessons appointed in our service; as these are appointed in reference to the day of the month only; and it is consequently a matter of chance which of them shall fall on Sunday. This is one of the imperfections which a Church-government, if we had one, would not fail to remedy. See Appendix to the Second Essay

especially which were alluded to in the outset, as to the fundamental character of "the kingdom of Heaven," and the person of its Founder.

§ 2. When the Jewish Rulers and People were clamorously demanding the death of Jesus under sentence of the Roman Authorities, and Pilate in answer declared, that before his—the Roman—tribunal, no crime had been proved, saying, "Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law," his intention evidently was that no heavier penalty should be inflicted than the scourging which was the utmost that the Jewish Authorities were permitted to inflict. But they replied that the crime of which they had convicted Him was, by their law, *capital*, while yet they were restricted by the Romans from inflicting capital punishment; ("it is not lawful for *us* to put any man to death;") on which ground accordingly they called on the Governor to execute the capital sentence of *their* Court.

Their clamours prevailed, through Pilate's apprehension of a tumult,* and of himself incurring suspicions of disloyalty towards the Emperor; which they had endeavoured to awaken by crying out that "if he let this man go, he was not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." But this was only brought forward as a plea to influence Pilate. The trial before the Jewish Council had nothing to do with the Roman Emperor, but was for "blasphemy," because "He made Himself the SON OF GOD."

It is important, therefore, to inquire,—since this phrase may conceivably bear more than one meaning,—in what sense it was understood by those who founded on it the sentence of death.

In a certain sense all mankind may be called children of God.† In a more especial manner,—in a higher sense,—those are often called his children whom He has from time to time chosen to be his "peculiar People,"—to have his will revealed to them, and his offers of especial favour set before them. Such were the Israelites of old (to whom the title of Son is accordingly assigned by the Lord himself, Exod. iv. 22,) as being the chosen or "elect" people of God, called from among all the nations of the world to receive direct communications, and especial blessings from their Heavenly Father. And the like privilege of peculiar "Sonship," (only in a far higher degree,) was extended afterwards to all nations who should embrace the Gospel; "who aforetime" (says the Apostle Peter) "were not a People, but now are the People of God." And Paul uses like expressions continually in addressing his converts, whether they walked worthy of their high calling or not.

Yet again, still more especially, those who do avail themselves of the privileges offered to them, and "walk as Children of the light," are spoken of as, in another and a superior way, the "Sons" of Him whom they love and submit to as a Father: "as many," says Paul, "as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."

Those Patriarchs, and Prophets again, to whom of old God revealed Himself immediately, and made them the means of communication between Himself and other men,—his messengers to his People,—and endowed with miraculous powers as the credentials of a heavenly embassy,—to such men as having a peculiar kind of divine presence with them, we might conceive the title of Children of God to be applicable in a different sense, as distinguishing them from uninspired men.

Now it is a most important practical question whether Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,—He to whom we are accustomed emphatically to apply the title of "*the* Son of God,"—was so designated, in the Angel's first announcement, and on so many occasions afterwards, merely as being an inspired messenger from heaven, or in some different and higher sense; and what that higher sense is.

§ 3. And first, that Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as the Son of God, in some different sense from any other person, is evident at once from the very circumstance of his being styled "the only begotten Son;" which title is particularly

* It seems to have been not unusual for the Roman Governors of Provinces to endeavour thus to prevent, or mitigate, or cut short, any tumult *not directed against the Roman power itself*, by yielding to the wishes of the populace, however unreasonable, or conniving at their disorders. A sort of compromise was thus made with the most turbulent and violent among them; who, provided they made no attempt to throw off the yoke of a foreign Power, were permitted to sacrifice a fellow citizen to their lawless fury. Thus Gallio at Corinth left the rioters to settle their own disputes as they would; (Acts xviii.;) and the magistrates at Philippi readily and spontaneously gratified the populace by seconding and sanctioning their unjust violence. Pilate on this occasion did so, tardily and reluctantly.

† (Acts xvii.) . . "for we are also his children."

dwelt on when He is speaking of Himself, (John iii.) This is a further stage in the revelation given; for the Angel had not told Mary that He should be "*the* Son of God," (though it is so rendered in our version) but only "*a* Son of God," υἱὸς Θεοῦ.

I need not multiply the citations of passages of which so many must be familiar to every one even tolerably well-read in the New-Testament. But there is one that is peculiarly worthy of attention, on account of the care which divine Providence then displayed in guarding the disciples against the mistake of supposing Jesus to be merely one—though the most eminent one—of the Prophets. In the transfiguration "on the Mount," three favoured Apostles beheld their Master surrounded with that dazzling supernatural light which had always been to the Israelites the sign of a divine manifestation, and which we find so often mentioned in the Old Testament as the Glory of the Lord—the Shechinah;—which appeared on Mount Sinai,—on the Tabernacle in the Wilderness,—in Solomon's Temple, &c.: and they beheld at the same time, in company with Him, two persons, each of whom had been seen in their lifetime accompanied by this outward mark of supernatural light; Moses, their great lawgiver, whose "face shone when he came down from Mount Sinai, so that the Israelites could not fix their eyes on it, and Elias (Elijah), their most illustrious Prophet, who was seen borne away from the earth in that Shechinah appearing as a "chariot and horses of fire:" and now, these same two persons were seen along with Jesus. It might naturally have occurred to the three disciples (perhaps some such idea was indicated by the incoherent words which dropped from them) —the thought might have occurred to them,—were Moses and Elias also Emmanuels?—were all three, manifestations of "God dwelling with his People?" and was Jesus merely the greatest of the three? To correct, as it should seem, any such notion, it was solemnly announced to them that their Master was a Being of a different character from the others: "there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is *my beloved* SON: hear *Him*." And on two other occasions we read of the same signs being given.

§ 4. No one can doubt then, that those who believed in Jesus at all, must have believed Him to be the Son of God in a far different and superior sense from that in which any other could be so called. But what *was* the sense, it may be asked, in which they did understand the title? Did the people of that time and country understand that God was with Him, not only in some such way as He never was with any other man, but so as to permit and require *divine worship* to be addressed to God in Christ? Many passages by which this tenet is supported are commonly cited from the Evangelists and Apostles; but I wish at present to confine myself to the expression "the Son of God," and to inquire in what sense that *word* was understood at the time.

Waiving then all abstruse disquisition on the notions conveyed by such terms as "consubstantiality"—"personality,"—hypostatic-union,"—"eternal filiation," and the like, (often I conceive debated about with eagerness than clearly understood,) let us confine ourselves to such views as we may presume the Apostles to have laid before the converts they were instructing; who were most of them plain unlearned persons, to whom such abstruse disquisitions as I have been alluding to must have been utterly unintelligible; but who, nevertheless, where called on,—all of them, of whatever age, sex, station, and degree of intellectual education,—to receive the Gospel, and to believe, and feel, and act, as that Gospel enjoined.

There is one great practical point clearly intelligible to all, thus far, at least, that they can understand what the question is that is under discussion, and which it is, and ever must have been, needful to bring before all Christians without exception: viz., whether there is that divine character in the Lord Jesus which entitles Him to our *adoration*:—whether He is the Son of God in such a sense as to authorize those who will worship none but the one God, to worship Jesus Christ; so that all men* should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

Now there is a maxim relative to the right interpretation of any passage of Scripture, so obvious when stated, that it seems strange it should be so often overlooked; viz. to consider *in what sense the words were understood by the generality of the persons they were addressed to;* and to keep in mind that the *presumption* is in favour of that, as the true sense, unless reasons to the contrary shall appear.

Some are accustomed to consider what

* John v. 23.

sense such and such words can be *brought* to *bear;* or how *we* should be most naturally inclined to understand them: but it is evident that the point we have to consider, if we would understand aright what it is that God did design to reveal, is, the sense (as far as we can ascertain it) which the very hearers of Christ and his Apostles did *actually* attach to their words. For we may be sure that if this was, in any case, a *mistaken* sense, a correction of the mistake (if it relate to any important practical point) will be found in some part of the Sacred Writings.

However strange therefore it may seem to any one that the phrase "Son of God" should have been so understood as it was at the time, and however capable of another sense it may appear to us, still, the sense which Jesus and his Apostles meant to convey, must have been that, whatever it was, in which they *knew that their hearers understood them.*

And what this meaning was, may I think be settled even by the testimony of his adversaries alone, as to the sense in which *they* understood Him. They charged Him, not only on his trial, but on many other occasions also, with "blasphemy," as "making Himself God,"—"making himself equal with God;" and threatened to "stone Him," according to the law of Moses against blasphemers; understanding blasphemy to comprehend the crime of enticing the People to worship any besides the one true God, Jehovah.*

Now if they had *mis*understood his words, and had supposed his language to imply a claim to such divine honour as He did *not* really mean to claim, we may be sure that any one—I do not say merely, any inspired messenger from heaven, but—any man of common integrity, would at once have disavowed the imputation, and explained his real meaning. If any Christian ministers, in these days, or at any time, were to have used some expression which they found was understood,—either by friends or foes,—as implying a claim to divine worship, what would they not deserve, if they did not hasten to disclaim such a meaning?

And much more would this be requisite in the case of a person who foresaw (as Jesus must have done) that his followers *would* regard Him as divine,—*would* worship Him—if He did not expressly warn them against it. Such a one would be doubly bound to make such explanations and such disavowals as should effectually guard his disciples against falling into the error—through any thing said or done by himself—of paying adoration to a Being not divine: even as the Apostle Peter warns the Centurion Cornelius against the adoration which he suspected that Cornelius designed to offer him; saying, "stand up, I myself also am a man." Jesus of course would have taken care to give a like warning, if He had been conscious of not having a claim to be considered as divine, and had at the same time been aware that the title of Son of God would be understood as implying that claim.

That the title *was* so understood, is the point to which I am now calling the reader's attention.

§ 5. On one occasion, when he had healed a cripple on the Sabbath-day, and had commanded him immediately "to take up his bed" (which was a work prohibited by the Jewish law) He vindicates himself against his opponents by saying "My Father worketh hitherto,* and I work;" or, as it might be rendered more clearly, according to our modern usage, "My father has been working up to this time;" (that is, ever since the creation, the operations of God have been going on throughout the universe, on all days alike;) and I work;" I claim the right to perform, and to authorize others to perform, whatever and whenever I see fit.† "Therefore the Jews" (says the Evangelist) "sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his [proper] Father; *making himself equal with God.*‡

On another occasion (John x. 33) when He had said "I and the Father are one," the Jews were about to stone Him for blasphemy, "because (said they) thou being a man makest thyself God." He defends Himself by alleging a passage of their Scripture in which the title of "God" is applied to those, "to whom the word of God came;" implying however at the same time

* See Deut. xiii.

* Ἐργάζεται ἕως ἄρτι.

† I have treated more fully on this point, in an Essay entitled "Thoughts on the Sabbath."

‡ Our version, it is important to observe, does not give the full force of the passage as it stands in the Original. It should be rendered, "that God was his *own proper* (or *peculiar*) Father." (πατέρα ἴδιον.) This it seems was the sense in which (according to the Evangelist) He was understood by his hearers to call God his Father, and Himself "the Son of God."—See Wilson on the New Testament, referred to in the Preface.

a *distinction* between Himself and those persons, and his own *superiority* to them: "Say ye of Him" (He doth not say "to whom the word of God came"—but) "whom the Father hath anointed and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?" *This* however did not necessarily imply any thing more than *superiority*, and divine *mission;* and accordingly *we find the Jews enduring it;* but when He goes on to say "that ye may know and believe that *the Father is in me and I in him*," we find them immediately *seeking again to lay hands on him;* and He withdraws from them.

But the most important record by far in respect of the point now before us is that which I originally proposed to notice,—the account of our Lord's trial and condemnation before the Jewish council. In order to have a clear view of this portion of the history, it is necessary to keep in mind, that when He was tried before the Roman Governor, it was (as I observed in the beginning) not for the same crime he was charged with before the Council of the Jews; but for seditious and treasonable designs against the *Roman* Emperor: "We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King." "Whosoever maketh himself a King, speaketh against Cæsar." Now I need hardly remark that this was no crime under the Law of *Moses;* and would in fact have been a merit in the sight of most of the Jews. But what He was charged with before *them*, was blasphemy, according to the Law of Moses;* and of this they pronounced Him guilty, and sentenced Him to death; but not having power to inflict capital punishment, they prevailed on Pilate, who had acquitted Him of the charge of treason, to inflict their sentence: "We have a law, and by *our law* He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

In order to understand clearly the trial and condemnation of our Lord before the Jewish council (which is in many respects a most important part of Sacred history) we should study, as I have said, the accounts given of it by all four of the Evangelists. Each relates such circumstances as most struck his own mind; where one is abridged, another is more diffuse; each omits some things that are noticed by another; but no one can be supposed to have recorded any thing that did *not* occur. All the four, therefore, should be compared together, in order to obtain a clear view of the transaction.

It seems to have been divinely appointed that Jesus should be convicted on no testimony but *his own;* perhaps in order to fulfil the more emphatically his declaration "No man taketh away my life, but I lay it down of myself." For the witnesses brought forward to misrepresent and distort his saying "Destroy this temple," and "*I* will destroy," could not make their evidence agree.

The High Priest then endeavoured, by examining Jesus Himself, to draw from Him an acknowledgment of his supposed guilt. He and the others appear to have asked Him *two* questions; which in the more abridged narrative of Matthew and Mark are compressed into one sentence; but which Luke has given distinctly as two. After having asked Him "Art thon *the Christ?*" they proceed to ask further "Art thou then the *Son of God?*"* and as soon as He had answered *this last* question in the affirmative (according to the Hebrew idiom "Ye say," "Thou hast said") immediately "the High Priest rent his clothes," saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy: ye have heard the blasphemy; what need we any further witnesses? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth."

§ 6. Some readers, I believe, from not carefully studying and comparing together the accounts of the different Evangelists, are apt to take for granted that the crime for which our Lord was condemned was that of falsely pretending to be the Messiah or Christ. But whatever the Jews may have thought of *that* crime, they certainly could not have found it mentioned, and death denounced against it, in the Law of Moses. It could, at any rate, have been no crime, unless *proved* to be a *false* pretension; which was not even attempted. Nor could they have brought that offence (even if proved) under the head of *blasphemy;* unless they had been *accustomed to expect* the Messiah as a divine person. *Then*, indeed, the claim of being the Messiah, and the claim of divine honour, would have amounted to the same thing. But so far were they from having this expectation that (not to multiply proofs) they were completely at a loss to answer our Lord's question, how Da-

* See Deut. xiii. 7.

* See John xx. 31.

vid, if the Christ were to be David's son, could speak of him as a divine Being under the title of LORD. "If David then called Him Lord, how is He his son," is a question which they would have answered without a moment's hesitation, if they had expected that the Christ should be, though the Son of David after the flesh and as a human Being, yet, the Son of God in such a sense as to make him a Divine Being also.

Whatever good reasons then they might have found in prophecy for such expectation, it seems plain that they had it not.

And the same I believe is the case, generally speaking, with the Jews of the present day.* A learned modern Jew, who has expressly written that Jesus "falsely demanded faith in Himself as the true God of Israel," adds that "if a prophet, or *even the Messiah Himself*, had offered proof of his divine mission by miracles, but claimed divinity, he ought to be stoned to death;" conformably *i. e.* to the command in Deut. xiii. And the only Jew with whom I ever conversed on the subject appeared to hold the same doctrine; though he was at a loss when I asked him to reconcile it with the application of the title of Emmanuel.

The Jewish Council then could not, it appears, capitally convict our Lord, merely for professing to be the Christ, even though falsely: and accordingly we may observe that they did not even seek for any proof that his pretension *was* false. But as soon as He acknowledged Himself to be the "Son of the living God," they immediately pronounced him "guilty of death" for blasphemy; *i. e.* as seeking to lead the people (Deut. xiii.) to pay divine honour to another besides the true God. They convict him on his own testimony (having "heard of his own mouth") of the crime which they afterwards describe to Pilate. "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

§ 7. No candid reader then can doubt, I think, that the Jews understood him to claim by that title a divine character. And He Himself must have *known* that they so understood him. As little can it be doubted therefore that they must have *rightly* understood him. For if he—condemned as he was on the evidence of his own words—had known that those words were understood differently from his real meaning, and yet had not corrected the mistake, he would have been himself bearing false witness against Himself; since no one can suppose it makes any difference in point of veracity, whether a man says that which is untrue in *every* sense, or that which, though in a certain sense true, yet is false in the sense in which he knows it to be understood. It is mere waste of labour and learning and ingenuity to inquire what meaning such and such an expression is *capable* of bearing, in a case where we know, as we do here, what was the sense which was actually conveyed by it, to the hearers, and which the speaker must have been aware it did convey to them.

Jesus did therefore acknowledge the fact alleged against Him; viz.: that of claiming to be the Son of God in such a sense as to incur the penalty (supposing that claim unwarranted) of death for blaspheming, according to the law respecting those who should entice Israel to worship any other than the one true God. The whole question therefore of his being rightly or wrongfully condemned, turns on the justness of that claim:—on his actually having, or not having, that divine character which the Jews understood Him to assume. For if He were *not* such, and and yet called Himself the Son of God, knowing in what sense they understood the title, I really am at a loss to see on what ground we can find fault with the sentence they pronounced.

It does appear to me therefore—I say this without presuming to judge those who think differently, but to me it appears—that the whole question of Christ's divine mission, and consequently of the truth of Christianity, turns on the claim which He so plainly appears to have made to divine honour for Himself.

I am not one of those indeed who profess to understand and explain why it was necessary for man's salvation that God should have visited his People precisely in the way He did. On such points, as I dare not believe less, so I pretend not to understand more, than He has expressly revealed. If I had been taught in Scripture that God had thought fit to save the world, through the agency of some Angel, or some great Prophet, not possessing in himself a divine character, I could not have presumed to maintain the impossibility of that. But *this* does strike me as utterly impossible; that a heaven-sent messenger—the Saviour of the world,—should be a person who claimed a divine

* See Wilson on the New Testament, above referred to.

character that did *not* belong to Him; and who thus gave rise to, and permitted, and encouraged, a system of idolatry. This is an idea so revolting to all my notions of divine purity, and indeed of common morality, that I could never bring myself to receive as a divine revelation any religious system that contained it.

All the difficulties on the opposite side —and I do not deny that *every* religious persuasion has its difficulties—are as nothing in comparison of the difficulty of believing that Jesus (supposing Him neither an impostor nor a madman) could have made the declaration he did make at his trial, if He were conscious of having no just claim to divine honour.

§ 8. And the conclusion to which we are thus led, arises (it should be observed) out of the mere consideration of the title "Son of God," or "only-begotten Son of God," as applied to Jesus Christ; without taking into account any of the confirmations of the same conclusion (and there are very many) which may be drawn from other parts of the Sacred Writings, both of the Evangelists and Apostles—from many things that were said, and that were done, both by our Lord and by his Apostles.

There is indeed no one of these their recorded actions and expressions that may not be explained away by an ingenious critic, who should set himself to do so, and who should proceed like a legal advocate, examining every possible sense in which some law or precedent, that makes against his client, may be interpreted. But again, there is hardly one of these passages which can be thus explained away without violating the maxim above laid down; viz., that we should consider, not *any* interpretation whatever that such and such words can bear, but—what notion they conveyed, and must have been known to convey, to the hearers, at the time.* For if this were a mistaken notion,—an untrue sense,—it follows inevitably that Christ and his Apostles must have been *teachers* of falsehood, even though their words should be capable of a different and true signification.

Unless, therefore, we conceive them capable of knowingly promoting idolatry,—unless we can consider Jesus Himself as either an insane fanatic, or a deliberate impostor,—we must assign to him, the "Author and Finisher of our Faith," the "only-begotten Son of God," who is "one with the Father," that divine character which He and his Apostles so distinctly claimed for Him; and acknowledge that God truly "was in Christ, reconciling the World unto Himself."

§ 9. Not less important, I conceive, are the lessons to be drawn from the second trial,—that before Pilate,—to which our Lord was subjected; provided this portion also of the sacred narrative be studied on the principle already laid down; that of interpreting his declarations with reference to the meaning they were meant to convey at the time, and to the very persons He was addressing.

The Jewish Council having found Jesus guilty of a capital crime, and being not permitted,* under the Roman laws, to inflict capital punishment, (for the stoning of Stephen appears to have been an irregular and tumultuous outbreak of popular fury,) immediately bring him before Pilate on a new and perfectly different charge. "The whole multitude of them arose and led Him unto Pilate: and they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." For the crime of which He had been convicted before *them*, that of blasphemy, in seeking to draw aside the Jews to the worship of another besides the LORD Jehovah, though a capital crime under the Mosaic law, was none at all in the court of the Roman Governor; and again, the crime alleged in this latter court, treason against the Roman emperor, was no crime at all under the law of Moses.

Now, in studying the circumstances of this second trial, we ought, as has been above observed, to proceed by the same rule of interpretation as in respect of the former trial; viz., to understand our Lord's expressions, not in any sense whatever they can be brought to bear, nor, necessarily, in the sense which to *us* may seem the most suitable, but in the sense, as far as we can ascertain it, in which He must have *known that He was understood* at the time.

When then He was charged before Pilate with "speaking against Cæsar" and "making Himself a King," how does He defend Himself? As on a former occasion, when his adversaries had tried to *make* him commit the offence with which they now charged Him, of interfering with the secular government of Cæsar, He, so far from "forbidding to give tribute," drew the line between

* See Sermon on the "Name Emmanuel."

* οὐκ ἐγνων.

secular and spiritual government, saying, "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's," so, now, before Pilate, He asserts his claim to be a King, but declares that "his kingdom is not of this world," and that, accordingly, his servants were not allowed to fight for Him; and He further describes his kingly office to consist in "bearing witness of the truth." "Every one that is of the truth," said He, "heareth (*i. e.* obeyeth) my voice."*

The result was that Pilate acquitted Him; declaring publicly that he "found no fault at all in Him." It is plain, therefore, that he must have believed—or at least professed to believe—both that the declarations of Jesus were true, and that they amounted to a total disavowal of all interference with the secular government, by Himself, or his followers, as such.

Much ingenuity has been expended,—I must needs say, has been *wasted*,—in drawing out from our Lord's expressions before Pilate, every sense that his words can be found capable of bearing; while a man of little or no ingenuity, but of plain good sense and sincerity of purpose, seeking in simplicity to learn what Jesus really did mean, can hardly, I should think, fail of that meaning, if he does but keep in mind the *occasion* on which He was speaking, and the sense in which He must have known that his language would be understood. The occasion on which He spoke was when on his trial before a Roman governor, for *treason*,—for a design to subvert, or in some way interfere with, the established government. To this charge, it is plain Pilate understood Him to plead *not guilty;* and gave credit to his plea. Pilate, therefore, must have taken the declaration that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," as amounting to a renunciation of all secular coercion,—all forcible measures in behalf of his religion. And we cannot without imputing to our blessed Lord a fraudulent evasion, suppose Him to have really meant any thing different from the sense which he knew his words conveyed. Such is the conclusion which I cannot but think any man must come to who is not seeking, as in the interpretation of an Act of Parliament, for any sense most to his own purpose, that the words can be made to bear, however remote that may be from the known design of the Legislator; but who, with reverential love, is seeking with simplicity and in earnest to *learn* what is the description that Christ gave of his kingdom.

But the ingenuity which has been (as I said before) wasted in trying to explain our Lord's words in some other way, has been called forth by a desire to escape some of the *consequences* which follow from taking them in their simple and obvious sense. Those who are seeking not really to learn the true sense of our Lord's declarations, but to reconcile them with the conduct of some Christian States, and to justify the employment of secular force in behalf of Religion, are driven to some ingenious special-pleading on the words employed, in order to draw from them such a sense as may suit their own purpose.

And all this ingenuity is (as I said before) wasted; because even supposing it proved that the words which Jesus uttered are, in themselves, capable of bearing some other meaning, still, nothing is gained (supposing our object is, not to *evade*, but to *understand* Scripture) if that meaning be one which could not have been so understood at the time, or which would have been one utterly foreign to the occasion and irrelevant to the question that was to be tried.

§ 10. For instance, I have heard it said that our Lord's description of his kingdom as "not of this world" meant *merely* that He claimed to possess a spiritual dominion (as undoubtedly He did) over the souls of men, and to be the distributor of the rewards and judgments of the other

* He came to establish a Kingdom of Truth; that is, not a kingdom whose subjects should embrace on compulsion what is in itself true, and consequently should be adherents of truth by accident; but a kingdom whose subjects should have been admitted as such in consequence of their being "of the truth" that is, men honestly disposed to embrace, and "obey the truth," whatever it might be, that God should reveal: agreeably to what our Lord has elsewhere declared, that "if any man will do (θέλῃ, is willing to do) the will of my Father, he shall know the doctrine, &c."

Those who explain Christ's declaration of his having "come into the world to bear witness of the truth," in some sense in itself intelligible, but quite unconnected with the inquiry He was answering, as to his being "a King," seem to forget that what he said must have had not only *some* meaning, but some meaning *pertinent* to the occasion; and this they seem as much at a loss for as Pilate himself; who exclaimed, "What is truth?" not from being ignorant of the meaning of the word, but from perceiving no connexion between "truth" and the inquiry respecting the claim to regal office.—*See Essay I.*, 2d series.

world. And such certainly *is* his claim: but the essential point, with a view to the trial then going on, was, that this was his *only* claim. He did not merely claim spiritual dominion, but he also *renounced* temporal. He declared not merely that his kingdom is of the *next* world; but that it is *not* of *this* world.

In fact, the *mere* assertion of his spiritual dominion, and one extending beyond the grave, would have been, at that time, and in reference to the charge brought against Him, wholly irrelevant, and foreign to the question. He was charged with "speaking against Cæsar,"—with making Himself King in opposition to the Roman Emperor. The Jews expected (as Pilate could hardly have been ignorant) a Christ who should be a heaven-sent "King of the Jews," possessing both temporal *and* spiritual authority; a kingdom, both of this world and of the next: for the great mass of the nation believed in a future state. Any man claiming to be such a king of the Jews, would evidently be an opponent of the Roman government. His *spiritual* pretensions, the Romans did not concern themselves about. It was the assumption of *temporal* power that threatened danger to the Empire; and it was of this assumption that Jesus was accused: *did He not distinctly deny it?* There was no question about the rewards and punishments of another world. The question was, whether He did or did not design to claim, for Himself, or his followers *as such*, any kind of secular empire:* could any words have disclaimed it more strongly than those He used? And can any one in his senses seriously believe that when Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," He meant to be understood as saying that his kingdom was not only of this world, but of the next world too.

No,—I have heard it said by some other expounders,—He did mean to disclaim all temporal dominion for *Himself personally* and *at that time*; but that, hereafter, when "the kingdoms of this world should become kingdoms of the Lord," and when "kings should become nursing fathers" of his Church, when "the Church should be in its complete developement by being perfectly identified with the State,—then, all those Christians who should have attained power, should exercise that power in enforcing the profession of his Gospel, and in putting down idolatry, infidelity, heresy, dissent, and all false religion. In short, at the time when Christ stood before Pilate, his kingdom was not of this world, "because" (I am citing the words of one of the most celebrated ancient divines) "that prophecy was not yet fulfilled, 'Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be learned, ye that are judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear;'" the rulers of the earth, he adds, were at that time opposed to the Gospel; the Apostles and other early disciples were *unable* to compel men to conform to the true faith; and *therefore* it was that the secular arm was not yet called to aid against the Church's enemies.

Now, without entering into the question whether our Lord's words could, in themselves, bear such a meaning, let us confine ourselves to the principle we set out with, and merely consider whether He could possibly have meant to be *so understood*. For this, we should observe, would clearly have been to *plead guilty to the charge*. It mattered nothing to the Roman Government whether it were Jesus *Himself*, or his *followers* that should revolt against Cæsar's power, and set up a rival kingdom. And therefore, when our Lord himself, and afterwards Paul and the other Apostles, *defended* themselves against the imputation of seditious designs, it is impossible they could have meant to be understood as merely disclaiming such designs *for the present*, and renouncing temporal dominion only for *themselves*, *personally*, but reserving for their followers, when these should have become strong enough, the right to establish by force a Christian political ascendency, and to put down all other religions. To have defended themselves against their accusers by acknowledging the very designs which those accusers imputed to them, would have been downright insanity.

But such absurdities as would, in *any other subject*, revolt every man of common sense, are sometimes tolerated in the interpretations of Scripture, that are framed in order to serve a purpose. For instance, suppose some emissaries of the Pretender in the last century, or, in later times, of the French revolutionists, or of the Chartists, or any set of revolutionists of the present day, to go about the country proclaiming and disseminating their principles, and then to be arrested and brought to trial for sedition: can any one conceive them defending themselves against the charge, by pleading that they did not intend that *they themselves*, but that their *disciples*,

* See Appendix, Note (A.)

should obtain the government of the country, and enforce their principles; that they aimed at the possession and the monopoly of civil rights* and privileges, not for themselves, but for their *successors;* that they did not mean to take up arms till they should have collected a sufficient number of followers; and that they taught all men to yield obedience to the existing government *till* they should be strong enough to overthrow it? Who does not see at once that to urge such a plea would convince every one of their being madmen? And yet this is what must be imputed to Jesus and his disciples, by any one who can suppose that they *meant to be understood* by the Roman magistrates as merely disclaiming all interference with civil government, till they should become numerous enough to enforce the claim;—all resort to secular coercion in religious matters, till they should have strength to employ it effectually;—all political monopoly, till they should be in a condition to maintain it by a strong hand.

Jesus then, it is plain, when He said "My kingdom *is* not of this world," could not have meant to be *understood* as implying that it *should* be so hereafter.

One of the modes in which it has been attempted to explain away the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, is by representing them as inculcating only the duty of *Subjects* towards Governors, and not meaning that the same principles should be applied in reference to the duty of *Governors* towards Subjects: so that though Christians were to "be subject, for conscience' sake," even to idolatrous rulers (as long as nothing at variance with Christian duty was enjoined) the right was reserved, it seems, to Christians, whenever they might obtain political power, to employ this in forcibly maintaining and propagating their own religion,† and securing to its professors a monopoly of civil rights. As if a citizen, of whatever persuasion, had not the same claim to the rights of a *citizen*, that a ruler, of whatever persuasion, has to the rights of a *ruler!* As if the Christian principles implied in "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" . . . "render unto *all* their *due*," were not equally applicable to the duties either of Subject or of Prince!

And supposing (what is inconceivable) that any such groundless and fanciful distinction had been in the mind of our Lord and his Apostles, and moreover that they had meant the Roman magistrates so to understand them, and also that those magistrates had given them credit for sincerity, still, after all, nothing is gained by these suppositions: since there could be no security against a Christian's obtaining political power, or against a man's embracing Christianity who was already in power. And if this power was to be exerted in propagating the Religion by those coercive means which a civil magistrate is enabled to employ, no one in his senses can doubt, that had Christ and his Apostles been understood as acknowledging this, they would have been *pleading guilty* to the charges brought against them.*

§ 11. But had He then some *hidden* meaning, which He did *not* intend to be understood at the time? Did He design to convey one sense to the Roman governor, and another to his own disciples?—to reserve for his followers in future times, that power to enforce the acknowledgment of his gospel, which He *pretended* to disclaim.

It seems almost too shocking even to ask such a question: and yet it is but too true, that such, in substance, (however glossed over in words) must be the meaning attributed to our blessed Lord by those who would reconcile his declarations before Pilate with that which they represent as the right and the duty of every Christian Governor. "The magistrate," they say, (I am giving the very words that have been employed,) "who restrains, coerces, and punishes any one who opposes the true faith, obeys the command of God:" and they contend that a Christian Governor is not only authorized, but bound, to secure to the professors of the true faith a monopoly of political power and civil rights. Now, to reconcile such doctrines with the declarations of Christ and his Apostles, a meaning must be attributed to those declarations which it would have been madness for them to have *avowed* at the time;—in short, a *hidden* meaning.

It is recorded of an ancient king of Egypt—one of the Ptolemies—that he

* See Appendix, Note (A.)

† I know not how the oppression under which the Vaudois are now suffering (see the Pamphlet referred to in the Preface) can be objected to by Protestants who hold these principles, unless they renounce altogether the rule of doing as we would be done by.

* See Essays on the Dangers, &c. pp. 210–13.

employed a celebrated architect to build a magnificent Light House, for the benefit of shipping, and ordered an inscription in honour of himself to be engraved on it; the architect, it is said, though inwardly coveting the honour of such a record for *himself*, was obliged to comply; but made the inscription on a plaster resembling stone, but of perishable substance: in the course of years this crumbled away; and the next generation saw *another* inscription, recording the name, not of the King, but of the architect, which had been secretly engraved on the durable stone below.

Now, just such a device as this is attributed to our Lord and his Apostles by those who believe them to have designed that secular power should hereafter be called in to enforce the Christian Faith, though all such designs were *apparently* disavowed, in order to serve a present purpose. According to such interpreters, "My kingdom is not of this world" was only an inscription on the perishable plaster; the design of "coercing and punishing" by secular power all opponents of the true faith was, it seems, the engraving on the stone beneath. "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's" was but the outward part of the inscription; the addition was an inner hidden engraving, directing that Christians, when become strong enough, should compel both Cæsar and his subjects,—all Rulers and all citizens—either to acknowledge the true faith, or to forfeit their civil rights. It was the *outside* inscription only that ran thus, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man; * * * the powers that be are ordained of God:" the secret characters on the *stone* said, "Take care as soon as possible to make every ordinance of man submit to *you*," and to provide that none but those of your own body shall *be* in authority; and that they shall use that authority in enforcing the profession of your religion.*

It might seem incredible, did we not know it to be the fact, that persons professing a deep reverence for Christ and his Apostles as heaven-sent messengers, should attribute to them this double-dealing;—should believe them to have secretly entertained and taught the very views of which their adversaries accused them, and which they uniformly disclaimed: that the blessed Jesus Himself, who rebukes *hypocrisy* more strongly than perhaps any other sin, should be regarded by his professed followers as having pretended to disavow that which was his real design, and which He imparted to his Apostles; teaching *them* in like manner to keep the secret till they should be strong enough to assert the political supremacy of the Gospel, and to extirpate, or hold in subjection as vassals, all professors of false religions.

All this I say, might seem hardly credible, did not daily experience show us how easily (not only in this but in other cases also) even intelligent men are satisfied with the slightest pretences of argument—with the most extravagant conclusions—when they are seeking not really for *instruction* as to what they *ought* to do, but for a *justification* of what they are *inclined* to do. Such a bias of inclination is like the magnet which is said to have been once secretly placed near a ship's compass by a traitor who purposed to deliver the crew into the enemy's hands. All their diligence and skill in working the ship, and steering by this perverted compass, served only to further them on the wrong course.

Without presuming to pronounce judgment on the general moral character of others, I cannot forbear saying, for myself, that if I could believe Jesus to have been guilty of such subterfuges as I have been speaking of, I not only could not acknowledge Him as sent from God, but should reject Him with *the deepest moral indignation.*

How far this indignant disgust may have been excited in the breasts of some who have taken for granted, on the authority of learned and zealous divines, that the interpretation I have been reprobating is to be received, and who may in consequence have *rejected Christianity* with abhorrence, it is for those who maintain such an interpretation carefully to consider.

§ 12. It is in many respects important to observe and to keep in mind, to how great an extent both an obliquity of moral judgment, and a deficiency in the reasoning-powers, will often affect, on some *one or two particular points*, a man who may be, on the whole, and in other points, where his particular prejudices have not gained dominion, a person both morally and intellectually above the average. In the present case, for instance, one may find men of much intelligence

* Of this subject I have treated more fully in the "Essay on Persecution," 3d Series; and in Appendix E. and F. to "Essays on the Dangers," &c., 4th Series.

misled by a fallacy which in the ordinary concerns of life every person of common sense would see through at once.

Was it designed, they say, that Christians should never take any part in civil affairs;—should never be magistrates or legislators, and thus partake of political power? And if this *is* permitted, must they not, as civil magistrates, act on Christian principles? No doubt; but they would *cease* to act on Christian principles if they should employ the *coercive power* of civil magistrates *in the cause of Christianity;* if they should not only take a part in civil affairs, but claim *as* Christians, or as members of a particular Church, a *monopoly* of civil rights. It is this, and this only, that tends to make Christ's kingdom "a kingdom of this world."

Now this is a distinction which in all other cases is readily perceived by every man of common sense. For instance, there are many well-known Societies in this and in most other countries, which no one would call in any degree political Societies; such as Academies for the cultivation of mathematical and other sciences,—Agricultural Societies,—Antiquarian Societies, and the like; now it would be reckoned silly even to ask respecting any one of these Secietics, whether the members of it were excluded from taking any part in civil affairs, and whether a magistrate or a legislator could be admitted as a member of it. Every one would see the absurdity of even entertaining any doubt on this point: and it would be reckoned no less silly to inquire whether the admission of such persons as members, constituted that Academy a political Society. It would at once be answered that the Society itself, and the members of it *as such*, had nothing to do with political, but only with scientific matters; and that though individual members of it might be also members of the legislature, the provinces of the two Societies, *as* Societies,—of a scientific association, and a political community,—are altogether distinct.

Now this is just the non-interference in political affairs which Christ and his Apostles professed, and taught, and carried into practice, in respect of the religion of the Gospel. As the Apostle Peter converted to the Faith Cornelius the *Centurion*, so likewise Paul, who avowed his practice of "witnessing both to small and *great*,"—converted Sergius Paulus the Roman Governor at Paphos, and Dionysius the Areopagite, a judge of the highest court at Athens; and expressed his ardent wish to convert Agrippa, and also all "who heard him that day." Yet neither Peter nor Paul ever thought of desiring the Centurion—the Governor—the Judge and the King, to lay down their offices, and renounce all concern with secular business; nor did they ever dream that their holding such offices when Christians, would make Christ's a "kingdom of this world." They wished, and they openly endeavoured, to make "the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of the Lord,"* and "kings the nursing-fathers of the Church," in the sense of making the *individuals* of every nation members of Christ;—of inducing kings and magistrates, and subjects too, to abstain from persecuting Christians, and to *become* Christians, and to act so as to induce others to follow their example.

It has been said that this passage respecting the "kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of the Lord," describes the Christian Church in its perfection, and "My kingdom is not of this world," describes it in its infancy. But what Jesus and his Apostles taught on this point, belongs, and ever did, and ever will belong, to the Christian Church in *every* stage alike; namely, that the Christian is to act, in *all* the relations in life, in whatever circumstances he is placed, on Christian principles. And what were the principles they inculcated? "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's:" "Render unto *all* their due; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour;" "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake:" "Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake," &c. Never was the Christian required to do less than conform to such principles; never will he be called on to do more.

If Sergius Paulus and other converted Roman governors had consulted Paul, whether they should use their *power as Roman governors* to put down Paganism by force, or if Dionysius, after having induced (suppose) the other judges of the Areopagus to embrace the Gospel, had proposed to the Apostle that that Court should sit in judgment on religious of-

* Some Millenarians understand this prophecy as referring to a temporal reign of Christ on earth. See "Scripture Revelations of a Future State." Lect. on Millennium.

fences, and inflict penalties on all persons opposing or rejecting the true Faith, or deprive them of civil rights,—if the Apostle Paul, I say, had been *thus* consulted, what answer, think you, he would have given? What answer *must* he have given, if we believe him sincere in his professions, and if we believe his great Master to have really meant exactly what He declared? The Apostle would surely have explained to such inquirers that Christ meant the reception of his Gospel to rest on sincere inward conviction, not on constrained outward profession, which is all that legal penalties *can* produce:—that their office as governors and judges, was to take cognizance of men's *overt acts*, and to punish and restrain crimes against the civil community; but that their duty as Christians was to regulate, and try to persuade others to regulate, the inward motives and dispositions of the heart, according to Gospel principles; and to keep themselves not from *crimes* merely, but from *sins* against God; and to "exercise themselves in having themselves a conscience void of offence, before God and man," (Acts xxiv. 16,) not in seeking to force another to speak or act against his conscience. He would not have forbidden them to take a part (as it is most fit that the laity should) in the government of the Church, or to hold any ecclesiastical or spiritual office in it; or again, to retain their civil offices: but he would have deprecated with abhorrence their blending the two classes of offices together, and attempting to employ the power of *coercion* which essentially belongs to the civil magistrate, in the cause of Christ's religion. He would have told them to strive to convert and reclaim their neighbours from superstitious error, (even as *he* had converted *them*) by instruction and *persuasion*; never losing sight of their great Master's rule, of doing as they would be done by; not inflicting therefore on the unbeliever the persecution which they had disapproved when directed against Christians; but leaving to every man that liberty of conscience which they desired to enjoy themselves.

Such would have been the answer, I think we cannot doubt, which the Apostles would have given to such inquirers; and which, if Peter and Paul were now on earth, they *would* give to any like questions at this day. For such surely must be the decision of any one who is convinced that Jesus Himself was perfectly sincere in the declaration He made at his trial, and that He "left us an example, that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was *guile* found in his mouth."

§ 13. Yet if the Apostle Paul, with these sentiments, were now on earth, would there not be some danger of his being accounted a *latitudinarian*—a person nearly indifferent about religious distinctions,—regarding one religion nearly as good as another;—ready to profess any,—and believing little or nothing of any? For such is the character often attributed to any one who disapproves of the employment of secular force in behalf of the true Faith, or the monopoly by its professors, of civil rights.

That there are persons indifferent about all religions, is true; and it is true that *some* of them are, from humanity of disposition, averse to persecution and coercion. For many persons,—perhaps most,—are tolerant or intolerant according to their respective *tempers*, and not according to their *principles*. But as far as principles are concerned, certainly the latitudinarian is the more likely to be intolerant, and the sincerely conscientious tolerant. A man who is careless about religious *sincerity*, may clearly see and appreciate the political convenience of religious *uniformity*; and if he has no religious scruples of his own, he will not be the more likely to be tender of the religious scruples of others: if he is ready himself to profess what he does not believe, he will see no reason why others should not do the same.

That man on the contrary whose own conscience is tender, and his sense of religion deep-felt and sincere, will be (so far) the more disposed to respect the conscience of another, and to avoid giving occasion to hypocritical professions. His own faith being founded on genuine conviction, he will seek for the genuine conviction of others, and not their forced conformity. He will remember that "the highest truth, if professed by one who believes it not in his heart, is, to him, a lie, and that he sins greatly by professing it. Let us try as much as we will, to convince our neighbours; but let us beware of influencing their conduct, when we fail in influencing their convictions. He who bribes or frightens his neighbours into doing an act which no good man would do for reward, or from fear, is tempting his neighbour to sin; he is assisting to lower and to harden his conscience;—to make

him act for the favour or from the fear of man, instead of for the favour and from the fear of God: and if this be a sin in him, it is a double sin in us to tempt him to it."*

And above all, in proportion as any man has a right understanding of the Gospel, and a deep veneration for his great Master, and an earnest desire to tread in his steps, and a full confidence in his promises, in the same degree will he perceive that the employment of secular coercion in the cause of the Gospel is at variance with the true spirit of the Gospel; and that Christ's declarations are to be interpreted as He himself knew them to be understood, then, and are to be the guide of his followers, now.

And finally, such a man will be convinced that it implies a sinful distrust,—a want of faith in Christ's wisdom, and goodness, and power,—to call in the aid of the arm of flesh of military or civil force,—in the cause of Him who declared that He *could* have called in the aid of "more than twelve legions of angels;" and who, when "all power was given unto Him in Heaven and in Earth," sent forth his disciples—not to *subjugate*, or to coerce, but to "*teach* all nations;" and "sent them forth as sheep among the wolves," forewarned of persecutions, and instructed to "bless them that cursed them," to return "good for evil;" and to "endure all things,—hope all things,—believe all things," for which He, their Master, had prepared them:—to believe *all* that He had taught,—to hope *all* that He had promised, and to endure and do *all* that He had commanded.

* Arnold's Christian Life, p. 435.

ESSAY II.

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ITS POWERS, AND MINISTRY.

Οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν, ἀλλὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν Κύριον ἑαυτοὺς δέ, δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν. 2 Cor. iv. 5.

§ 1. Of all who acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth as their Master, "the Author and Finisher of their faith," there are scarcely any who do not agree in regarding Him as the Founder and perpetual Head of a religious *Society* also;—as having instituted and designed for permanent continuance, a Community or system of Communities, to which his Disciples here on earth were to belong. The religion He introduced was manifestly designed by Him,—and so understood by his immediate followers,—to be a *social* Religion. It was not merely a revelation of certain truths to be received, and of practical rules to be observed,—it was not a mere system of doctrines and precepts to be embraced by each individual independently of others; and in which his agreement or co-operation with any others would be accidental; as when several men have come to the same conclusions in some Science, or have adopted the same system of Agriculture or of Medicine; but it was to be a *combination* of men who should be "members of the Body of Christ,"—living stones of one Spiritual Temple;* "edifying" (*i. e.* building up) "one another in their Faith;"—and brethren of one holy Family.

This "Kingdom of Heaven," as it is called, which the Lord Jesus established, was proclaimed (*i. e.* preached)† by his forerunner, John the Baptist, as "*at hand.*" And the same, in this respect, was the preaching of our Lord Himself,

* See Sermon IV., "On a Christian Place of Worship," and also Dr. Hinds' "Three Temples."

† This word has come to be ordinarily applied to religious *instruction*; from which, however, it is always clearly distinguished in Scripture. It signifies, properly, to *announce* as a *herald*. Our Lord's "*preaching* that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand," and his *teaching* the People, are always expressed by different words.

and of his Disciples,—first the Twelve, and afterwards the Seventy,—whom He sent out during his ministry on earth. The good tidings they were to proclaim, were only of the *approaching* Kingdom of Heaven; it was a joyful *expectation* only that they were commissioned to spread: it was a preparation of men's hearts for the coming of that Kingdom, that they were to teach.

But when the personal ministry of Christ came to a close, the Gospel they were thenceforward to preach was the good tidings of that Kingdom not *approaching* merely, but actually *begun*,—of the first Christian Community set on foot,—of a kingdom which their Master had "*appointed* unto them:" thenceforward, they were not merely to *announce* that kingdom, but to *establish* it, and invite all men to enrol themselves in it: they were not merely to make known, but to execute, their Master's design, of commencing that Society of which He is the Head, and which He has promised to be with "always, even unto the end of the world."*

We find Him, accordingly, directing them not only to "go into all the world, and preach to every creature,"† but further, to "teach" ("make disciples of," as in the margin of the Bible) "all nations;" admitting them as members of the Body of Disciples, by "baptizing them into‡ the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Of his design to establish what should be emphatically a Social Religion,—a "Fellowship" or "Communion of Saints," there can be, I think, no doubt in the mind of any reflecting reader of our sacred books. Besides our Lord's general promise of "coming unto, and dwelling in, *any man* who should love Him and keep his saying," there is a distinct promise also of an especial presence in any *Assembly*—even of "two or three—gathered together in his name." Besides the general promises made to prayer,—to the prayer of an individual "in the closet,"—there is a distinct promise also to those who shall "agree together touching something they shall ask." And it is in conformity with his own institution that Christians have, ever since, celebrated what they designate as, emphatically, *the Communion*, by "meeting together to break bread," in commemoration of his redemption of his People.

His design, in short, manifestly was to adapt his Religion to the *social* principles of man's nature;* and to bind his disciples, throughout all ages, to each other, by those ties of mutual attachment, sympathy, and co-operation, which in every human Community and Association, of whatever kind, are found so powerful.

§ 2. Obvious, and indeed trite, as the remark may appear, most persons are apt, I think, not sufficiently to consider what important conclusions result from it;—how much is implied in the constituting of a *Community*. It is worth while, therefore, to pause at this point, and inquire what are the inherent properties and universal character naturally and necessarily belonging to any regularly-constituted society, as such, for whatever purpose formed. For I think it will appear, on a very simple examination, that several points which have been denied or disregarded by some, and elaborately, but not always satisfactorily maintained by others, arise, as obvious consequences, out of the very intrinsic character,—the universal and necessary description of a regular *community*.

It seems to belong to the very essence of a Community, that it should have—1st, *Officers* of some kind; 2dly, *Rules* enforced by some kind of penalties; and 3dly, Some power of admitting and excluding persons as *Members*.

For, 1st, whatever may be the character, and whatever the proposed objects, of a regularly-constituted Community, Officers of some kind are essential to it. In whatever manner they may be appointed,—whether by hereditary succession, or by

* It is likely that the Doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," (which all the soundest critics, I believe, are now agreed, does not exist in the best MSS. of the Gospels,) was adopted by the Disciples very soon after our Lord's departure from earth. At the time when He first taught the prayer to his Disciples, it would have been premature to speak of the heavenly kingdom in the present tense, as actually established. They were taught to pray for its coming as a thing future. At a later period, it was no less proper to allude to it as already existing; and the prayer for its "coming" would be, from the circumstances of the case, a prayer for its continued extension and firmer hold on men's hearts.

† See a Sermon by Dr. Dickinson, (now Bishop of Meath,) on our Lord's two charges to his disciples.

‡ "In the name," is a manifest mistranslation, originating, apparently, with the Vulgate Latin, which has "in nomine." The preposition, in the original, is not *in* but *εἰς* "into" or "to."

* See Bampton Lectures for the year 1822, Lect. I.

rotation,—or by election of any kind,—whatever be the number or titles of them, and whatever the distribution of their functions,—(all which are matters of detail,) Officers of some kind every Community *must* have. And these, or some of these, while acting in their proper capacity, *represent* the Community; and are, so far, invested with whatever powers and rights belong to *it*; so that their acts, their rights, their claims, are considered as those of the whole Body. We speak, *e. g.* indifferently of this or that having been done by the Athenians, the Romans, the Carthaginians; or by the Athenian, the Roman, or Carthaginian *Government or Rulers*.* And so also when we speak of the acts of some University, or of the *Governors* of that University, we are using two equivalent expressions.

2dly. It seems equally essential to every Community that it should have certain Regulations or By-laws, binding on its own members. And if it be not wholly subjected to the control, and regulated by the directions of some extraneous power, but is in any degree an *independent* Community, it must so far have power to enact, and abrogate,—to suspend, alter, and restore by-laws, for itself; namely, such regulations, extending to matters intrinsically indifferent, as are not at variance with the enactments of any superior authority. The enforcement also of the regulations of a Community by some kind of Penalties, is evidently implied by the very existence of Regulations. To say of any Community that its Laws are valid, and binding on its members, is to say that the violators of them may justly be visited with penalties: and to recognize Officers in any Community is to recognize as among its Laws, submission to those officers while in the exercise of their legitimate functions.

In the case of *Political* Communities, which is a peculiar one, inasmuch as they necessarily exercise an *absolutely-coercive* power,—the penalties must be determined according to the wisdom and justice of each Government, and can have no other limit. But in a *voluntary* Community, the *ultimate* Penalty must be expulsion; all others, short of this, being submitted to as the *alternative*.* But in every Community, of whatever description (or in those under whose control it is placed) there must reside a power of enacting, enforcing, and remitting, the Penalties by which due submission to its laws and to its officers is to be secured.

3dly. Lastly, no less essential to a Community seems to be a power, lodged somewhere, of determining questions of Membership. Whatever may be the claims or qualifications on which that may depend—nay, even whether the community be a voluntary Association, or (as is the case with political Communities) one claiming compulsory power,—and whatever may be its purpose—in all cases, the admission to it, or exclusion from it, of each individual, must be determined by some recognized authority.

Since therefore this point, and also those others above-mentioned, seem, naturally and necessarily, to belong to every regular Community,—since it must, in short, consist of regularly constituted *Members*, subject to certain *Rules*, and having certain *Officers*, it follows, that whoever directs or sanctions the establishment of a Community (as our Lord certainly did in respect of Christian Churches,) must be understood as thereby sanctioning those institutions which belong to the essence of a Community. To recognize a Community as actually having a legitimate existence, or as allowably to be formed, is to recognize it as having *Officers*,—as having *Regulations* enforced by certain Penalties, and as admitting or refusing to admit *Members*.

§ 3. All this, I say, seems to be implied by the very nature of the case. But, on purpose, as it should seem, to provide against any misapprehension or uncertainty, our Lord did not stop at the mere general sanction given by Him to the formation of a Christian Community, but He also particularized all the points I have been speaking of. He appointed or ordained the first *Officers*; He recognized the power of enacting and abrogating *Rules*; and He gave authority for the admitting of *Members*.

Such is the obvious sense of his directions to his Apostles: obvious, I mean, *to them*,—with such habits of thought and of expression as they had, and as He must have known them to have. He must have known well what meaning his words would convey to his own countrymen, at

* And it is to be observed that it makes no difference, as to this point, whether the Governors are *elected by* the governed, and in any degree restrained by them, or are hereditary and unlimited. In all cases, the *established and recognized* Rulers of any Community are considered as *representing it*.

* See Appendix, Note (B.)

hat time. But some things which would ppear plain and obvious to a Jew,—even n unlearned Jew,—in those days, may e such as to require some examination nd careful reflection to enable *us*, of a listinct Age and Country, to apprehend hem in the same sense. When however we do examine and reflect, we can hardly loubt, I think—considering to whom, and it what time, He was speaking—that our Lord did sanction and enjoin the formation of a permanent religious Community or Communities, possessing all those powers which have been above alluded to. The power of "binding and loosing;"—*i. e.* enacting and enforcing, and of abrogating or suspending regulations for a Christian Society,—was recognized by his promise* of the *divine ratification* of those acts,—the "binding and loosing in heaven." The "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," denote the power of admitting persons Members of the Church, and excluding them from it. And the expression respecting the "remitting and retaining of sins," if it is to be understood (as I think it is) as extending to any thing beyond the power of admitting members into Christ's Church by "Baptism for remission of sins," must relate to the enforcement or remission of *ecclesiastical* censures for offences against a Christian Community.

By attentive reflection on the two topics I have here suggested—namely, on the rights and powers essentially inherent in a Community, and consequently implied in the very institution of a Community, so far as they are not expressly excluded; and again on the declarations of our Lord, as they must have been understood by his Disciples,—by reflection, I say, on these two topics, we shall be enabled, I think, to simplify and clear up several questions which have been sometimes involved in much artificial obscurity and difficulty.

§ 4. And our view of the sense in which our Lord's directions are to be understood will be the more clear and decided, if we reflect that all the circumstances which have been noticed as naturally pertaining to every Community, are to be found *in that religious Community in which the Disciples had been brought up*;—the Jewish Church, or (as it is called in the Old Testament) the Congregation, or Ecclesia,† of which each Synagogue was a branch.‡ It had regular *Officers*;—the Elders or Presbyters, the Rulers of Synagogues, Ministers or Deacons, &c.—it had By-laws; being not only under the Levitical Law, but also having authority, within certain limits, of *making* regulations, and enforcing them by penalties (among others, that which we find alluded to in the New Testament, of excommunicating or "casting out of the Synagogue"): and it had power to admit Proselytes.

With all these points then, the Disciples of Jesus had long been familiar. And He spoke of them in terms with which they must have been well acquainted. For instance, the expression, "binding and loosing,"* was, and still is, perfectly familiar to the Jews, in the sense of enforcing and abrogating rules; or,—which amounts precisely to the same thing,—deciding as to the manner, and the extent, in which a previously existing law is to be considered as binding: as is done by our Judges in their recorded Decisions.

The Jewish Church was indeed subject, by divine authority, to the Levitical Law. But minute as were the directions of that Law, there were still many points of detail, connected with the observance of it, which required to be settled by some competent authority: such as, for instance, what was, or was not, to be regarded as "work" forbidden on the Sabbath:—what was to be considered as "servile work," forbidden on certain other days;—and in what way the injunctions respecting their food, their garments, the sowing of their fields, and several other matters, were to be observed.†

In regard to regulations of this kind, our Lord recognizes the authority of the Jewish Rulers, as being so far successors of Moses; for He tells his hearers, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe, and do." And though He adds a caution not to "do after their works, for they say, and do not," He does not teach that their personal demerits, or even that gross abuse of their power, which he strongly repro-

* See Appendix, Note (C). † Septuagint.
‡ See Vitringa on the Synagogue.

* See Lightfoot on this subject, and also Dr. Wotton's valuable work on the Mishna.

† Those who can procure or gain access to Dr. W. Wotton's Selections from the Mishna, will find in it much curious and interesting information relative to these and several other particulars, which throws great light on many passages of the New Testament.

bates, could invalidate the legitimate exercise of that power. Indeed, since there is hardly any human government that has not, at some time or other, abused, more or less, the power entrusted to it, to deny on that ground all claims whatever to submission would be the very principle of anarchy.

The Jewish Rulers went beyond their proper province, when, instead of merely making such regulations as were necessary with a view to the due observance of the Mosaic Law, they superadded, on the authority of their supposed Tradition, commandments foreign to that Law; and, still more, evasions of the spirit of it.*

Jesus accordingly censures them severely, as "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" and again, as "making the Word of God of none effect, by their Tradition." But still He distinctly recognizes their legitimate authority in making such regulations as were necessarily left to their determination.

§ 5. And his disciples, therefore, who have *both* of these his declarations, could not have been at any loss to understand what He meant by giving to themselves and the succeeding Officers of a Christian Church, the power to "bind and loose." He charged them to "teach every one to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them;" promising to be "with them always, even to the end of the world;" and He also gave them the power of "binding and loosing;" saying, "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;" (*i. e.* ratified by the divine sanction,) "and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

They would of course understand by this, not that they, or any of their successors, could have authority to dispense with their Master's commandments—to add to or alter the terms of Gospel salvation—to teach them, in short, *not* to "observe what He had commanded them," but to enact, from time to time, to alter, to abrogate, or to restore, regulations respecting matters of detail, not expressly determined in Scripture, but which yet *must* be determined in some way or other, with a view to the good order of the Community, and the furtherance of its great objects.

So, also, we cannot suppose they would even suspect that they, or any mortal *man*, can have "power to forgive sins," *as against God;*—that a *man* could be authorized either to absolve the *impenitent*, or to shut out from divine mercy the penitent; or again, to read the heart, so as to distinguish between the two, without an express inspiration in each particular case.

And this express inspiration in particular cases, whatever may have been their original expectations, they must soon have learned they were *not* to look for. They were to use their best discretion, to exercise due caution, in guarding against the admission of "false brethren"—"deceitful workers"—hypocritical pretenders to Christian faith and purity; but they had not, universally at least, any supernatural safeguard against such hypocrisy.

The example of Simon Magus would alone show this, even if there were no others to be found. He was, we find, baptized along with the other Samaritans (Acts viii. 13,) professing, as of course he must have done, sincere repentance and devotion to Christ: and yet the Apostles find him, after this, to be still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." Acts viii. 21.

But still, the Gospel or good-tidings which they were authorized and enjoined to proclaim, being most especially tidings of "remission of sins" to all who should accept the invitation made to them by the preachers of that Gospel, they might properly be said to "remit" or "retain" according as they admitted to Baptism the attentive and professedly-penitent and believing hearers, and left out of the number of the subjects of Christ's kingdom those who neglected or opposed Him.* "Repent and be baptized every one of you *for the remission of sins*" is accordingly the kind of language in which they invite their hearers every where to join the Body of their Master's People; and yet it is certain the remission of sins was *conditional only*, and dependent on a condition of which they—the Apostles themselves—had no infallible knowledge; the

* See Wotton on the Mishna.

* Of course, if there had been a distinct divine appointment of such a sacrament as that of Penance, as it is called (including private Confession and priestly Absolution) we should have been bound to regard that in the same light as we do the sacraments of Baptism and of the Eucharist. Without presuming to set limits to the divine favour, we feel bound to resort to, and to administer these, as appointed means of grace. But if there had *not* been that divine appointment of these sacraments, a Church would have no more authority to confer on *them* a sacramental character, than on the pretended sacrament of Penance.

condition being, the real sincerity of that penitence and faith which the converts *appeared* and *professed* to have.*

§ 6. But although this is the only sense in which the Apostles, or of course any of their successors in the Christian ministry, can be empowered to "forgive sins" *as against God; i. e.* though they can only pronounce and proclaim *his* forgiveness of all those who come to Him through Christ, and assure each individual of his acceptance with God, *supposing* him to be one of "those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe," yet offences, *as against a Community*, may, it is plain, be pardoned, or pardon for them withheld, *by* that Community, or by those its officers who duly represent it.

Whether our Lord intended, in what He said of "remitting and retaining sins," to include (as seems to me a probable supposition) this power of inflicting or removing *ecclesiastical censures* for transgressions of the regulations of a Society, we may be perhaps not authorized positively to conclude; but at any rate, such a power is *inherent* necessarily in every Community, so far as not expressly reserved for some superior jurisdiction: *regulations* of some sort or other, and consequently *enforcement* of those regulations by some kind of penalties, being essential to a Community, and implied in the very nature of it.

But what leads to confusion of thought in some minds is, that the same action may often have two distinct characters, according to the light in which it is viewed; whether as a *sin*† against God, or as a *crime* in reference to the Community; and hence they are sometimes led to confound together the pardoning of the *crime*—the *offence* against the Community—with the pardoning of the *sin*. Now the regularly-appointed Ministers—the Officers of a Community may be authorized to enforce or remit penalties against the ecclesiastical offence, the crime in reference to the Community; and may pronounce an *absolute* and complete pardon of a particular offender, for a particular act, on his making the requisite submission and reparation, and appearing outwardly, as far as man can judge, a proper subject for such pardon; while the pardon of sin as against God must *be conditional* on that hearty inward repentance, of which, in each case, God only, or those to whom He may impart the knowledge, can adequately judge.

When Paul says to the Corinthians in reference* to that member of their Church who had caused a scandal by his offence, "to whomsoever ye forgive any thing, I forgive it also," though I am far from saying that the offender's sin against God was *not* pardoned, it is quite plain *this* is not what the Apostle is here speaking of. He is speaking of a case in which they and he were not merely to *announce*, but to *bestow* forgiveness. They were to receive back the offender, who had scandalized the Society, into the bosom of that Society, on his professing with sincerity, or rather *apparent* sincerity (for of that alone they could be judges) his contrition. They would, of course—as believing those his professions—cherish a confident hope that his sin against God was pardoned. But doubtless they did not pretend either to an omniscient discernment of his sincerity, or to the power either of granting divine pardon to the impenitent, or of excluding from God's mercy the repentant sinner.

§ 7. Then again, with respect to the "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" which our Lord promised (Matt. xvi. 19.) to give to Peter,† the Apostles could not, I

* See Speech of Bishop Stanley in the House of Lords, May 26, 1840.

† See Warburton's Div. Leg.

* 2 Cor. ii. 10.

† There seems good reason to believe,—though it would be most unwarrantable to make it an article of faith,—that Peter really was the chief of the Apostles; not, certainly, in the sense of exercising any supremacy and absolute control over them,—as dictating to their consciences,—as finally deciding all cases of doubt—or as claiming any right to interfere in the Churches other Apostles had founded, (See Gal. ii. 7—9 and 11—14,) but as the chief in dignity; taking precedence of the rest, and acting as President, Chairman, or Speaker in the meetings. Peter, and James, and John, and sometimes Peter, and James,—always with Peter placed foremost, were certainly distinguished, as appears from numerous passages in the Gospels, from the rest of the Apostles. He was apparently the chief Spokesman on the day of Pentecost, when the *Jewish* Believers were first called on to unite themselves into a Church; and he was the chosen instrument in founding the first Church of the ("devout") *Gentiles*, opening the door of the Kingom of Heaven to Cornelius and his friends.

I need hardly add, that to claim on that account for Peter's supposed *successors* such supreme jurisdiction over the whole Church-universal, as he himself neither exercised nor claimed, would be most extravagant. Moreover, since whatever pre-eminence he did possess, was confessedly not conferred on him *as* Bishop of Rome, his supposed successors in that See cannot, manifestly, have any claim to *that* pre-eminence; any more than

conceive, doubt that He was fulfilling that promise, to Peter and to the rest of them conjointly, when He "appointed unto them a Kingdom," and when, on the day of Pentecost, He began the building of His Church, and enabled them, with Peter as their leader and chief spokesman, to open a door for the entrance of about three thousand converts at once; who received daily accessions to their number. The Apostles, and those commissioned by them, had the office of granting admission into the Society from time to time, to such as they judged qualified.*

And that this Society or Church—was "that Kingdom of Heaven" of which the keys were committed to them, and which they had before proclaimed as "at hand," they could not doubt. They could not have been in any danger of cherishing any such presumptuous dream, as that they or any one else, except their divine Master, could have power to give or refuse admittance to the mansions of immortal bliss.

On the whole then, one who reads the Scriptures with attention and with candour will be at no loss, I conceive, to ascertain what was the sense, generally, in which our Lord's Disciples would understand his directions and injunctions. Besides what is implied, naturally and necessarily, in the very institution of a Community, we know also, what the instructions were which the Disciples had already been accustomed to receive from their Master, and what was the sense they had been used from childhood to attach to the expressions He employed. And as we may be sure, I think, how *they* would understand his words, so we may be equally sure that He would not have *failed to undeceive* them, had they mistaken his real meaning; which therefore, we cannot doubt, must have been that which these Disciples apprehended.

§ 8. As for the mode in which the Apostles and other early Christian Ministers carried into effect the directions they had received, we have indeed but a few, and those generally scanty and incidental, notices in the sacred writers; but all the notices we do find, go to confirm——if confirmation could be wanted—what has been just said, as to the sense in which our Lord must have been understood—and consequently, in which He must have *meant* to be understood—by his Disciples.

And among the important facts which we can collect and fully ascertain from the sacred historians, scanty and irregular and imperfect as are their records of particulars, one of the most important is *that very scantiness* and incompleteness in the detail; that absence of any full and systematic description of the formation and regulation of Christian Communities, that has been just noticed. For we may plainly infer, from this very circumstance, the design of the Holy Spirit, that those details, concerning which no precise directions, accompanied with strict injunctions, are to be found in Scripture, were meant to be left to the regulation of each Church, in each Age and Country. On any point in which it was designed that all Christians should be, every where, and at all times, bound as strictly as the Jews were to the Levitical Law, we may fairly conclude they would have received directions no less precise, and descriptions no less minute, than had been afforded to the Jews.

It has often occurred to my mind that the generality of even studious readers are apt, for want of sufficient reflection, to fail of drawing such important inferences as they often might, from the *omissions* occurring in any work they are perusing; —from its *not* containing such and such things relative to the subject treated of. There are many cases in which the non-insertion of some particulars which, under other circumstances, we might have calculated on meeting with, in a certain book, will be hardly less instructive than the things we do meet with.

And this is much more especially the case when we are studying works which we believe to have been composed under divine guidance. For, in the case of mere human compositions, one may conceive an author to have left out some important circumstances, either through error of judgment, or inadvertency, or from having written merely for the use of a particular class of readers in his own time and country, without any thought of what might be necessary information for persons at a distance and in after ages; but we cannot, of course, attribute to any such causes omissions in the *inspired* Writers.

the successors of King William the Third, in the office of Stadtholder, could claim the English throne. And to speak of a *succession* of men as being, each, a *foundation* on which the Church is built, is not only extravagant but unmeaning.

* σωζομένους, rendered in our version "such as should be saved;" by which our Translators probably meant, according to the idiom of their day, (which is the true sense of the original,) "persons entering on the road of salvation."

On no supposition whatever can we account for the omission, by all of them, of many points which they do omit, and of their scanty and slight mention of others, except by considering them as withheld by the express design and will (whether *communicated* to each of them or not) of their Heavenly Master, restraining them from committing to writing many things which, naturally, some or other of them, at least, would not have failed so to record.

I have set forth accordingly, in a distinct Treatise,* these views respecting the *Omissions* in the Sacred Books of the New Testament, and the important inferences thence to be deduced. We seek in vain there for many things which, humanly speaking, we should have most surely calculated on finding. "No such thing is to be found in our Scriptures as a Catechism, or regular *Elementary Introduction* to the Christian Religion; nor do they furnish us with any thing in the nature of a sytematic Creed, set of Articles, Confession of Faith, or by whatever other name one may designate a regular, complete Compendium of Christian doctrines: nor, again, do they supply us with a Liturgy for ordinary Public Worship, or with Forms for administering the Sacraments, or for conferring Holy Orders; nor do they even give any precise *directions* as to these and other ecclesiastical matters;—any thing that at all corresponds to a Rubric, or set of Canons."

Now these omissions present, as I have, in that Treatise, endeavoured to show, a complete moral demonstration that the Apostles and their followers must have been *supernaturally withheld* from recording great part of the institutions, instructions, and regulations, which must, in point of fact, have proceeded from them; withheld, *on purpose* that other Churches, in other ages and regions, might not be led to consider themselves bound to adhere to several formularies, customs, and rules, that were of local and temporary appointment; but might be left to their own discretion in matters in which it seemed best to divine wisdom that they should be so left.†

§ 9. With respect to one class of those points that have been alluded to, it is probable that one cause—humanly speaking—why we find in the Sacred Books less information concerning the Christian Ministry and the Constitution of Church Governments than we otherwise might have found, is that these institutions had less of *novelty* than some would at first sight suppose, and that many portions of them did not wholly originate with the Apostles. It appears highly probable—I might say morally certain*—that wherever a Jewish Synagogue existed that was brought,—the whole or the chief part of it,—to embrace the Gospel, the Apostles did not, there, so much *form* a Christian Church, (or Congregation;† Ecclesia,) as *make an existing Congregation Christian;* by introducing the Christian Sacraments and Worship, and establishing whatever regulations were requisite for the newly adopted faith; leaving the machinery (if I may so speak) of government unchanged; the Rulers of Synagogues, Elders, and other Officers (whether spiritual or ecclesiastical, or both) being already provided in the existing institutions. And it is likely, that several of the earliest Christian Churches did originate in this way; that is, that they were *converted synagogues;* which *became* Christian Churches as soon as the members, or the main part of the members, acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah.

The attempt to effect this conversion of a Jewish Synagogue into a Christian Church, seems always to have been made, in the first instance, in every place where there was any opening for *it*. Even after the call of the idolatrous Gentiles, it appears plainly to have been the practice of the Apostles Paul and Barnabas,‡ when

* Essay VI., First Series. See Appendix, Note (D.)

† See Appendix, Note (D.)

* See Lightfoot, Appendix, Note (C.)

† The word "*Congregation*," as it stands in our Version of the Old Testament, (and it is one of very frequent occurrence in the Books of Moses,) is found to correspond, in the Septuagint, which was familiar to the New Testament writers, to Ecclesia; the word which, in our version of these last, is always rendered—not "Congregation," but "*Church*." This, or its equivalent "Kirk," is probably no other than "circle;" *i. e.* Assembly, Ecclesia.

‡ These seem to be the first who were employed in converting the *idolatrous* Gentiles to Christianity,* and their first considerable harvest among these seems to have been at Antioch in Pisidia, as may be seen by any one who attentively reads the 13th chapter of Acts. Peter was sent to Cornelius, a "*devout*" Gentile,—one of those who had renounced idolatry and frequented the Synagogues. And these seem to have been regarded by him as in an especial manner his particular charge. His Epistles appear to have been addressed to them; as may be seen both by the general tenor of his ex-

* See Barrington's Miscellanea Sacra.

they came to any city in which there was a Synagogue, to go thither first and deliver their sacred message to the Jews and "devout (or proselyte) Gentiles;"—according to their own expression, (Acts xiii. 16,) to the "men of Israel and those *that feared* God:" adding, that it was necessary that the Word of God should first be preached to them."

And when they found a church in any of those cities in which (and such were, probably, a very large majority) there was no Jewish Synagogue that received the Gospel, it is likely they would still conform, in a great measure, to the same model.

But though, as has been said, the circumstance just mentioned was probably the cause—humanly speaking—why some particulars are not recorded in our existing Sacred Books, which otherwise we might have found there, still, it does seem to me perfectly incredible on any supposition but that of supernatural interference, that neither the Apostles nor any of their many followers should have committed to writing any of the multitude of particulars which we do *not* find in Scripture, and concerning which we are perfectly certain the Apostles did give instructions, relative to Church-Government, the Christian Ministry, and Public Worship. When we consider how large a portion of the churches and of the ministers were Gentiles, and strangers to the constitution of Jewish Synagogues, and also how much was introduced that was new and strange, even to Jewish Christians, (as well as highly important)—the Christian Sacrament being wholly new, and the prayers in a great measure so—we may judge how great a number of particular directions must have been indispensably necessary for all; directions which it would have been natural, humanly speaking, for the Apostles or their attendants to have recorded in writing; and which, if it had not been done, would naturally have been so recorded by the persons to whom they were delivered. "Suppose we could make out the possibility or probability, of Paul's having left no Creed, Catechism, or Canons, why have we none from the pen of Luke, or of Mark? Suppose this also explained, why did not John or Peter supply the deficiency? And why again did none of the numerous bishops and presbyters whom they ordained, undertake the work under the direction?"* "And that there is nothing in the Christian Religion considered in itself, that stands in the way of such a procedure, is plain from the number of works of this description which have appeared from the earliest times, (*after the age of inspiration*,) down to the present; from the writings entitled the 'Apostles' Creed,' and the 'Apostolical Constitution,' &c. (compositions of uncertain authors, and amidst the variety of opinions respecting them, never regarded as Scripture) down to the modern Formularies and Confessions of Faith. Nor again can it be said that there was any thing in the *founder* of the religion, any more than in the religion itself, which, humanly speaking, should seem likely to preclude them from transmitting to us such compositions. On the contrary, the Apostles, and the rest of the earlier preachers of Christianity, were brought up Jews; accustomed in their earliest notions of religion, to refer to the Books of the Law, as containing precise statements of their Belief, and most minute directions as to religious worship and ceremonies. So that to give complete and regular instructions as to the character and the requisitions of the new religion, as it would have been natural, for any one, was more especially to be expected of these men.†

We are left then, and indeed unavoidably led, to the conclusion, that in respect of these points the Apostles and their followers were, during the age of inspiration, supernaturally withheld from recording those circumstantial details which were not intended by divine Providence to be absolutely binding on all Churches, in every Age and Country, but were meant to be left to the discretion of each particular Church.‡

§ 10. The absence of such detailed descriptions and instructions as I have been adverting to, is the more striking when contrasted with the earnest and frequent inculcations we do meet with, of the great fundamental Gospel doctrines and moral duties, which are dwelt upon in so many passages, both generally, and in reference

pressions,* and especially in the opening address; which is not (as would appear from our Version) to the dispersed *Jews*, but to the "sojourners of the dispersion παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς, *e. e.* the *devout Gentiles living among the* "Dispersion"

* See Hind's History, vol. ii.

* Essay on Omissions, p. 19.

† Essay on Omissions, pp. 7, 8.

‡ See some valuable remarks on this subject, in a pamphlet by Dean Hoare, entitled "Letters on the Tendency and Principles advocated in the "Tracts for the Times."

to various classes of persons, and various occasions. Our sacred writers have not recorded their Creeds,—their Catechisms for the elementary instruction of converts,—their forms of Public Prayer and Psalmody,—or their modes of administering the Sacraments;—they have not even described the posture in which the Eucharist was received, or the use of leavened or unleavened bread; (two points on which, in after ages, bitter controversies were raised,) nor many other things which we are certain Paul (as well as the other Apostles) "set in order, when he came" to each Church.

But, on the other hand, it is plainly recorded that they did establish Churches wherever they introduced the Gospel; that they ordained elders in every city," and the Apostles again delegated that office to others; that they did administer the rite of Baptism to their converts; and that they celebrated the communion of the Lord's Supper. And besides the general principles of Christian Faith and Morality which they sedulously set forth, they have recorded the most earnest exhortations to avoid "confusion"* in their public worship; to do "all things decently and in order;" to "let all things be done to edifying," and not for vain-glorious display; they inculcate the duty of Christians "assembling themselves together" for joint worship; they† record distinctly the solemn sanction given to a Christian Community; they inculcate‡ due reverence and obedience to those that "bear rule" in such a community, with censure of such as walk "disorderly" and "cause divisions;" and they dwell earnestly on the care with which Christian Ministers, both male and female, should be selected, and on the zeal, and discretion, and blameless life required in them, and on their solemn obligation to "exhort, rebuke, and admonish:" yet with all this, they do not record even the number of distinct orders of them, or the functions appropriated to each, or the degree, and kind, and mode of control they exercised in the Churches.

While the *principles*, in short, are clearly recognized, and strongly inculcated, which Christian Communities and individual members of them are to keep in mind and act upon, with a view to the great objects for which these Communities were established, the *precise modes* in which these objects are, in each case, to be promoted, are left,—one can hardly doubt, studiously left—undefined.

§ 11. Many of the omissions I have alluded to, will appear even the more striking in proportion as we contemplate with the more minute attention each part of the sacred narrative. For instance, it is worth remarking that the matters concerning which the Apostle Paul's Epistles do contain the most detailed directions, are most of them precisely those which every one perceives to have relation only to the times in which he wrote; such as the eating or abstaining from "meats offered to idols," and the use and abuse of supernatural gifts. He was left, it should seem, *unrestrained* in recording—and hence he does record,—particular directions in *those cases where there was no danger* of those his directions being applied in *all* Ages and Countries, as binding on *every* Church *for ever*. Again, almost every attentive reader must have been struck with the circumstance, that there is no such description on record of the first appointment of the higher Orders of Christian Ministers as there is (in Acts vi.) of the ordination of the *inferior* Class, the Deacons. And this consideration alone would lead a reflecting mind to conclude, or at least strongly suspect, that the particular notice of this appointment of Deacons is *incidental* only, and that probably there would have been as little said of these, as of the Presbyters, but for the circumstance of the extraordinary effect produced by two of these Deacons, Stephen and Philip, as preachers: the narrative of their appointment being a natural, and almost necessary, introduction to that of two most important events, the great outbreak of persecution consequent on Stephen's martyrdom (which seems to have led, through the dispersion of the Disciples, to the founding of the first purely Gentile Church, at Antioch,* and the conversion of Samaria.

But this conclusion is greatly strengthened, when, on a closer examination, we find reason to be convinced that these, so-called, first seven Deacons, who are usually assumed (for I never met with even any attempt at proof) to have been the first that ever held such an office, were, in reality, only the first Grecian†

* 1 Cor. and 1 Tim. † Heb. x. 25.
‡ See Hebrews and Timothy.

* See Encyclop. Metrop. (Ecclesiastical History) on the designation of Christians first given to the Disciples at that place.

† Hellenist, or "Grecian," is the term constantly used for the *Jews* who used the Greek

Deacons, and that there were *Hebrew* Deacons before.

The following extract from an able Article in the Encyclopædia Metropolitana on Ecclesiastical History, will make this point, I think, perfectly clear.

"Meanwhile within the Church itself were displayed some slight symptoms of discontent, which deserve to be noticed particularly, on account of the measure to which they gave rise. The complaint is called 'a murmuring of the Grecians (or foreign Jews) against the Hebrews, (or native Jews,) because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.' Who these widows probably were has already been suggested; and if the suggestion, that they were deaconesses, be admitted, the grounds of the complaint may be readily surmised. As the greater share of duty would at this time devolve on the Hebrew widows or deaconesses, they might have been paid more liberally, as their services seemed to require; and hence the discontent.

"This, it is true, supposes that the order of deacons and deaconesses already existed, and may seem at first to contradict the statement of St. Luke, that in consequence of this murmuring, deacons were appointed. It does not, however, really contradict it; for evidently some *dispensers* there must have been, and if so, either the Apostles must have officiated as deacons, or special deacons there must have been, by whatever name they went. That the Apostles did not officiate, is plain from the tenor of the narrative, which indicates that the appeal was made to them, and that they excused themselves from presiding personally at the 'ministration,' (as was probably desired by the discontented party,) alleging that it was incompatible with their proper duties. 'It is not reason that we should *leave the word of God*, and serve tables.' This very assertion, then, is proof certain that they did not officiate. Again, on reading over the names of the seven deacons, we find them all of the Grecian or Hellenistic party; Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, the last of whom is expressly described as "a proselyte of Antioch." Now this surely would have produced, in turn, a murmuring of the Hebrews against the Grecians, unless they had *already* had some in office interested in looking after their rights. With these presumptions in favour of a previous appointment of deacons, it would seem then, that these seven were *added* to the former number, because of the complaint.

"All that is thus far intimated of their office is, that they were employed in the daily distribution of the alms and the stipends due from the public fund. Whether, even at the first, their duties were limited to this department of *service*, may be reasonably doubted. Of this portion of their duties we are now informed; obviously, because to the unsatisfactory mode in which this had been hitherto performed it was owing, that the new appointment took place, and that the subject was noticed at all. It is, however, by no means improbable, that the young men who carried out the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, and who are described as 'ready' in attendance, were of the same order; in other words, deacons by office, if not by name. What may serve to confirm this view of it is, the opposition between what would seem to have been their original title, and another order in the Church. They are called 'juniors' and 'young men,' (νεώτεροι' νεανίσκοι,) terms so strongly opposed to presbyters or elders as to incline one at the first glance to consider them as expressive of the two orders of the ministry, the seniors and the juniors, (the πρεσβύτεροι διάκονοι and the νεώτεροι διάκονοι;) the two orders, in short, which at length received the fixed and perpetual titles of presbyters and deacons.

"Accordingly, there is no just ground for supposing, that when the same term deacon occurs in the Epistles of St. Paul, a different order of men is intended: first, because an office may preserve its original name long after the duties originally attached to it have been changed; and, secondly, because, whatever duties may have been added to the office of deacons, it is certain that the duty of attending to the poor was for several centuries attached to it. Even after the deacons ceased to hold the office of treasurers, and the Bishops began to receive the revenues of their respective sees, the distribution of that portion which was allotted to charity still passed through the hands of the deacons. Hence, in a still later period, the title of cardinal deacon; and hence, too, the appropriation of the term *diaconiæ* to those Churches wherein alms

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language; as distinguished from Hellen, a *Greek* or Gentile by *nation*.

used to be collected and distributed to the poor.

"Not that it is possible to point out, with any thing like precision, the course of duty which belonged to the primitive deacons. That it corresponded entirely with that of our present order of deacons is very unlikely, whatever analogy be allowed from their relative situation in the Church. As the Church during the greater part of the first century was a shifting, and progressive institution, their duties probably underwent continual change and modification. If we were to be guided, for instance, by the office in which we find the 'young men,' (νεανίσκοι,) engaged, when the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were removed, we should say that they performed the business which in the present day would devolve on the inferior attendants of our churches. If, again, we were to judge of their character from the occasion on which we find them acting as stewards of the Church fund, a higher station would be doubtless assigned to them, but still, one not more nearly connected with the ministry of the word, nor approaching more to the sphere of duty which belongs to our deacons. On the other hand, the instances of Stephen and Philip prove, that the title was applied to those who were engaged in the higher departments of the ministry, although not in the highest.

"After all, it is most likely that the word deacon was originally applied, as its etymology suggests, to all the *ministers* of the Gospel establishment. But the Apostles having from the first a specific title, it more properly denoted any minister inferior to them,—any, however employed in the *service* of the Church. Between these, also, there soon obtained a distinction. If we suppose, then, that the *seniors*, or superior class, were distinguished by the obvious title of Elder deacons, (πρεσβύτεροι διάκονοι,) the generic and unappropriated term 'deacon' would devolve on the remaining class. And thus the present Order in the Church, to which that name is applied, may be truly asserted to be deacons in the apostolical and primitive sense of the word; and yet, nevertheless, much may be said about deacons, both in the New Testament and in the writings of the early fathers, which will not apply to them."

If any one should be disposed to think it a question of small moment whether Stephen and his companions were or were not the first Deacons ever appointed let him consider that, however unimportant in itself, it is one which throws much additional light on the subject now before us. We not only find few and scanty records of those details of the Church-government established by the Apostles, which, if they had designed to leave a model absolutely binding on all Christians for ever, we might have expected to find fully and clearly particularized, but also we find that a part even of what the inspired writers do record, is recorded incidentally only, for the elucidation of the rest of the narrative; and not in pursuance of any design to give a detailed statement of such particulars. Thus a further confirmation is furnished of the view that has been taken; viz., that it was the plan of the Sacred Writers to lay down clearly the *principles* on which Christian Churches were to be formed and governed, leaving the mode of application of those principles undetermined and discretionary.

§ 12. Now what did the Holy Spirit design us to learn from all this? In the first place "he that hath ears to hear" may draw from it, as has been already observed, a strong internal evidence of the genuineness and of the inspired character of our Sacred Books; inasmuch as they do not contain what would surely have been found in the works of men (whether impostors or sincere) left to themselves to record whatever seemed interesting and important.

And this point of evidence presents itself to the mind at once, before we have even begun to inquire into the particular object proposed in the omission; because we may be sure, in this case, that what did *not* come from Man must have come from God.*

But besides this we may fairly infer, I think, that what is *essential* is to be found clearly laid down in Scripture; and that those points which are either wholly passed over in silence, (when they are such that we are certain from the nature of the case, the Apostles must have given *some* directions relative to them,) or are slightly mentioned, imperfectly described, and incidentally alluded to, must belong to the class of things either altogether indifferent, or so far non-essential in their character that "it is not necessary (as our 34th Article expresses it) they should be in all places one and utterly alike;"—such in short that divine wisdom judged it best they should be left to the discre-

* See Appendix, Note (E.)

tion of each Church in each Age and Country,* and should be determined according to the *principles* which had been distinctly laid down by divine authority; while the *application* of those principles in particular cases was left (as is the case with our moral conduct also†) to the responsible judgment of Man.

It was designed in short that a Church should have (as our 34th Article expresses it) "authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies and rites resting on Man's authority only:" (this, be it observed, including things which may have been enjoined by the Apostles *to those among whom they were living*, and which, *to those persons*, had a divine authority; but which are not recorded by the sacred writers as enjoined *universally*) "so that all things be done to edifying:" but that "as no Church ought to decree any thing *against* Holy Writ, so *besides* the same ought it not to enforce the belief of any thing as necessary to salvation."

§ 13. And we may also infer very clearly from an attentive and candid survey of the Sacred Writings, not only that some things were intended to be absolutely enjoined as essential, and others left to the discretion of the rulers of each Church, but also that some things, again, were absolutely *excluded*, as inconsistent with the character of a Christian Community.

It is very important therefore, and, to a diligent, and reflective, and unprejudiced reader, not difficult,—by observing that the Sacred Writers have omitted, and what they have mentioned, and in what manner they have mentioned each, to form in his mind distinctly the three classes just alluded to: viz., 1st, of things essential to Christianity, and *enjoined* as universally requisite; 2dly, those left to the *discretion* of the governors of each Church; and 3dly, those *excluded* as *inconsistent* with the character of the Gospel religion.

These last points are not least deserving of a careful examination; especially on account of the misconceptions relative to them, that have prevailed and still prevail, in a large portion of the Christian World. It would lead me too far from the subject now immediately under consideration, to enter into a full examination of all the features that are to be found in most religions except the Christian, and which might have been expected to appear in that, supposing it of human origin; but which are expressly excluded from it. It may be worth while however to advert to a few of the most remarkable.

The Christian Religion, then, arose, be it remembered, among a People who not only looked for a temporal Deliverer and Prince in their Messiah, but who had been accustomed to the sanction of temporal rewards and judgments to the divine Law;*—whose Laws, in religious and in secular matters alike, claimed to be an immediate revelation from Heaven—whose civil Rulers were regarded as delegates from "the Lord their God, who was their king," and were enjoined to punish with death, as a revolt from the Supreme Civil Authority,—as a crime of the character of high-treason,—any departure from the prescribed religion. It arose in a Nation regarding themselves as subjects of a "Kingdom of God" that *was*, emphatically, a kingdom of this world: and its most prominent character was its being "a Kingdom *not* of this world;" it was in all respects the very reverse in respect of the points just mentioned, of what *might* have been expected, humanly speaking, from Jewish individuals, and of what *was* expected by the Jewish *Nation;* and it may be added, of what many Christians have in every Age laboured to represent and to make it. While the mass of his own People were seeking "to take Jesus by force to make Him a king," (a procedure which has been, virtually, imitated by a large proportion of his professed followers ever since) He Himself and his Apostles, uniformly and sedulously, both in their precepts, and in their conduct, rejected, as alien from the character of the Gospel, all employment of secular coercion in behalf of their religion,—all encroachments on "the things that be Cæsar's;" and maintained the purely spiritual character of that "Kingdom of Heaven" which they proclaimed.

On this, every way most important point, I have treated at large in the first Essay in this volume, and also, in the Essay on Persecution, (3d Series,) and the Essays on the Dangers to Christianity, (4th Series.)

§ 14. Moreover the Gospel religion was introduced by men, and among men—whether Jews or Gentiles,—who had

* See Appendix, Note (F.)

† Essay on Abolition of Law. Second Series.

* See Essay I., 1st Series: "On the Peculiarities," &c. And also Discourse "On National Blessings."

never heard of or conceived such a thing as a religion without a Sacrificing *Priest*, without Altars for *Sacrifice*,—without *Sacrifices* themselves,—without either a *Temple*, or at least some High Place, Grove, or other sacred spot answering to a Temple;—some place, that is, in which the Deity worshipped was supposed more especially to dwell.*

The Apostles preached, for the first time—the first both to Jew and Gentile—a religion quite opposite in all these respects to all that had ever been heard of before:—a religion without any Sacrifice but that offered up by its Founder in his own person;—without any sacrificing Priest (Hiereus)† except Him, the great and true High Priest,‡ and consequently with no Priest (in that sense) on Earth; except so far as every one of the worshippers was required to present himself as a "living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God;"§ and a religion without any Temple, except the collected Congregation of the Worshippers themselves.‖

Let any one but contemplate the striking contrast between the confined—the local character—of the Mosaic system, and the character of boundless extension stamped on the Gospel of Christ. "In the place which the Lord shall choose" (says Moses** "to set his Name therein, there shalt thou offer thy Sacrifices." "The hour cometh" (says Jesus††) "when men shall neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father;" . . . . . "wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."‡‡ "In his *Temple*" (says the Psalmist;§§ *i. e.* in his temple at Jerusalem) "doth every one speak of his glory:" . . . . . "there will I" (Jehovah) "*dwell*, for I have a delight therein:" "Ye are the *Temple*" (says the Apostle Paul) "of the Holy Ghost, which *dwelleth* in you."‖‖

Now all this is deserving of attentive reflection, both as important in reference to a right knowledge of the true character of the religion of the Gospel, and also as furnishing a strong internal evidence as to its origin. For not only is it inconceivable that any impostor or enthusiast would have ever *devised* or dreamed of any thing both so strange, and so unacceptable, as must have seemed, in those days, a religion without Priest, Altar, Sacrifice, or Temple, (in the sense in which men had always been accustomed to them;) but also it is no less incredible that any persons, unaided by miraculous powers, should have *succeeded*—as the Apostles did—in propagating such a religion.

But what is most to our present purpose to remark is, that the Sacred Writers did not *omit* the mention of these things, and leave it to the discretion of each Church to introduce them or not; but they plainly appear to have distinctly *excluded* them. It is not that they made little or no mention of Temples, Sacrifices, and sacrificing Priests; they mention them and allude to them, perpetually; as existing, in the ordinary sense of the terms, among the Jews, and also among the Pagans; and again, they also perpetually mention and allude to them in reference to the religion of the Gospel, invariably, and manifestly, *in a different sense*. Jesus Christ, as the Christian Priest, and Christian Sacrifice,—Christians themselves as "living Sacrifices,"—the sacrifice of beneficence to the Poor,*—the Temple composed of the Christian Worshippers themselves; who are exhorted to "build up" (or edify, οἰκοδομεῖν) one another, as "living stones"† of the Temple of the Holy Ghost;—all these are spoken of and alluded to continually; while, in the primary and customary sense, the same terms are perpetually used by the same writers, in reference to the Jewish and to the Pagan religions, and never to the Christian.

I cannot well conceive any proof more complete than is here afforded, that Christ and his Apostles intended distinctly to exclude and forbid, as inconsistent with his religion, those things which I have been speaking of. It being the natural and inherent office of any Community to make by-laws for its own regulation, *where not restricted by some higher Authority*, these points are precisely those which come under that restriction; being distinctly ex-

* Hence the name of Ναὸς from *ναίειν*, "to dwell." See Hinds' "Three Temples."

† See Discourse "On the Christian Priesthood," appended to Bampton Lectures.

‡ Hebrews, ch. iv.

§ Rom. xii. This offering the Apostle calls θυσίαν ζῶσαν, "a living Sacrifice," as distinguished from the *slain* animals offered up in other religions; and also λογικὴ λατρεία, "a *reasonable* (*i. e.* rational) service," as opposed to the *irrational* animals slain on the altars.

‖ I have treated of this point in one of a volume of Discourses delivered in Dublin.

** Deut. xii. †† John iv. ‡‡ Matt. xviii.

§§ Ps. xxix. ‖‖ 1 Cor. iii.

* "To do good and to distribute, forget not, for with such sacrifices, (θυσίαις,) God is well pleased."

† 1 Peter ii. 5, &c.

cluded by the Founder and Supreme Governor of the Universal Church, is inconsistent with the character of his religion.

It is not a little remarkable, therefore, —though in other matters also experience shows the liability of men to maintain at once opposite errors,—that the very persons who are for restricting within the narrowest limits,—or rather, indeed, annulling altogether,—the natural right of a Community to make and alter by-laws in matters not determined by a superior authority, and who deny that any Church is at liberty to depart, even in matters left wholly undecided in Scripture, from the supposed,—or even conjectured—practice of the Apostles, these very persons are found advocating the introduction into Christianity of practices and institutions not only unauthorized, but plainly excluded, by its inspired promulgators;—such as Sacrifices and sacrificing Priests; thus, at once, denying the rights which do belong to a Christian Community, and asserting those which do not; at once fettering the Church by a supposed obligation to conform strictly to some supposed precedents of antiquity, and boldly casting off the obligation to adhere to the plainest injunctions of God's written word. "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."*

§ 15. Among the things excluded from the Christian system, we are fully authorized to include all subjection of the Christian World, permanently, and from generation to generation, to some one Spiritual Ruler (whether an individual man or a Church) the delegate, representative and vicegerent of Christ; whose authority should be binding on the conscience of all, and decisive on every point of faith. Jesus Himself, who told his Disciples that it was "expedient for them that He should go away, that He might send them another Comforter, who should abide with them for ever," could not possibly have failed, had such been his design, to refer them to the man, or Body of men, who should, in perpetual succession, be the depository of this divine consolation and supremacy. And it is wholly incredible that He Himself should be perpetually spoken of and alluded to as the Head of his Church, without any reference to any supreme Head on Earth, as fully representing Him and bearing universal rule in his name,—whether Peter or any other Apostle, or any successor of one of these,—this, I say, is utterly incredible, supposing the Apostles or their Master had really designed that there should be for the universal Church any institution answering to the oracle of God under the Old Dispensation, at the Tabernacle or the Temple.

The Apostle Paul, in speaking of miracles as "the signs of an Apostle," evidently implies that no one NOT possessing such miraculous gifts as his,* much less, without possessing any at all, —could be entitled to be regarded as even on a level with the Apostles; yet he does not, by virtue of that his high office, claim for himself, or allow to Peter or any other, supreme rule over all the Churches.† And while he claims and exercises the right to decide authoritatively on points of faith and of practice on which he had received express revelations, he does not leave his converts any injunction to apply, hereafter, when he shall be removed from them, to the Bishop, or Rulers of any other Church, for such decisions; or to any kind of permanent living Oracle to dictate to all Christians in all Ages. Nor does he even ever hint at any subjection of one Church to another, singly, or to any number of others collectively;—to that of Jerusalem, for instance, or of Rome; or to any kind of general Council.

It appears plainly from the sacred narrative, that though the many Churches which the Apostles founded were branches of one *Spiritual* Brotherhood, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Head,—though there was "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," for all of them, yet they were each a distinct, independent community *on Earth*, united by the common principles on which they were founded, and by their mutual agreement, affection and respect; but not having any one recognized Head on Earth, or acknowledging any sovereignty of one of these Societies over others.‡

And as for—so-called—General Councils, we find not even any mention of them, or allusion to any such expedient. The pretended first Council, at Jerusalem,

* Mark vii. 9.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 18. † Gal. ii. 7—9.

‡ Generally speaking, the Apostles appear to have established a distinct Church in each considerable city; so that there were several even in a single Province; as for instance, in Macedonia, those of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berœa, Amphipolis, &c.; and the like in the Province of Achaia and elsewhere.

does seem to me* a most extraordinary chimera, without any warrant whatever from Sacred History. We find in the narrative, that certain persons, coming from Jerusalem to Antioch, endeavoured to impose on the Gentile converts the yoke of the Mosaic Law; pretending—as appears plainly from the context†—to have the sanction of the Apostles for this. Nothing could be more natural than the step which was thereupon taken—to send a deputation to Jerusalem, to inquire whether these pretensions were well founded. The Apostles, in the midst of an Assembly of the Elders (or Clergy, as they would now be called) of Jerusalem, decided that no such burden ought to be imposed, and that their pretended sanction had not been given. The Church at Jerusalem, even independently of the Apostles, had of course power to decide this last point; *i. e.* to declare the fact whether they had or had not given the pretended sanction: and the Apostles, confessedly, had plenary power to declare the will of the Lord Jesus. And the deputation, accordingly, retired satisfied. There is no hint, throughout, of any summons to the several Churches in Judea and Galilee, in Samaria, Cyprus, Cyrene, &c., to send deputations, as to a general Council; nor any assumption of a right in the *Church* of Jerusalem, as such, to govern the rest, or to decide on points of faith.

It is worth remarking also, that, as if on purpose to guard against the assumption, which might, not unnaturally, have taken place, of some supremacy—such as no Church was designed to enjoy,—on the part of Jerusalem, the fountain-head of the religion, it was by the *special appointment* of the Holy Spirit that Saul and Barnabas were *ordained* to the very highest office, the Apostleship, *not* by the hands of *the other Apostles*, or of any person at *Jerusalem*, but by the *Elders of Antioch*. This would have been the less remarkable had *no human* ordination at all taken place, but merely a special immediate appointment of them by divine revelation. But the command given was, "separate me .... let them go."‡ *Some* reason for such a procedure there must have been; and it does seem probable that it was designed for the very purpose (among others) of impressing on men's minds the independence and equality of the several Churches on Earth.

On the whole, then, considering in addition to all these circumstances, the number and the variety of the Epistles of Paul, (to say nothing of those of the other Apostles,) and the deep anxiety he manifests for the continuance of his converts in the right faith, and his earnest warnings of them* against the dangers to their faith, which he foresaw; and considering also the incalculable importance of such an institution (supposing it to exist) as a permanent living Oracle and supreme Ruler of the Church, on Earth; and the necessity of pointing it out so clearly that no one could possibly, except through wilful blindness and obstinacy, be in any doubt as to the place and persons whom the Lord should have thus "chosen to cause his name to dwell" therein—especially, as a plain reference to this infallible judge, guide, and governor, would have been so obvious, easy, short, and decisive a mode of guarding against the doubts, errors, and dissensions which he so anxiously apprehended; considering, I say, all this, it does seem to me a perfect moral impossibility, that Paul and the other sacred writers should have written, as they have done, without any mention or allusion to any thing of the kind, if it had been a part (and it must have been a most *essential* part, if it were any) of the Christian System. They do not merely omit all reference to any supreme and infallible Head and Oracle of the Universal Church,—to any Man or Body as the representative and Vicegerent of Christ, but they omit it in such a manner, and under such circumstances, as plainly to amount to an exclusion.

It may be added that the circumstance of our Lord's having *deferred* the Commencement of his Church till after his own *departure* in bodily person from the Earth, seems to have been designed as a further safeguard against the motion I have been alluding to. Had He publicly presided in bodily person subsequently to the completion of the Redemption by his death, over a Church in Jerusalem or elsewhere, there would have been more plausibility in the claim to *supremacy* which might have been set up and admitted, on behalf of that Church, and of his own successors in the Government of it. His previously withdrawing, made it

* See Burnet on Article 21. † Acts xv. 24.
‡ Acts xiii. 2, 3.

* Acts xx.

the more easily to be understood that He was to remain the spiritual Head in Heaven, of the spiritual Church universal; and consequently of all particular Churches, equally, in all parts of the world.

§ 16. This therefore, and the other points just mentioned, must be regarded as *negatively* characteristic of the Christian religion, no less than it is positively characterized by those truths and those enactments which the inspired Writers lay down as essential. Their prohibitions in the one case are as plain as their injunctions in the other.

There is not indeed any systematic enumeration of the several points that are excluded as inconsistent with the character of the religion; answering to the prohibition of Idolatry in the Decalogue, the enumeration of forbidden meats, and other such enactments of the Levitical Law. But the same may be said no less of the affirmative directions also that are to be found in the New Testament. The fundamental doctrines and the great moral principles of the Gospel are there taught,—for wise reasons no doubt, and which I think we may in part perceive,* not in creeds or other regular formularies, but incidentally, irregularly, and often by oblique allusions; less striking indeed at first sight than distinct enunciations and enactments, but often even the more decisive and satisfactory from that very circumstance; because the Apostles frequently allude to some truth as not only essential, but indisputably admitted, and familiarly *known to be* essential by those they were addressing.†

On the whole then, I cannot but think an attentive and candid inquirer, who brings to the study of Scripture no extraordinary learning or acuteness, but an unprejudiced and docile mind, may ascertain with reasonable certainty, that there are points—and what those points are—which are insisted on by our sacred writers as *essential*; and again, which are excluded as *inconsistent* with the religion they taught; and again that there are many other points,—some of them such, that the Apostles cannot but have practically decided them in one way or another *on particular occasions*, (such as the mode of administering the Eucharist, and many others) respecting which they have not *recorded* their decisions, or made any *general* enactment to be observed in all Ages and Countries.

And the inference seems to be inevitable, that they *purposely* left these points to be decided in each Age and Country according to the discretion of the several Churches, by a careful *application* of the *principles* laid down by Christ and his Apostles.

§ 17. At variance with what has been now said, and also at variance with each other, are some opinions which are to be found among different classes of Christians, in these, as well as in former times. The opposite errors (as they appear to me to be) of those opinions may in many instances be traced, I conceive, in great measure, to the same cause; to the neglect, namely, of the distinction—obvious as it is to any tolerably attentive reader—which has been just noticed, between those things, on the one hand, which are either plainly declared and strictly *enjoined*, or distinctly *excluded*, by the Sacred Writers, and on the other hand, those on which they give no distinct decision, injunction, or prohibition; and which I have thence concluded they meant to place under the jurisdiction of each Church. To the neglect of this distinction, and again, to a want of due consideration of the character, offices, and rights of a Christian Community, may be attributed, in a great degree, the prevalence of errors the most opposite to each other.

There are persons, it is well known, who from not finding in Scripture precise directions, and strict commands, as to the constitution and regulation of a Christian Church,—the several Orders of Christian Ministers,—the distinct functions of each,—and other such details, have adopted the conclusion, or at least seem to lean, more or less, towards the conclusion,—that it is a matter entirely left to each individual's fancy or convenience to join one Christian Society, or another, or none at all;—to take upon himself, or confer on another, the ministerial office, or to repudiate altogether any Christian Ministry whatever:—to join, or withdraw from, any or every religious Assembly for joint Christian worship, according to the suggestion of his individual taste:—in short, (for this is what it really amounts to when plainly stated) to proceed as if the sanction manifestly given by our Lord and his Apostles to the establishment of Christian Communities, and consequently, to all the privileges and powers implied in the very nature of a Community, and also the in-

* See Appendix, Note (G.)

† See Rhetoric, 6th Edition, Part I. ch. 2, § 4.

ulcation in Scripture of the *principles* on which Christian Churches are to be conducted, were all *to go for nothing*, unless the application of these principles to each particular point of the details of Church government, can also be found no less plainly laid down in Scripture.

Now though I would not be understood as insinuating any thing against the *actual* morality of life of those who take such views, I cannot but remark, that their *mode of reasoning* does seem to me perfectly analogous to that of men who should set at nought all the moral principles of the Gospel, and account nothing a sin that is not expressly particularized as forbidden,—nothing a duty, that is not, in so many words, enjoined. Persons who entertain such lax notions as I have been alluding to, respecting Church enactments, should be exhorted to reflect carefully on the obvious and self-evident, but often-forgotten truth—the oftener forgotten, perhaps, in practice, from its *being* self-evident—that *right* and *duty* are reciprocal; and consequently that since a Church has a *right* (derived, as has been shown, both from the very nature of a Community, and from Christ's sanction) to *make* regulations, &c., not at variance with Scripture principles, it follows that *compliance* with such regulations must be a *duty* to the individual members of that Church.

On the other hand, there are some who, in their abhorrence and dread of principles and practices subversive of all good order, and tending to anarchy and to every kind of extravagance, have thought,—or at least professed to think,—that we are bound to seek for a distinct authoritative sanction, in the Scriptures or *in some other ancient* writings*,—some *Tradition* in short—for each separate point which we would maintain. They assume that whatever doctrines or practices, whatever institutions, whatever regulations respecting Church government, we can conclude, either with certainty, or with any degree of probability, to have been either introduced by the Apostles, or to have prevailed in their time, or in the time of their immediate successors, are to be considered as absolutely binding on all Christians for ever;—as a model from which no Church is at liberty to depart. And they make our membership of the Church of Christ, and our hopes of the Gospel salvation, depend on an exact adherence to every thing that is proved, or believed, or even suspected, to be an apostolical usage; and on our possessing what they call Apostolical Succession; that is, on our having a Ministry whose descent can be traced up, in an unbroken and undoubted chain, to the Apostles themselves, through men regularly ordained by them or their successors, according to the exact forms originally appointed. And all Christians (so called) who do not come under this description, are to be regarded either as outcasts from "the Household of Faith," or at best as in a condition "analogous to that of the Samaritans of old" who worshipped on Mount Gerizim,* or as in "an intermediate state between Christianity and Heathenism," and as "left to the uncovenanted mercies of God."

§ 18. Those who on such grounds defend the Institutions and Ordinances, and vindicate the Apostolical Character, of our own (or indeed of any) Church—whether on their own sincere conviction, or as believing that such arguments are the best calculated to inspire the mass of mankind with becoming reverence, and to repress the evil of schism,—do seem to me, in proportion as they proceed on those principles, to be, in the same degree, removing our institutions from a foundation on a rock, to place them on sand. Instead of a clearly-intelligible, well-established, and *accessible* proof of divine sanction for the claims of our Church, they would substitute one that is not only obscure, disputable, and out of the reach of the mass of mankind, but even self-contradictory, subversive of our own and every Church's claims, and leading to the very evils of doubt, and schismatical division, which it is desired to guard against.

The Rock on which I am persuaded our Reformers intended, and rightly intended, to rest the Ordinances of our Church, is, the warrant to be found in the Holy Scriptures written by, or under the direction of those to whom our Lord had entrusted the duty of "teaching men to observe all things whatsoever He had

* By "ancient" some persons understand what belongs to the first *three* centuries of the Christian era; some, the first four; some, seven; so arbitrary and uncertain is the standard by which some would persuade us to try questions, on which they, at the same time, teach us to believe our Christian Faith and Christian Hope are staked!

"Scire velim, pretium chartis quotus arroget annus:
* * * * * * *
Est vetus atque probus, centum qui perficit annos.
Quid? qui deperiit minor uno mense vel anno,
Inter quos referendus erit? veteresne?" * * *
Horace, Epist. I. b. 2.

* John iv.

commanded them." For in those Scriptures we find a divine sanction clearly given to a regular Christian Community, a Church; which is, according to the definition in our 19th Article,* "a congregation (*i. e.* Society or Community; Ecclesia,) of faithful men,† in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things which of necessity are requisite to the same." Now since, from the very nature of the case, every Society must have officers appointed in some way or other, and every Society that is to be *permanent*, a perpetual *succession* of Officers, in whatever manner kept up, and must have also a power of enacting, abrogating and enforcing on its own members, such regulations or by-laws as are not opposed to some higher authority, it follows inevitably (as I have above observed) that any one who sanctions a Society, gives, in so doing, his sanction to those essentials of a Society, its Government,—its Officers,—its Regulations. Accordingly, even if our Lord had *not* expressly said any thing about "binding and loosing," still the very circumstance of his sanctioning a Christian Community would necessarily have implied his sanction of the Institutions, Ministers, and Government of a Christian Church, so long as nothing is introduced at variance with the positive enactments, and the fundamental principles laid down by Himself and his Apostles.

§ 19. This, which I have called a foundation on a rock, is evidently that on which (as has been just observed) our Reformers designed to place our Church. While they strongly deny to any Church the power to "ordain any thing contrary to God's Word," or to require as essential to salvation, belief in any thing not resting on scriptural authority, they claim the power for each Church of ordaining and altering "rites and ceremonies," "so that all things be done to edifying," and nothing "contrary to God's Word." They claim on that ground for our own Church a recognition of that power in respect of the Forms of Public Service; on the ground, that is, (Art. 36) that these "contain nothing that is in itself superstitious and ungodly."

And they rest the claims of Ministers, not on some supposed sacramental virtue transmitted from hand to hand in unbroken succession from the Apostles, in a chain, of which if any one link be even doubtful, a distressing uncertainty is thrown over all Christian Ordinances, Sacraments, and Church privileges for ever; but, on the fact of those Ministers being the *regularly appointed officers of a regular Christian Community*. "It is not lawful (says the 23d Article) for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be *lawfully called and sent* to execute the same. —And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's Vineyard."*

Those who are not satisfied with the foundation thus laid,—and which, as I have endeavoured to show, is the very foundation which Christ and his Apostles have prepared for us,—who seek to take higher ground, as the phrase is, and maintain what are called according to the modern fashion "Church principles," or "Church-of-England principles," are in fact subverting the principles both of our own Church in particular, and of every Christian Church that claims the inherent rights belonging to a Community, and confirmed by the sanction of God's Word as contained in the Holy Scriptures. It is advancing, but not in the right road,—it is advancing not in sound learning but error,—not in faith, but in superstitious credulity, to seek for some higher and better ground on which to rest our doctrines and institutions than

* In our Article as it stands in the *English*, it is "*The* visible Church of Christ is," &c.; but there can be no doubt, I think, that the more correct version from the Latin (the *Latin* Articles appear to have been the original, and the English a translation—in some few places, a careless translation—from the Latin) would have been "*A* visible Church," &c. The Latin "Ecclesia Christi visibilis" would indeed answer to either phrase, the want of an *article* definite or indefinite in that language rendering it liable to such ambiguity. But the context plainly shows that the writer is not speaking of the Universal Church, but of particular Churches, such as the "Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Rome." The English translator probably either erred from momentary inattention, or (more likely) understood by "Ecclesia," and by "the Church," the particular Church whose Articles were before him,—the Church of England.

† *I. e.* believers in Christ;—fideles;—πιστοι.

* See § 23.

hat on which they were placed by "the Author and Finisher of our Faith."*

On this point I will take the liberty of nserting an extract from a Charge (not ublished) which was delivered a year go; because I wish to point out, that he views I am taking, whether sound or unsound—and this I sincerely wish to be decided according to the reasons adduced—are at least not hastily but deliberately adopted, and have undergone no change in that interval.

"When I speak of unceasing progress, —of continual improvement in all that pertains to the Christian life,—as what we ought to aim at, both in ourselves, and in those with whom we have influence, it may perhaps be proper to add, that this does not imply any attempt 'to be wise above that which is written,'—any expectation of a new and additional revelation, or of the discovery of new doctrines,—any pretensions to inspiration,—or hopes of a fresh outpouring of that, or of any other miraculous gifts. It seemed needful to make this remark, because such hopes have been cherished, —such pretensions put forth,—from time to time, in various ages of the Church, and not least in the present.

"I have coupled together these two things,—miraculous gifts, and a new revelation, because I conceive them to be in reality inseparable. Miracles are the only sufficient credentials on which any one can reasonably demand assent to doctrines not clearly revealed (*to the understanding of his hearers*) in Scripture. The promulgation of new articles of faith, or of articles which, though not avowedly new, are yet not obviously contained in Scripture, is most presumptuous, unless so authenticated. And again, pretensions to miraculous powers such as those of Moses and the Prophets,—of Christ and the Apostles, seem to imply some such object to be furthered by them. At any rate, those who shall have thus established their claim to be considered as messengers from Heaven, *may* evidently demand assent to whatever they may in that character promulgate. If any persons therefore pretend to such a mark of divine commission as the gift of tongues, or any such power, no one who admits their pretensions can consistently withhold assent from any thing they may declare themselves commissioned to teach.

"And, again, if any persons claim for any traditions of the Church, an authority, either paramount to Scripture, or equal to Scripture, or concurrent with it,—or, which comes to the very same thing, *decisive as to the interpretation of Scripture*,*—taking on themselves to decide what *is* 'the Church,' and *what* tradition is to be thus received,—these persons are plainly called on to establish by miraculous evidence the claims they advance. And if they make their appeal not to miracles wrought by themselves, but to those which originally formed the evidence of the Gospel, they are bound to show by some decisive proof, that that evidence can fairly be brought to bear upon and authenticate their pretension;—that they are, by Christ's decree, the rightful depositaries of the power they claim.

"But to such as reject and protest against all such groundless claims, an interminable field is still open for the application of all the faculties, intellectual and moral, with which God has endowed us, for the fuller understanding and developement of the truths revealed in his written Word. To learn and to teach what is there to be found;—to develope more and more fully to your own minds and to those of your hearers, what the Evangelists and Apostles have conveyed to us, will be enough and more than enough to occupy even a longer life than any of us can expect.

"The Mosaic Dispensation was the

* It is curious to observe how very common it is for any Sect or Party to assume a title indicative of the very excellence in which they are especially deficient, or strongly condemnatory of the very errors with which they are especially chargeable. Thus, those who from time to time have designated themselves "Gnostics," *i. e.* persons "*knowing*" the Gospel, in a far superior degree to other professed Christians,—have been generally remarkable for their *want* of knowledge of the very first rudiments of evangelical truth. The phrase "Catholic" religion, (*i. e.* "Universal") is the most commonly in the mouths of those who are the most limited and *exclusive* in their views, and who seek to shut out the largest number of Christian communities from the Gospel covenant. "Schism," again, is by none more loudly reprobated than by those who are not only the immediate authors of schism, but the advocates of principles tending to generate and perpetuate schisms without end. And "Church-principles,"—"High-church principles,"—"Church-of-England principles,"—are the favourite terms of those who go the furthest in subverting all these.

Obvious as this fallacy is, there is none more commonly successful in throwing men off their guard.

* See Appendix, Note (H.)

dawn of 'the day-spring from on high,' not yet arrived,—of a Sun only about to rise. It was a Revelation in itself imperfect. The Sun of the Gospel arose; 'the true Light, which lighteth every one that cometh into the world' appeared: but it was partially hidden, and is so, still, by a veil of clouds;—by prejudices of various kinds,—by the passions, and infirmities, and ignorance of mankind. We may advance, and we may lead others to advance, indefinitely, in the full developement of Gospel truth,—of the real character and meaning and design of Christ's religion; not by seeking to *superadd* something to the Gospel revelation; but by a more correct and fuller comprehension of it;—not by increasing, absolutely, the light of the noonday-sun, but by clearing away the mists which obscure our view of it. Christianity itself cannot be improved; but men's views, and estimate, and comprehension of Christianity, may be indefinitely improved.

"Vigilant discretion however is no less needful than zeal and perseverance, if we would really advance in the Christian course. The most active and patient traveller, if he be not also watchfully careful to keep in the right road, may, after having once diverged from it into some other track, be expending his energies in going further and further astray, while he fancies himself making progress in his journey.

"In various ways is the Christian, and not least, the Christian Minister, liable to this kind of self-deception. I am not now, you will observe, adverting chiefly to the danger of mistaking what is absolutely false, for true, or wrong for right; but rather to that of mistaking the real character of some description of truth or of valuable knowledge. We have to guard against mistake, for instance, as to what is or is not a part of the Christian-*Revelation;*—a truth *belonging* to the Gospel, and resting, properly, on divine authority. While advancing in the attainment of what may be in itself very valuable and important knowledge, we may be in fact going further and further in error, if we confound together the inspired and the uninspired, —the sacred text, with the human comment.

"There are persons (such as I have above alluded to) who in their zeal—in itself laudable—to advance towards a full comprehension of the Gospel revelation, have conceived that they are to seek for this by diligent research into the tenets and practices of what is called the Primitive Church; *i. e.* the Christian world during the first three or first four Ages; and some have even gone so far as to represent the revelation of the Christian scheme contained in the New Testament as a mere imperfect and uncompleted outline, which was to be filled up by the Church in the succeeding three centuries;—as a mere beginning of that which the early Fathers were empowered and commissioned to finish; though on what grounds any kind of authority is claimed for the Church *then*, which does not equally belong to it at this day, or at any intermediate period, no one, as far as I know, has even attempted to make out.

"Now, to learn what has been said and done by eminent men in every Age of the Church, is of course interesting and valuable to a theological student. And a man of modesty and candour will not fail to pay great attention to their opinions, in whatever period they may have lived. He will also inquire with peculiar interest into the belief and the practices of those who had been instructed by the immediate disciples and other contemporaries of the Apostles themselves. But the mistake is to assume, on the ground of presumptuous conjecture (for of proof, there is not even a shadow) that these men were infallible interpreters of the Apostles, and had received from them by tradition something not contained, or not plainly set forth, in their writings, but which yet were designed by those very Apostles as a necessary portion of Christianity.

"Not only are all these assumptions utterly groundless and unwarrantable, but, on the contrary, even if there is any thing which we can be morally certain *was* practised in the time of the Apostles, and with their sanction (as is the case for instance with the Agapæ or Love-feasts) we must yet consider it as not designed by them to be of universal and perpetual obligation, where they have not distinctly laid it down as such in their writings. By omitting, in any case, thus to record certain of their practices or directions, they have given us as clear an indication as we could have looked for, of their design to leave these to the free choice and decision of each Church in each Age and Country. And there seems every reason to think that it was on purpose to avoid misapprehensions of this kind, that they did leave unrecorded so much of what we cannot but be sure they must have practised, and said, and established, in the Churches under their own immediate care.

"And it should be remembered that what some persons consider as the *safe* side in respect of such points,—as the extreme of scrupulous and cautious veneration—is in truth the reverse. A wise and right-minded reverence for divine authority will render us doubly scrupulous of reckoning any thing as a divine precept or institution, without sufficient warrant. Yet, at the first glance, a readiness to bestow religious veneration, with or without good grounds (which is the very characteristic of superstition) is apt to be mistaken for a sign of pre-eminent piety. Besides those who hold the 'double doctrine'—the 'disciplina arcani'—and concerning whom therefore it would be rash to pronounce whether any particular tenet taught by them is one which they inwardly believe, or is one of the exoteric instructions deemed expedient for the multitude,—besides these persons, there are, no doubt, men of sincere though mistaken piety, who, as has been just intimated, consider it as the safe side in all doubtful cases, to adhere with unhesitating confidence to every thing that *may possibly* have been introduced by the Apostles;—to make every thing an article of Christian faith that could have been implied in any thing they may have taught. But such persons would perceive, on more careful and sober reflection, that a rightly scrupulous piety consists, as has been said, in drawing the line as distinctly as we are able, between what is, and what is not *designed* by our divine Instructors as a portion of their authoritative precepts and directions. It is by this careful anxiety to *comply with their intention with respect to us*, that we are to manifest a true veneration for them.

"Any thing that does not fall within this rule, we may believe, but not as a part of the Christian *revelation;*—we may practise, but not as a portion of the *divine institutions essential to a Christian Church*, and binding on all men in all ages: not, in short, as something placed beyond the bounds of that 'binding and loosing' power which belongs to *every* church, in reference to things neither enjoined in Scripture nor at variance with it. Otherwise, even though what we believe should be, really, and in itself, true, and though what we practise, should chance to be in fact what the Apostles did practise, we should not be honouring, but dishonouring God, by taking upon ourselves to give the sanction of his authority to that from which He has thought fit to withhold that sanction. When the Apostle Paul gave his advice on matters respecting which he 'had no commandment from the Lord,' he of course thought that what he was recommending was good; but so far was he from presuming to put it forth as a divine command, that he expressly notified the contrary. Let us not think to manifest our pious humility by reversing the Apostle's procedure!

"I have thought it needful, in these times especially, to insert this caution against such mistaken efforts after advancement in Christian knowledge and practice; against the delusions of those who, while they exult in their imagined progress in the Christian course, are, in reality, straying into other paths, and following a bewildering meteor."

§ 20. Those whose "Church principles" lead them thus to remove from a firm foundation the institutions of a Christian Church, and especially of our own, and to place them on the sand, are moreover compelled, as it were with their own hands, to dig away even that very foundation of sand. For, in respect of our own Church, since it inculcates repeatedly and earnestly as a fundamental principle,* that nothing is to be insisted on as an essential point of faith, that is not taught in Scripture, any member of our Church who should *make* essentials of points confessedly NOT found in Scripture, and who should consequently make it a point of necessary faith to *believe* that these *are* essentials, must unavoidably be pronouncing condemnation, either on himself, or on the very Church he belongs to, and whose claims he is professing to fortify.

But moreover, not from our own Church only, but from the Universal Church,—from all the privileges and promises of the Gospel,—the principles I am condemning, go to exclude, if fairly followed out, the very persons who advocate them. For it is certain that our own institutions and practices (and the like may be said, I apprehend, of every other Church in the world) though not, we conceive, *at variance* with any Apostolical injunctions, or with any Gospel principle, are, in several points, not precisely coincident with those of the earliest Churches. The Agapæ for instance, or "Love-feasts," alluded to just above, have, in most Churches, been long discontinued. The "Widows" again, whom we find mention of in Paul's Epis-

* Besides the Articles, see, on this point, the Ordination Service.

tles, appear plainly to have been an Order of Deaconesses regularly appointed to particular functions in the earliest Churches: and their Deacons appear to have had an office considerably different from those of our Church.

Again, it seems plainly to have been at least the general, if not the universal, practice of the Apostles, to appoint over each separate *Church* a *single* individual as a chief Governor, under the title of "*Angel*" (i. e. *Messenger* or *Legate* from the Apostles) or "BISHOP," i. e. *Superintendent* or Overseer. A CHURCH and a DIOCESS seem to have been for a considerable time *co-extensive* and *identical*. And each Church or Diocess (and consequently each Superintendent) though connected with the rest by ties of Faith and Hope and Charity, seems to have been (as has been already observed) perfectly independent as far as regards any power of control.

The plan pursued by the Apostles seems to have been, as has been above remarked, to established a great number of small (in comparison with modern Churches) distinct and independent Communities, each governed by its own single Bishop, consulting, no doubt, with his own Presbyters, and accustomed to act in concurrence with them, and occasionally conferring with the Brethren in other Churches, but owing no submission to the rulers of any other Church, or to any central common authority except the Apostles themselves. And other points of difference might be added.

Now to vindicate the institutions of our own, or of some other Church, on the Ground that they "are not in themselves superstitious or ungodly,"—that they are not at variance with Gospel principles, or with any divine injunction that was designed to be of universal obligation, is intelligible and reasonable. But to vindicate them on the ground of the exact conformity, which it is notorious they do not possess, to the most ancient models, and even to go beyond this, and condemn all Christians whose institutions and ordinances are not "one and utterly like" our own, on the ground of their departure from the Apostolical precedents, which no Church has exactly adhered to,—does seem,—to use no harsher expression,—not a little inconsistent and unreasonable. And yet one may not unfrequently hear members of Episcopalian Churches pronouncing severe condemnation on those of other Communions, and even excluding them from the Christian body, on the ground, not of their not being under the *best* form of Ecclesiastical Government, but, of their wanting the very essentials of a Christian Church: viz., the very same distinct Orders in the Hierarchy that the Apostles appointed: and this, while the Episcopalians themselves have, universally, so far varied from the Apostolical institutions as to have in one Church several *Bishops*; each of whom consequently differs in the office he holds, in a most important point, from one of the primitive Bishops, as much as the Governor of any one of our Colonies does from a Sovereign Prince.

Now whether the several alterations and departures from the original institutions, were or were not, in each instance made on good grounds, in accordance with an altered state of society, is a question which cannot even be entertained by those who hold that no Church is competent to vary at all from the ancient model. Their principle would go to exclude at once from the pale of Christ's Church almost every Christian Body since the first two or three Centuries.

The edifice they overthrow crushes in its fall the blind champion who has broken its pillars.

§ 21. Waiving however what may be called a personal argument, and supposing that some mode could be devised of explaining away all the inconsistencies I have been adverting to, still, if the essentials of Christianity,—at least a considerable portion of them—are not to be found in Scripture, but in a supplementary Tradition, which is to be sought in the works of those early Fathers who were orthodox, the foundations of a Christian's Faith and Hope become *inaccessible* to nearly the whole of the Laity, and to much the greater part of the Clergy.

This, it may be said, is just as it should be; and as it must be: the unlearned being necessarily dependent on the learned, in respect of several most important points; since the great mass of Christians cannot be supposed capable of even reading the Scriptures in the original tongues;

* It is remarkable that there are *Presbyterians* also, who proceed on similar principles; who contend that originally the distinction between Bishops and Presbyters did not exist; and *consequently* (not that *Episcopacy* is not *essential* to a Church but) that Episcopal government is an *unwarrantable innovation*—a usurpation—a profane departure from the divine ordinances!

much less of examining ancient manuscripts.

Now this necessity I see no reason for admitting, if it be understood in the sense that the unlearned must needs take the word of the learned, and place implicit reliance* on the good faith of certain individuals selected by them as their spiritual guides. It is in their power, and is surely their duty, to ascertain how far the assertions of certain learned men are to be safely relied on.†

But when, in the case now before us, men come to consider and inquire what the foundation really is on which they are told (according to the principles I have been speaking of) to rest their own hopes of eternal life, and to pronounce condemnation on those who differ from them, it cannot be but that doubt and dissatisfaction, and perhaps disgust, and danger of ultimate infidelity, will beset them, in proportion as they are of a serious and reflective turn, and really anxious to attain religious truth. For when referred to the works of the orthodox ancient Fathers, they find that a very large portion of these works is lost; or that some fragments, or reports of them by other writers, alone remain: they find again that what *has* come down to us is so vast in amount that a life is not sufficient for the attentive study of even the chief part of it;* they find these Authors by no means agreed, on all points, with each other, or with themselves; and that learned men again are not agreed in the interpretation of *them;* and still less agreed as to the orthodoxy of each, and the degree of weight due to his judgment on several points; nor even agreed by some centuries as to the degree of *antiquity*† that is to make the authority of each decisive, or more or less approaching to decisive.

Every thing in short pertaining to this appeal is obscure,—uncertain,—disputable—and actually disputed,—to such a degree, that even those who are not able to read the original authors may yet be perfectly competent to perceive how unstable a foundation they furnish. They can perceive that the mass of Christians are called on to believe and to do what is essential to Christianity, in implicit reliance on the *reports* of their respective pastors, as to what certain deep theological antiquarians have *reported* to *them*, respecting the *reports* given by certain ancient Fathers, of the *reports* current in their times, concerning apostolical usages and institutions! And yet, whoever departs in any degree from these, is to be regarded at best in an intermediate state between Christianity and Heathenism! Surely the tendency of this procedure must be to drive the doubting into confirmed (though perhaps secret) infidelity, and to fill with doubts the most sincerely pious, if they are anxiously desirous of attaining truth, and unhappily have sought it from such instructers.

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* See Appendix, Note (I.)

† "It is manifest that the concurrent testimony, positive or negative, of several witnesses, when there can have been no concert, and especially when there is any rivalry or hostility between them, carries with it a weight independent of that which may belong to each of them considered separately. For though, in such a case, each of the witnesses should be even considered as wholly undeserving of credit, still the chances might be incalculable against their all agreeing in the *same* falsehood. It is in this kind of testimony that the generality of mankind believe in the motions of the earth, and of the heavenly bodies, &c. Their belief is not the result of their own observations and calculations; nor yet again of their implicit reliance on the skill and the good faith of any one or more astronomers; but it rests on the agreement of many independent and rival astronomers; who want neither the ability nor the will to detect and expose each other's errors. It is on similar grounds, as Dr. Hinds has justly observed, that all men, except about two or three in a million, believe in the existence and in the genuineness of manuscripts of ancient books, such as the Scriptures. It is not that they have themselves examined these; or again, (as some represent) that they rely implicitly on the good faith of those who profess to have done so; but they rely on the *concurrent* and *uncontradicted* testimony of all who have made, or who *might make*, the examination; both unbelievers, and believers of various hostile sects; any one of whom would be sure to seize any opportunity to expose the forgeries or errors of his opponents.

"This observation is the more important, because many persons are liable to be startled and dismayed on its being pointed out to them that they have been believing something—as they are led to suppose—on very insufficient reasons; when the truth is perhaps that they have been mis-stating their reasons."—*Rhetoric*, part I. ch. 2. § 4.

* Would not the ingenuous course be, for those who refer to the authority of "The Fathers," to state distinctly, 1st, *which* of these ancient writers they mean; and, 2dly, whether they have *read* these? For, a very large proportion, even of the higher classes, are far from being aware of the voluminous character of the works thus vaguely referred to: and being accustomed, when any one refers to "The *Scriptures*," to understand him as speaking of a well known book, which they presume he professes to have read, it is likely they should conclude, unless told to the contrary, that one who appeals to "The Fathers," has himself read them.

† See Note, p. 114.

§ 22. But an attempt is usually made to silence all such doubts by a reference to the Catholic Church, or the "primitive" or the "ancient Catholic Church," as having authority to decide,—and as having in fact decided,—on the degree of regard due to the opinions and testimony of individual writers among the Fathers. And a mere reference such as this, accompanied with unhesitating assertion, is not unfrequently found to satisfy or silence those who might be disposed to doubt. And while questions are eagerly discussed as to the degree of deference due to the "decisions of the universal Church," some preliminary questions are often overlooked: such as,—when, and where did any one visible Community, comprising all Christians as its members, exist? Does it exist still? Is its authority the same as formerly? And again, who are its rulers and other officers, rightfully claiming to represent Him who is the acknowledged Head of the Universal (or Catholic) Church, Jesus Christ, and to act as his *Vicegerents* on Earth? For, it is plain that no society that has a *supreme Governor*, can perform any act, *as a Society*, and in its corporate capacity, *without* that supreme Governor, either in person, or represented by some one clearly deputed by him, and invested with his authority. And a Bishop, Presbyter, or other officer, of any particular Church, although he is a *member* of the Universal Christian Church, and also a *Christian Ecclesiastical Ruler*, is not a Ruler *of* the Universal Church; his jurisdiction not extending beyond his particular Diocess, Province, or Church: any more than a *European King* is King *of* Europe. Who then are to be recognized as Rulers *of* (not merely, *in*) the Universal Church? Where (on Earth) is its central supreme government, such as every single Community must have? Who is the accredited organ empowered to pronounce its decrees, in the name of the whole Community? And where are these decrees registered?

Yet many persons are accustomed to talk familiarly of the decisions of the Catholic Church, as if there were some accessible record of them, such as we have of the Acts of any Legislative Body; and "as if there existed some recognized functionaries, regularly authorized to govern and to represent that community, the Church of Christ; and answering to the king—senate—or other constituted authorities, in any secular community. And yet no shadow of proof can be offered that the Church, in the above sense,—the Universal Church,—can possibly give any decision at all;—that it has any constituted authorities as the organs by which such decision could be framed or promulgated,—or, in short, that there is, or ever was, any *one community on earth*, recognized, or having any claim to be recognized, as the Universal Church, bearing rule over and comprehending all particular Churches.

"'We are wont to speak of the foundation of the Church,—the authority of the Church,—the various characteristics of the Church,—and the like,—as if the Church were, originally at least, One Society in all respects. From the period in which the Gospel was planted beyond the precincts of Judæa, this manifestly ceased to be the case; and as Christian societies were formed among people more and more unconnected and dissimilar in character and circumstances, the difficulty of considering the Church as One Society increases. Still, from the habitual and unreflecting use of this phrase, "the Church," it is no uncommon case to confound the two notions; and occasionally to speak of the various societies of Christians as *one*, occasionally, as *distinct* bodies. The mischief which has been grafted on this inadvertency in the use of the term, has already been noticed; and it is no singular instance of the enormous practical results which may be traced to mere ambiguity of expression. The Church is undoubtedly *one*, and so is the Human race *one*; but not as a *Society*. It was from the first composed of distinct societies; which were called one, because formed on common principles. It is One Society only when considered as to its *future* existence. The circumstance of its having one common Head, (Christ,) one Spirit, one Father, are points of unity which no more make the Church One Society on earth, than the circumstance of all men having the same Creator, and being derived from the same Adam, renders the Human Race one Family. That Scripture often speaks of Christians generally under the term, "the Church," is true; but if we wish fully to understand the force of the term so applied, we need only call to mind the frequent analogous use of ordinary historical language when no such doubt occurs. Take, for example Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It contains an account of the transactions of two opposed parties, each

made up of many distinct communities; on the one side were Democracies, on the other Oligarchies. Yet precisely the same use is made by the historian of the terms "the Democracy" and "Oligarchy," as we find Scripture adopting with regard to the term "the Church." No one is misled by these so as to suppose the Community of Athens *one* with that of Corcyra, or the Theban with the Lacedæmonian. When the heathen writer speaks of "the Democracy of" or "in" the various democratical States, we naturally understand him to mean distinct Societies *formed on similar principles;* and so, doubtless, ought we to interpret the sacred writers when they, in like manner, make mention of the Church of, or in, Antioch, Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, &c.

"'But there was also an especial reason why the term Church should have been often used by the sacred writers as if it applied to One Society. God's dispensation had hitherto been limited to a single society,—the Jewish People. Until the Gospel was preached, the Church of God *was* One Society. It therefore sometimes occurs with the force of a transfer from the objects of God's *former* dispensation, to those of his *present* dispensation. In like manner, as Christians are called "the Elect," their bodies "the Temple," and their Mediator "the High Priest;" so, their condition, as the objects of God's new dispensation, is designated by the term "the Church of Christ," and "the Church."

"'The Church is *one*, then, not as consisting of One Society, but, because the various societies, or Churches, were then modelled, and ought still to be so, on the same principles; and because they enjoy common privileges,—one Lord, one Spirit, one Baptism. Accordingly the Holy Ghost, through his agents the Apostles, has not left any detailed account of the formation of any Christian society; but He has very distinctly marked the great principles on which all were to be founded, whatever distinctions may exist amongst them. In short the foundation of the Church by the Apostles was not analogous to the work of Romulus, or Solon; it was not, properly, the foundation of Christian societies which occupied them, but the establishment of the principles on which Christians in all ages might form societies for themselves.'—*Encyclopædia Metropolitana.* "Age of the Apostolical Fathers," p. 774.

"The above account is sufficiently established even by the mere negative circumstance of the absence of all mention in the Sacred Writings of any *one* Society on earth, having a Government and officers of its own, and recognized as the Catholic or Universal Church: especially when it is considered that the frequent mention of the particular Churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, &c.,—of the seven Churches in Asia,—and of 'the care of all the Churches' which Paul had founded, would have rendered unavoidable the notice of the One Church (had there been any such) which bore rule over all the rest, either as its subjects, or as provincial departments of it.

"This negative evidence, I say, would alone be fully sufficient, considering that the whole burden of proof lies on the side of those who set up such a claim. He who appeals to the alleged decisions of a certain Community, is clearly bound, in the first place, to prove its existence. But if we proceed to historical evidence, we find on examination, that there *never was a time* when the supremacy of any one Church was acknowledged by all, or nearly all Christians. And to say they *ought* to have done so, and that as many as have refused such submission are to be regarded as schismatics and rebels, is evidently to prejudge the question.

"The Universal Church, then, being *one*, in reference not to any one Government on earth, but only to our Divine Head, even Christ, ruling Christians by his Spirit, which spoke to them from time to time through the Apostles while these were living, and speaks still in the words of the Christian Scriptures, it follows that each Christian is bound (as far as Church authority extends) to submit to the ordinances and decisions,—not repugnant to Scripture, (see Art. xxxiv.,) of the particular Church of which he is a member.

"If it were possible that all the Christians now in existence—suppose 250 millions—could assemble, either in person, or by deputation of their respective Clergy, in one place, to confer together: and that the votes, whether personal or by proxy, of 230 or 240 millions of these were to be at variance (as in many points they probably would be) with the decisions and practices of our own Church; we should be no more bound to acquiesce in and adopt the decision of that majority, even in matters which we do not regard as essential to the Christian Faith, than

we should be, to pass a law *for this realm*, because it was approved by the majority for the *human race*."*

Many persons are accustomed to speak as if a *majority* had some natural inherent right to control and to represent the *whole* of any Assembly or Class of persons. We are told of this or that being "held by *most* of the early Fathers;"—of the opinions or practices of "the *greater part* of the members of the early Church;"—of the "decision of the *majority* of" such and such a Council, &c. No doubt, *when other points are equal*, the judgment of a greater number deserves more consideration than that of a less; but a majority has no such controlling or representing power, except by *express*, arbitrary regulation and *enactment*; and regulations as to this point differ in different cases. Thus, the *decision of a Jury*, in England, is their *unanimous* decision; in Scotland, that of *two-thirds*; a decision of the House of Peers is that of a majority of those who are (personally, or by Proxy) *present*;—of the House of Commons,—of a majority in a House of not less than *forty*; &c. And when there is *no* express enactment or agreement on this point, nothing can fairly be called an opinion or decision of such and such persons, except one in which they *all* concur. When they do not, we then look, not merely to the *numbers*, but also to the *characters* and circumstances of each party.

Many again are misled by the twofold ambiguity in the phrase "Authority of the Catholic (or Universal) Church;" both "Authority," and "Church"† being often employed in more than one sense. Authority, in the sense, not of *power*,‡ but of a claim to *attention* and to deference, (more or less as the case may be,) belongs of course to the "Universal Church," meaning thereby not any *single Society*, but Christians generally throughout all regions;—the "Christian World," or (in modern phraseology) "the Christian Public." Whatever is, or has been, attested, or believed, or practised, by all of these, or by the greater part of them, or by several of those whom we may regard as the best and wisest among them,—is, of course, entitled to a degree of attentive and respectful consideration, greater or less according to the circumstances of each case.

It is in quite a different sense that we speak of the "Authority," for instance, of Parliament; meaning, of an *Act of Parliament*, regularly passed according to the prescribed forms, and claiming (if not at variance with the divine laws) submission—compliance—*obedience*; quite independent of any *approbation* on our part.

And yet one may find it asserted, as a matter that admits of no doubt, and is to be taken for granted, as "generally admitted, except by those trained in a modern school, that any particular Church *owes obedience* to the Universal Church, of which it is a part." Such assertions sometimes come from men of acknowledged learning; in reality far too learned not to be themselves well aware that there never *was*, since the days of the Apostles, any such Body *existing* as *could* claim, on the plea of being the recognized representative of the whole Christian World, this "obedience," from each particular Church; and hence, these bold assertions will often succeed in overawing the timid, in deceiving the ignorant and inconsiderate, and in satisfying the indolent.

The temptation, doubtless, is very strong—especially for those who would maintain doctrines or practices that are, seemingly at least, at variance with Scripture—to make an appeal to a standard that is inaccessible to the mass of mankind, and that is in all respects so vague; to a vast and *indefinite* number of writers, extending over a very long and *indefinite* space of time;—and to avail oneself of the awe-inspiring force of sacred names, by exhorting men, in the apparent language of Scripture*—(for no such passage really exists) to "hear the Church!"

* Essays, 4th Series, pp. 166—171.

† See Appendix, Note (K.)

‡ It is worthy of remark that *Power* (or Authority in that sense) in reference to *any particular act*, or decision, does not admit of *degrees*. A man may indeed have more or less power than another: that is, he may have rightful power to do something which another cannot: but with respect to any specified act, he either has the power, or he has it not. On the other hand, "Authority" in the sense of a *claim to deference*, admits of infinite degrees.

* Our Lord directs his disciples, in the event of a dispute between two individuals, to refer the matter, in the last resort, to the decision of the Congregation, Assembly, or Church (Ecclesia;) and that if any one *disobey* (or "refuse to hear," as our translators render it) this, he is to be regarded "as a heathen," &c., ὡσὰν τὰς ἐθνικὸς καὶ τελώνης. Those who adduce this passage, would, it may be presumed, have at least *preferred* bringing forward, if they could have found one, some passage of Scripture which does support their views.

§ 23. The readiness with which some persons acquiesce, at least profess to acquiesce, in supposed decisions of the Universal or Catholic Church, using the term in a sense in which it can even be proved that no such Community ever existed on Earth, and of General Councils, such as, in fact, never met, and of Traditions several of which are such as to need proof, first, how far they are genuine, and next, how far, if admitted to be genuine, they would be binding on all Christians,—this ready acquiescence, I say, is the more extraordinary, when we consider that many of the points which are attempted to be supported by an appeal to such authority, do, in fact, stand in no need of that support, but have a firm foundation in Scripture, by virtue of the powers plainly conferred by Christ Himself on Christian Communities.

Any forms, for instance, for Public Worship, and for the Ordaining of Christian Ministers, which "contain (as our Reformers maintain respecting those they sanctioned*) nothing that is in itself superstitious and contrary to God's Word," are plainly binding, by Christ's own sanction, on the members of the Church that appoints them.

But some, it should seem, are not satisfied with a *justification* of their own ordinances and institutions, unless they can find a plea for condemning all those who differ from them. And this plea they seek, not by endeavouring to show the superior expediency, with a view to decency, good order, and edification of the enactments they would defend, but by maintaining the obligatory character of supposed apostolical traditions; and then they are driven, as I have said, to shift our own institutions from the foundation on a rock, to place them on sand.

When one sees persons not content with the advantages they enjoy, unless they can exclude others, and in the attempt to do so, "falling into the midst of the pit they have digged for another," it is hardly possible to avoid recalling to one's mind the case of Haman, and the result of his jealousy of Mordecai.

Some persons have endeavoured, from time to time, to represent our Reformers as appealing to the practice of what is called the Primitive Church, and to the writings of the early Fathers, as the principal,—or as one principal—ground on which they rest the vindication of their own decisions; and as taking for their authoritative standard of rectitude and truth in religious matters, not Scripture alone, but Scripture combined and "blended with Tradition."

And it is very true that they do (as it was perfectly natural they should, engaged as they were in controversy with the Romanists) frequently refer to the records which their opponents appealed to, in order to show that the very authorities these last were accustomed to rely on, are in fact opposed to them. They point out the proofs extant that many doctrines and practices which *had been made to rest on supposed ancient* tradition, were in fact comparatively modern innovations; and they vindicate themselves from the charge of *innovation* in some points by referring to ancient precedents. All this is perfectly natural and perfectly justifiable. But it is quite a different thing from acknowledging a decisive authority in early precedents, and in Tradition, either alone, or "blended with Scripture."* If any man is charged with introducing an *unscriptural novelty*, and he shows first that it is *scriptural*, and then, (by reference to the opinions of those who lived long ago) that it is *no novelty*, it is most unreasonable to infer that Scripture authority would have no weight with him unless backed by the opinions of fallible men.

No one would reason thus absurdly in any other case. For instance, when some bill is brought into one of the Houses of Parliament, and it is represented by its opponents as of a *novel* and unheard-of character, it is common, and natural, and allowable, for its advocates to cite instances of similar Acts formerly passed. Now, how absurd it would be thought for any one thence to infer that those who use such arguments must mean to imply that Parliament has no power to pass an

* Article xxxvi.

* The maxim of "abundans cautela nocet nemini" is by no means a safe one if applied without limitation. See Logic, b. ii. ch. 5, § 6.)

It is sometimes imprudent (and some of our Divines have, I think, committed this imprudence) to attempt to "make assurance doubly sure" by bringing forward confirmatory reasons, which, though in themselves perfectly fair, may be interpreted unfairly, by representing them as an acknowledged *indispensable* foundation;—by assuming, for instance, that an appeal to such and such of the ancient Fathers or Councils, in confirmation of some doctrine or practice, is to be understood as an admission that it would fall to the ground if *not* so confirmed.

Act unless it can be shown that similar Acts have been passed formerly!

If any Bishop of the present day should be convinced that such and such Theologians,—ancient and modern—had given correct and useful expositions of certain parts of Scripture, he could not but wish that the Clergy he ordained should give similar expositions; and he would probably recommend to their attentive perusal the works of those theologians. Now how monstrous it would be to represent him, on such grounds, as making those works a *standard of faith conjointly* with Scripture!

Of a like character is the very reference I have now been making to the documents put forth by those Reformers themselves. I certainly believe them to be in accordance with the principles above laid down as scriptural and reasonable: but I protest (and so probably would they) against blending with Scripture" the writings of the Reformers, to constitute jointly a rule of faith binding on every Christian's conscience. If any one is convinced that the doctrines and practices and institutions of our Church are unscriptural, he is bound in conscience to leave it.

Our Reformers believed, no doubt, that their institutions were, on the whole, similar to those of the earliest Churches; perhaps they may have believed this similarity to be greater than it really is; but what is the *ground* on which they rested the claim of these institutions to respectful acquiescence? On the ground of their "not being in themselves superstitious, and ungodly, and *contrary to God's Word;*"—on the ground of the "power of each particular Church to ordain and abrogate or alter" (though not wantonly and inconsiderately) Church-rites and ceremonies, provided nothing be done contrary to Scripture. So also, they believed, no doubt, that the doctrines they taught, and which they commissioned others to teach, were such as had been taught by many early Fathers; and thinking this, they could not but wish that the teaching of the Clergy should coincide with that of those Fathers: but what was the *rule* laid down,—the standard fixed on, for ascertaining what should be taught as a part of the Christian Religion? It was Holy Scripture; not Scripture and Tradition, jointly and "blended together;" but the Written Word of God; nothing being allowed to be taught as an Article of faith that could not thence be proved. Again, they doubtless believed that there were early precedents for the form of Church-government they maintained,—for the different Orders of the Ministry, and for the mode of appointing each. They believed, no doubt, as a fact, that the Apostles ordained Ministers, and these others, and so on in succession, down to the then-existing period. But what was the basis on which they deliberately chose to rest their system? On the declared principle that "those and those only are to be accounted as lawfully appointed Ministers who are called and sent out by *those who have authority* in the Congregation" (or Church) "to call and send labourers into the Lord's vineyard:" and though themselves deliberately adhering to episcopal Ordination, they refrain, both in the Article on the "Church" and in that on "ministering in the Church" from specifying Episcopacy and episcopal Ordination as among the essentials.

§ 24. Some *individuals* among the Reformers have in some places used language which may be understood as implying a more strict obligation to conform to ancient precedents than is acknowledged in the Articles. But the Articles being deliberately and *jointly* drawn up for the very purpose of precisely determining what it was designed should be determined respecting the points they treat of, and in order to supply to the Anglican Church their Confession of Faith on those points, it seems impossible that any man of ingenuous mind can appeal from the Articles, Liturgy, and Rubric, put forth as the authoritative *declarations of the Church*, to any other writings, whether by the same or by other authors.*

* Articles XIX. XX. XXIII. XXXIV. XXXVI.

"XIX. *Of the Church.*—The visible Church of Christ ["ecclesia Christi visibilis est," &c. evidently *A* visible Church of Christ is *a* congregation, &c.] is a congregation of faithful 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.

"As the Church of *Jerusalem, Alexandria* and *Antioch*, have erred; so also the Church of *Rome* hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

"XX. *Of the Authority of the Church.*—The Church hath power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it n[ot]

On the contrary, the very circumstances that opinions going far beyond what the Articles express, or in other respects considerably differing from them, did exist, and were *well known and current*, in the days of our reformers, gives even the *more* force to their *deliberate omissions* of these, and their distinct declaration of what they do mean to maintain. It was not hastily and unadvisedly that they based the doctrines of their Church on "the pure Word of God," and the claim of their Church to the character of a Christian Community, on its being a "Congregation of believers, in which that pure word is preached, and the Christian Sacraments duly administered."

Whatever therefore may have been the private opinion of any individuals among their number, they have declared plainly what it was they *agreed* in regarding as a safe and sufficient foundation, and as essential, and consequently requiring to be set forth and embodied in the Symbol or Creed of their Church.

But neither the Reformers of our Church, nor any other human being, could frame any expressions such as not to admit of being explained away, or the consequences of them somehow evaded, by an ingenious person who should resolutely set himself to the task. And accordingly our Church has been represented as resting her doctrines and her claims on Scripture and Tradition *jointly*, and "blended" together.

We have been told for instance of a person held up as a model of *pure Anglican Church principles*, that he "submitted to the decision of inspiration *wherever* it was to be found, whether in Scripture or Antiquity." And again we have been told that "Rome differs from us as to the *authority* which she ascribes to tradition: she regards it as *co*-ordinate, our divines as *sub*-ordinate; as *to the way in which it is to be employed*, she, as *independent* of Holy Scripture; ours, as *subservient* to, and blended with it: as *to its limits*, she supposes that the Church of Rome has the power of imposing new articles necessary to be believed for salvation; ours, that all such articles were comprised at first in the Creed, and that the Church has only the power of clearing, defining, and expounding these fixed articles."

Now whether the above description be a correct one as far as regards the tenets of the Church of Rome, I do not pretend to decide, nor does it belong to my present purpose to inquire: but the description of the tenets of the Anglican Church, is such as I feel bound to protest against. If indeed by "*us*" and "*our divines*" is to be understood certain individuals who profess adherence to the Church of England, the above description is, no doubt, very correct as far as relates to THEM: but if it be meant that such are the tenets of our Church itself as set forth in its authoritative Confession of Faith,—the Articles,—nothing can be more utterly unfounded, and indeed more opposite to the truth. Our Church not only does *not* "blend Scripture with Tradition," but takes the most scrupulous care to *distinguish* from every thing else the Holy Scriptures, as the sufficient and sole authoritative standard.

Our Reformers do not merely *omit* to ascribe to any Creed or other statement

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to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

"XXIII. *Of Ministering in the Congregation.*—It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

"XXXIV. *Of the Traditions of the Church.*—It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offendeth against the common order of the church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.

"Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.

"XXXVI. *Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers.*—The Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops, and Ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth, and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, doth contain all things necessary to such consecration and Ordering: neither hath it any thing that of itself is superstitious and ungodly. And therefore whosoever are consecrated or ordered according to the Rites of that Book, since the second year of the forenamed King Edward unto this time, or hereafter shall be consecrated or ordered according to the same Rites; we decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordered."

of any doctrine, an *intrinsic* authority, or one derived from tradition, but in the Article on the three Creeds,* they *take care distinctly to assign the ground* on which those are to be retained; viz., that "they may be proved by Holy Writ."

§ 25. As for the distinction drawn between making Tradition on the one hand "an authority *co-ordinate with* Scripture," on the other hand "*subordinate and blended with* Scripture," I cannot but think it worse than nugatory.† The latter doctrine I have no scruple in pronouncing the worse of the two; because while it virtually comes to the same thing, it is more insidious, and less likely to alarm a mind full of devout reverence for Scripture.

When men are told of points of faith which they are to receive on the authority of Tradition alone, quite independently of any Scripture warrant, they are not unlikely to shrink from this with doubt or a disgust, which they are often relieved from at once, by a renunciation, in words, of such a claim, and by being assured that Scripture is the supreme Authority, and that Tradition is to be received as its handmaid only,—as not independent of it, but "subordinate and blended with it." And yet if any or every part of Scripture is to be interpreted according to a supposed authoritative Tradition, and from that interpretation there is to be *no appeal*, it is plain that, to all practical purposes, this comes to the same thing as an independent Tradition. For on this system, any thing may be made out of any thing. The Jews may resort, whenever it suits their purpose, (and often do,) to an appeal to their Scriptures INTERPRETED *according to their tradition*, in behalf of any thing they are disposed to maintain. I remember conversing some years ago with an educated Jew on the subject of some of their observances, and remarking, in the course of the conversation, that their prohibition of eating butter and flesh at the same meal, rested, I supposed, not like several other prohibitions, on the Mosaic written Laws, but on Tradition alone. No, he assured me it was prohibited in the Law. I dare say my readers would be as much at a loss as I was, to guess where. He referred me to Exod. xxiii. 19.

In like manner, if any ordinary student of Scripture declares that he finds no warrant there for believing in the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and that he finds on the contrary our Lord Himself declaring that "it is the *Spirit* that quickeneth," (giveth life;) "the *flesh profiteth nothing*," he is told that Tradition directs us to interpret literally the words "This is my Body," and that he must not presume to set up his "private judgment" against the interpretation, and this, when perhaps he is assured by the same person, on similar grounds, that "the whole Bible is one great Parable!"

If again he finds the Apostles ordaining Elders, (Presbyters,) and never alluding to any person, except Christ Himself, as bearing any such office in the Christian Church as that of the Levitical Priest, (Hiereus) he is told, on the authority of Tradition, which he must not dispute, that Presbyter means Hiereus, a sacrificing Priest. Mahomet's application to himself of the prophecy of Jesus, that He would "send another Paraclete" or Comforter, was received by his followers on similar grounds; that is, it was an interpretation which he chose to put on the words; and woe to him who should dispute it!

If again we find the whole tenor of Scripture opposed to invocation of Saints, and Image-worship, we may be told that there is a kind of invocation of Saints which the Scriptures, as interpreted by Tradition, allow and encourage. And so on, to an indefinite extent; just as effectually, and almost as easily, as if Tradition had been set up independent of Scripture, instead of being "blended with it."*

* Nor, by the way, is it true that our Church has declared, in that, or in any other Article, "that all such Articles as are necessary to be believed for Salvation were comprised at first in the [Apostles'] Creed. This, in fact, is neither done, nor was intended to be done, by the framers of that Creed; if at least they held—as I doubt not they did—*the doctrine of the Atonement*: for *this* is *not at all mentioned* in the Apostles' Creed. The cause, I have no doubt, was that the doctrine had not in the earliest ages been *disputed*. But at any rate, the fact is certain, that the Creed does dwell on the reality of the historical transaction only, the actual *death* of Christ, without asserting *for whom* or *for what* He suffered death.

† It is not meant to be implied that all persons who take this view are, themselves, disposed to join the Romish Church, or to think little of the differences between that and their own. Distinctions may be felt as important by *one* person, *which* may appear to *others*, and may really be, utterly insignificant. The members, for instance, of the Russian branch, at least, of the Greek Church, are said to abhor *image*-worship, while they pay to *pictures* an adoration which Protestants would regard as equally superstitious.

* See Powell on Tradition, § 14–17.

"Tradition" and "Church interpretaon" are made, according to this system, ubordinate to, and dependent on Scripure, much in the same way that some arasite plants are dependent on the trees at support them. The parasite at first lings to, and rests on the tree, which it radually overspreads with its own bliage, till by little and little, it weakens nd completely smothers it:

"Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma."

And it may be added that the insidious haracter of this system is still further ncreased, if the principle be laid down vithout following it out, at once, into all he most revolting consequences that may ollow, and that have followed, from its doption. For by this means a contrast s drawn between the most extravagant, nd a far more moderate, system of falseood and superstition; and it is insinuted that this favourable contrast is the esult of the one being built on "coordinate" and the other on "subordiate" Tradition; the real difference being nly that every usurped and arbitrary ower, is usually *exercised with comparave leniency at first*, till it has been well stablished. Let but the *principle* which common to both systems be estabshed; and the one may be easily made answer all the purposes of the other.

And all this time the advocates of this uthoritative tradition may loudly prolaim that they require no assent to any ning but what "may be proved by cripture;" that is, proved *to them;* and hich, on the ground of *their* conviction, ust be implicitly received by every man. is most important,—when the expresion is used of "referring to Scripture as ne infallible standard," and requiring ssent to such points of faith only as can e thence proved, to settle clearly, in the utset, the important question, "proved *whom?*" If any man or Body of men efer us to Scripture, as the sole authoriative standard, meaning that we are not be called on to believe any thing as a ecessary point of faith, on their word, ut only on *our own* conviction that it is criptural, then they place our faith on ne basis, not of human authority, but of ivine. But if they call on *us*, as a point f conscience, to receive whatever is roved to *their* satisfaction from Scripures, even though it may appear to *us* nscriptural, then, instead of releasing us om the usurped authority of Man taking ne place of God, they are placing on us two burdens instead of one. "You require us," we might reply, "to believe, first, that whatever you teach is *true;* and secondly, besides this, to believe also, that it is a truth *contained in Scripture;* and we are to *take your word* for both!"

§ 26. I can imagine persons urging, in reply to what has been said, the importance of giving the people religious instruction over and above the mere reading of Scripture—the utility of explanations and comments,—and the necessity of creeds and catechisms, &c.; and dwelling also on the reverence due to antiquity, and on the arrogancy of disregarding the judgment of pious and learned men, especially of such as lived in or near the times of the Apostles.

It is almost superfluous to remark that nothing at variance with all this has been here advanced. The testimony of ancient writers as to the facts, that such and such doctrines or practices did or did not prevail in their own times, or that such and such a sense was, in their times, conveyed by certain passages of Scripture, may often be very valuable; provided we keep clear of the mistake of inferring, either that whatever is ancient is to be supposed apostolical, or even necessarily, *in accordance* with apostolical teaching; (as if errors had not crept in, even during the lifetime* of the Apostles,) or again, that every practice and regulation that really had the sanction of the Apostles (and which, therefore, must be concluded to have been the best, *at that time*) was designed by them, —when they abstained [see § 16] from recording it in writing,—to be of universal and eternal obligation;—in short, that they entrusted to *oral Tradition* any of the *essentials* of Christianity.† And, again, the opinions of any author, ancient or modern, are entitled to respectful consideration in proportion as he may have been a sensible, pious, and learned man: provided we draw the line distinctly between the works of divine messengers inspired from above, and those of fallible men.

But what is the object (unless it be to

* See Appendix, Note (L.)

† And yet one may find persons defending this view by alleging that we have the Scriptures themselves by Tradition. Any one may be believed to be serious in urging such an argument, if it is found that he places as much confidence in the genuineness of some account that has been transmitted from *mouth to mouth by popular rumours* from one end of the kingdom to another, as in a *letter* that has been transmitted over the same space. See Appendix, Note (K.)

mystify the readers, and draw off their attention from the real question) of dwelling on truths which are universally admitted,* not only in theory but in practice, by Christians of every denomination? Catechisms, oral or written,—expositions of Scripture—religious discourses or tracts, of some kind or other, &c., are in use, more or less, among all. The utility, and indeed necessity, of human instruction, both for young Christians and adults, has never, that I know of, been denied by any Christian Church or denomination. The only important distinction is between those who do, and those who do not, permit, and invite, and encourage their hearers to "search the Scriptures whether these things be so," which they are taught by their pastors.

It is to be observed, however, that what I am speaking of is a reference to Scripture, as the *sole basis* of the articles of necessary faith,—the only *decisive authority*.

Some persons, while claiming reception for such and such confessions of faith, declare continually and with much earnestness, that they are teaching nothing but what is "*conformable* to Scripture," "*agreeable* to Scripture," &c. And the unwary are often misled by not attending to the important distinction between this,—between what is simply *agreeable* to Scripture,—and what is *derived from* Scripture,—*founded* on it, and claiming no other authority.

When it is said that the Old Testament and the New are *not at variance*, but *conformable* to each other, this is quite different from saying that either of them *derives all its authority* from the other. On the other hand, our Reformers do not maintain merely that the Creeds which they receive *are agreeable to Scripture;* but that they are to be received *because* they may be proved from Scripture.

The distinction, as I have above remarked, is apparent only, and not really important, between those who require the acceptance of what they teach, independently of Scripture, and those who do refer to Scripture as the ground of their *own* conviction, or at least as confirmatory of their teaching, but require *their* interpretations of Scripture to be implicitly received; denying to individuals the right and the duty* of judging ultimately for themselves. The real distinction is between those who do, and those who do not recognize this right and duty. For if a certain comment is to be received implicitly and without appeal, it not only is placed, practically, as far as relates to every thing except a mere question of *dignity*, on a level with Scripture,† but has also a strong—and as experience has abundantly proved,—an increasing tendency to supersede it. A regular and compact *system* of theology, professedly compiled from Scripture, or from "Scripture and Tradition blended together,"‡ if it be that which, after all, we must acquiesce in as infallible, whether it accord or not with what appears to *us* to be the sense of Scripture, being more compendious and methodical than the Sacred Books themselves, will naturally be preferred by the learner. And all study, properly so called, of the rest of Scripture,—(for on the above supposition, such a comment would be itself a part of Scripture, infallible and divinely inspired, as much as the rest)—all lively interest in

* It is no uncommon practice with some writers, to shelter (as in the present instance) some paradoxical tenet, when opposed, under the guise of a *truism;* and, when this has been admitted without suspicion, to unmask the battery as it were, and by a seemingly slight change, to convert a self-evident and insignificant truth into a dogma of fearful importance. Thus for instance, when we are sometimes told, with much solemn earnestness, of the importance of holding fast "the faith of the Holy Catholic Church," this is explained as being "what has been held by *all* Christians, *always*, and *every where*:" ["quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus:"] and of course no one can think of denying that what has always been held *universally* by all Christians is a part of their faith, must be a part of the *universal* [or Catholic] faith. There "needs no ghost to tell us that;" as it is in fact only saying that "Catholic" means "Universal," and that what is believed is believed. But when the wooden horse has been introduced, it is found to contain armed men concealed within it. "All Christians" is explained to mean "all the orthodox;" and the "orthodox" to be, those in agreement with the authors who are instructing us.

* See Dr. Hawkins on the Duty of Private Judgment.

† Among the Parliamentarians at the time of the Civil War, there were many,—at first a great majority,—who professed to obey the King's commands, as *notified to them by Parliament*, and levied forces in the King's name, against his person. If any one admitted Parliament to be the sole and authoritative interpreter and expounder of the regal commands, and this, without any check from any other power, it is plain that he virtually admitted the sovereignty of that Parliament, just as much as if he had recognized their formal deposition of the King. The parallelism of this case with the one before us is too obvious to need being dwelt on.

‡ See Essay (Third Series) on "Undue Reliance on Human Authority."

the perusal,—would be nearly superseded by such an inspired compendium of doctrine; to which alone, as being far the most convenient for that purpose, habitual reference would be made in any question that might arise. Both would be regarded, indeed, as of divine authority; but the compendium, as the fused and purified metal; the other, as the *mine*, containing the crude ore.

§ 27. The uses are so important, and the abuses so dangerous, of the instruction which may be afforded by uninspired Christian teachers, that it may be worth while still farther to illustrate the subject by an analogy, homely perhaps and undignified, but which appears to me perfectly apposite, and fitted by its very familiarity to answer the better its purpose of affording explanation.

The utility of what is called paper currency is universally acknowledged and perceived. Without possessing any intrinsic value, it is a convenient representative of coins and ingots of the precious metals. And it possesses this character, from its being known or confidently believed, that those who issue it are ready, on demand, to exchange it for those precious metals. And the occurrence, from time to time, of this demand, and the constant liability to it, are the great *check* to an over issue of the paper money. But if paper money be made a legal tender and not convertible into gold and silver at the pleasure of the holder—if persons are required to receive it in payment, by an arbitrary decree of the Government, either that paper *shall* be considered as having an intrinsic value, or again, that it shall be considered as representing bullion, or land,* or some other intrinsically valuable commodity, the existence and amount of which, and the ability of Government to produce it, are to be believed, not by the test of any one's demanding and obtaining payment, but *on the word of the very government* that issues this inconvertible paper currency, then the consequences which ensue are well known. The precious metals gradually disappear, and a profusion of worthless paper alone remains.

Even so it is with human teaching in religion. It is highly useful, as long as the instructers refer the People to Scripture, exhorting and assisting them to "prove all things and hold fast that which is right;"—as long as the Church "ordains nothing contrary to God's word,"—nothing, in short, beyond what a Christian Community is authorized both by the essential character of a Community, and by Christ's sanction, to enact; and requires nothing to be believed as a point of Christian faith "that may not be declared"* (*i. e.* satisfactorily proved) to be taken from Holy Scripture. But when a Church or any of its Pastors ceases to make this payment on demand—if I may so speak—of Scripture-proof,† and requires implicit faith, on human authority, in human dogmas or interpretations, all *check* is removed to the introduction of any conceivable amount of falsehood and superstition; till human inventions may have overlaid and disfigured Gospel truth, and Man's usurped authority have gradually superseded divine: even as was the case with the rabbinical Jews, who continued to profess the most devout reverence for the Mosaic Law, even at the time when we are told that "in vain they worshipped God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."‡

§ 28. It is worth remarking also that the persons who make this use of Tradition are often found distinctly advocating the deliberate suppression, in the instruction of the great mass of Christians, of a large portion of the Gospel doctrines which are the most earnestly set forth in Scripture; as a sort of esoteric mystery, of which ordinary believers are unworthy, and which should be "reserved" as a reward for a long course of pious submission. This system of "reserve" or "economy" is vindicated, by studiously confounding it with the *gradual* initiation of Christians in the knowledge of their religion, in proportion as they are "able to bear it;" *i. e.* able and willing to understand each point that is presented to their minds: and the necessity of gradual teaching,—of reading the first line of a passage before the second,—and the care requisite to avoid teaching any thing which, though true in itself, would be falsely understood by the hearers, is thus confounded with the system of withholding a portion of Gospel truth from those

* This was the case with the Assignats and Mandats of France.

* The Word "declared" is likely to mislead the English reader, from its being ordinarily used in the present day in a different sense. The Latin "declarare" of which it was evidently intended to to be a translation, signifies "to make clear"—"to set forth plainly."

† See Appendix, Note (M.)

‡ See Dr. Hawkins on Tradition.

able and willing to receive it;—the system of "shunning to set before men all the counsel of God," and of having one kind of religion for the initiated few, and another for the mass of the Christian World. Very different was the Apostle Paul's Gospel, which he assures us, if it was hid, was hid from them that are lost," (men on the road to destruction, ἀπολλυμένοις,) "whom the god of this world hath blinded."

But the charge of teaching something different from what they inwardly believe, the advocates of this system repel, by alleging that all they do teach is agreeable to Scripture, although they withhold a part, and do not teach *all* that is to be found in Scripture: as if this did not as effectually constitute two different religions as if they had added on something of their own. For, by expunging or suppressing at pleasure, that which remains may become totally different from what the religion would have been if exhibited as a whole.

It has been remarked that every statue existed in the block of marble from which it was carved; and that the Sculptor merely *discloses* it, by removing the superfluous portions;—that the Medicean Venus, for instance, has not in it a single particle which did not originally exist exactly in the same relative position as now; the artist having *added* nothing, but merely *taken away*. Yet the statue is as widely different a thing from the original block, as if something *had* been added. What should we think of a man's pleading that such an image is not contemplated in the commandment against *making* an image, because it is not "made," as if it had been moulded, or cast, out of materials *brought together* for the purpose? Should any one scruple to worship a moulded, but not a sculptured image, his scruple would not be more absurdly misplaced, than if he should hold himself bound, in his teaching, not to *add on* to Scripture any thing he did *not* believe to be true, but allowed to suppress any portions of Gospel truth at his pleasure, and to exhibit to his People the remaining portions, as the whole system of their religion.

It may be added also, that as a Christian teacher is not authorized either to suppress any portion of the Gospel as unfit for those disposed and able to receive it, or to inculcate as an essential portion of it, any thing not revealed in Scripture, but dependent on Tradition, whether alone or "blended with Scripture," so, he ought not to insist on the acceptance, as essential, of any thing which, even though it may be satisfactorily proved from Scripture, yet it is so slightly hinted at there, that till attention has been called to it, and the arguments by which it is supported brought together, whole Churches for whole generations together may have studied Scripture without finding it. I do not say that nothing of this character *should be maintained*, and supported by arguments which may satisfactorily prove it; but it should not be *maintained as something necessary* to Salvation, unless it is *clearly* revealed to an ordinary reader of candid mind.

For instance, there are some who think that an intermediate state of consciousness,—and others, of unconsciousness,—between death and the resurrection,—may be proved from Scripture; but I cannot think it justifiable to represent *either* opinion as an essential *article of faith*.

Again, *the call of the Gentiles* to be partakers with the Jews of the privileges of God's People, and the *termination of the Mosaic dispensation*, are *contained*, but not *clearly* revealed, in the Old Testament, and in the discourses of our Lord; these doctrines are not so *obviously* contained there, as to make them an essential part of the Jewish faith. This, therefore, was a case in which a *fresh and distinct declaration*, supported by miraculous evidence, was fairly to be expected: and *this was accordingly afforded*. A distinct miraculous revelation was made to the Apostle Peter as to this very point.*

§ 29. In saying that the essential doctrines of Christianity are to be found in Scripture, or may be satisfactorily proven from it, and that the enactments of any Church, with a view to good government, "decency and order," derive a sufficient authority *from that very circumstance*, inasmuch as the Apostle commands us to "do all things decently and in order," and our Heavenly Master has given power to "bind and loose" in respect to such regulations, I do not mean to imply that such reasons always *will*, in fact, prove satisfactory to careless and uncandid reasoners—to the fanciful, the wilful, and

* According to our Lord's promise respecting the Holy Spirit:—He shall teach you all things, and *bring all things to your remembrance*," &c.

the arrogant. But nothing is in reality gained by endeavouring to add force to sound reasons by the addition of unsound ones. To seek, when men will not listen to valid arguments, for some other arguments which they *will* listen to will, I am convinced, (to say nothing of its unfairness,) be found in the end to be unwise policy.

Yet I cannot but suspect that the principles I have been deprecating must have been sometimes maintained by persons not altogether blind to the inconsistent consequences they lead to, but actuated by a desire of impressing on the minds of the multitude not only an additional confidence in the doctrines of our Church, but also that reverence, which is so often found to be deficient, for Church institutions and enactments, and for regularly ordained Christian Ministers: and that they have been influenced by a dread of certain consequences as following from an adherence to what I have pointed out as the only sound and secure principles.*

For instance, it has been thought dangerous to acknowledge a power in any Body of uninspired men to depart in the smallest degree from the recorded precedents of the earliest Churches: including (be it remembered by the way) those existing after the times of the Apostles, and therefore consisting, themselves, of uninspired men. And a danger there certainly is; a danger of the mis-use of any power, privilege, or liberty, trusted to any one. The Christian course is beset by dangers. They are an essential part of our trial on Earth. We are required to be on our guard against them; but we must never expect, here below, to be exempt from them. And there is nothing necessarily gained by exchanging one danger for another; the danger of erring in our own judgment, for that of following imperfect, uncertain or corrupted traditions.

But to maintain the right of any Community—a Church among others—to establish, abrogate, or alter, regulations and institutions of any kind, is understood by some as amounting to an *approval* of every thing that either ever *has* been done, or conceivably *might* be done, by virtue of that claim; as if a sanction were thus given to perpetual changes, the most rash, uncalled for, and irrational. But what is left to men's *discretion*, is not therefore meant to be left to their *in*discretion. To maintain that a power exists, is not to maintain either that it matters not how it is used, or again that it cannot possibly be abused.

The absurdity of such a mode of reasoning would be at once apparent in any other case. For instance, the Senate, Parliament, or other legislative Body of this or any other country, has clearly a *right* to pass or to reject any proposed law that is brought before it; and has an *equal right* to do the one or the other; now no one in his senses would understand by this, that it is *equally right* to do the one or the other:—that whatever is left to the legislator's decision, must be a matter of absolute indifference; and that whatever is to be determined by his *judgment*, may fairly be determined according to his *caprice*.

A Church,—and the same may be said of a State,—may so far abuse its power, and exceed the just limits of that power, as to make enactments which a man may be bound in conscience to disobey; as, for instance, if either an ecclesiastical or civil Government should command men (as the Roman Emperors did the early Christians) to join in acts of idolatrous worship; or (as was done towards the Saxon Clergy) to put away their wives. But this does not do away the truth of the general assertion that "the Powers that be are ordained of God;"—that both civil and ecclesiastical Governments have a right to make enactments that are *not* contrary to religion or morality.

And again; even these enactments,—such as a State or a Church does possess

* For instance, the view taken (see *Thoughts on the Sabbath*) of the Lord's Day, as a Church festival observed in memory of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, and not in compliance with the Mosaic Law, I have seen objected to, on the ground that "men are apt not to pay so much deference to the enactments of the Church, as to express commands of Scripture." That is to say, although the Mosaic Law be *not* really binding on Christians (for, if it were, and the observance of the Lord's day were a part of it, *that* would supersede all need of other arguments) yet it is advisable to teach men that it *is*, in order that they may be the more ready to observe the Lord's Day. The Church therefore is to be represented,—and that to men who, by supposition, are disposed to *undervalue* Church authority,—as having taken the liberty to *alter* a divine commandment of acknowledged obligation, by changing the *seventh* day of the week to the *first* (besides alterations in the mode of observance) in compliance with a supposed tradition, that the Apostles sanctioned—which it is plain from Scripture they did not—this transference of the Sabbath. This is surely expecting an *unreasonable* deference for Church authority from men who, it is supposed, are unwilling to yield to it such a deference as is *reasonable*.

a right to make,—it is not only conceivable, but highly probable, that there will be some which may appear to many persons, and perhaps with reason, to be not the very wisest and best. In such a case, a man is bound to do his best towards the alteration of those laws:* but he is not, in the mean time, exempted from obedience to laws which he may not fully approve.† For supposing his objections to any law to be well founded, still, as infallibility does not exist among men, all Professions and precepts relative to the duty of submission to Government would be nugatory, if that duty were to be suspended and remain in abeyance, till an unerring government should arise.

If any one, accordingly, is convinced that a certain Church is essentially unscriptural, he cannot with a sound conscience belong to its communion. But he may consistently adhere to it, even though he should be of opinion that in some non-essential points it has adopted regulations which are not the most expedient. He may still consistently hold these to be binding, as coming from a competent authority; though he may wish that they had been, or that they should be, settled otherwise.

§ 30. But as there are some persons who are too ready to separate from any religious Community on slight grounds, or even through mere caprice, to "heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears," it has been thought,—or at least maintained,—that the only way of affording complete satisfaction and repose to the scrupulous, and of repressing schism, is to uphold, under the title of "Church principles," the doctrine that no one is a member of Christ's Church, and an heir of the covenanted Gospel promises, who is not under a Ministry ordained by Bishops descended in an unbroken chain from the Apostles.

Now what is the degree of satisfactory assurance that is thus afforded to the scrupulous consciences of any members of an Episcopal Church? If a man consider it as highly *probable* that the *particular Minister* at whose hands he receives the sacred Ordinances is really thus apostolically descended, *this* is the very utmost point to which he can, with any semblance of reason, attain: and the more he reflects and inquires, the more cause for hesitation he will find. There is not a Minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree. The sacramental virtue (for such it is, that is implied,—whether the term be used or not in the principle I have been speaking of) dependent on the imposition of hands, with a due observance of apostolical usages, by a Bishop, himself duly consecrated, after having been in like manner baptized into the Church, and ordained Deacon and Priest,—this sacramental virtue, if a single link of the chain be faulty, must, on the above principles, be utterly nullified ever after, in respect of all the links that hang on that one. For if a Bishop has not been duly consecrated, or had not been, previously, rightly ordained, his Ordinations are null; and so are the ministrations of those ordained by him; and their Ordination of others; (supposing any of the persons ordained by him to attain to the episcopal office) and so on, without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite and irremediable extent.

And who can undertake to pronounce that during that long period usually designated as the Dark Ages, no such taint ever was introduced? Irregularities could not have been wholly excluded without a perpetual miracle; and that no such miraculous interference existed, we have even historical proof. Amidst the numerous corruptions of doctrine and of practice, and gross superstitions, that crept in, during those ages, we find recorded descriptions not only of the profound ignorance and profligacy of life, of many of the Clergy, but also of the grossest irregularities in respect of discipline and form. We read of Bishops consecrated when mere children;—of men officiating who barely knew their letters—of Prelates expelled, and others put into their places, by violence;—of illiterate and profligate laymen, and habitual drunkards, admitted to Holy Orders; and in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder, and reckless disregard of the decency which the Apostle enjoins. It is inconceivable that any one even moderately acquainted with history, can feel a certainty, or any approach to certainty, that, amidst all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to, by men, many of them openly profane and secular, unrestrained by public opinion, through the gross ignorance of the population

* See "Appeal in behalf of Church Government;" (Houlston;) a very able pamphlet.

† See Sermon on Obedience to Laws.

among which they lived; and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained was admitted to sacred offices.

Even in later and more civilized and enlightened times, the probability of an irregularity, though very greatly diminished, is yet diminished only, and not absolutely destroyed. Even in the memory of persons living, there existed a Bishop concerning whom there was so much mystery and uncertainty prevailing as to when, where, and by whom he had been ordained, that doubts existed in the mind, of many persons whether he had ever been ordained at all. I do not say that there was good ground for the suspicion: but I speak of the fact, that it did prevail; and that the circumstances of the case were such as to make manifest the *possibility* of such an irregularity occurring under such circumstances.

Now, let any one proceed on the hypothesis that there are, suppose, but a hundred links connecting any particular minister with the Apostles, and let him even suppose that not above half of this number pass through such periods as admit of any possible irregularity; and then, placing at the lowest estimate the probability of defectiveness in respect of each of the remaining fifty, taken separately, let him consider what amount of probability will result from the *multiplying* of the whole together.* The ultimate consequence must be, that any one who sincerely believes that his claim to the benefits of the Gospel-Covenant depends on his own Minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true Ordination, and this again, on perfect Apostolical Succession as above described, must be involved, in proportion as he reads, and inquires, and reflects, and reasons on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the advocates of this theory studiously disparage reasoning, deprecate all exercise of the mind in reflection, decry appeals to evidence, and lament that even the power of reading should be imparted to the People. It is not without cause that they dread and lament "an Age of too much light," and wish to involve religion in "a solemn and awful gloom."* It is not without cause that, having removed the Christian's confidence from a rock, to base it on sand, they forbid all prying curiosity to examine their foundation.

The fallacy, indeed, by which, according to the above principles, the Christian is taught to rest his own personal hopes of salvation on the individual claims to "Apostolical succession" of the particular Minister he is placed under, is one so gross that few are thoughtless enough to be deceived by it in any case where Religion is not concerned;—where, in short, a man has not been taught to make a virtue of uninquiring, unthinking acquiescence. For the fallacy consists in confounding together the unbroken Apostolical succession of *a Christian Ministry generally*, and the same succession, in an unbroken line, of *this or that individual Minister*. The existence of such an *Order of Men as Christian Ministers*, continuously from the time of the Apostles to this day, is perhaps as complete a moral certainty, as any historical fact can be; because (independently of the various incidental notices by historians, of such a class of persons) it is plain that if, at the present day, or a century ago, or ten centuries ago, a number of men had appeared in the world, professing (as our Clergy do now) to hold a recognized office in a Christian Church, to which they had been regularly appointed as successors to others, whose predecessors, in like manner, had held the same, and so on, from the time of the Apostles,—if, I say, such a pretence had been put forth by a set of men assuming an office which no one had ever heard of before,—it is plain that they would at once have been refuted and exposed. And as this will apply equally to each successive generation of Christian Ministers, till we come up to the time when the institution was confessedly new,—that is, to the time when Christian Ministers were appointed by the Apostles, who professed themselves eye-witnesses of the Resurrection,

* Supposing it to be one hundred to one, in each separate case, in favour of the legitimacy and regularity of the transmission, and the links to amount to fifty, (or any other number) the probability of the unbroken continuity of the whole chain must be computed as 99-100 of 99-100 of 99-100, &c., to the end of the whole fifty. Of course, if different data are assumed, or a different system is adopted of computing the rate at which the uncertainty increases at each step, the ultimate result will be different as to the *degree* of uncertainty; but when once it is made apparent that a considerable and continually increasing uncertainty does exist, and that the result must be, in respect of any individual case, a matter of *chance*, it can be of no great consequence to ascertain precisely what the chances are on each side.

* Κλαυτη δε τις νυκτος αμαυρα.

we have (as Leslie has remarked*) a standing Monument, in the Christian Ministry, of the fact of that event as having been proclaimed immediately after the time when it was said to have occurred. This therefore is fairly brought forward as an evidence of its truth.

But if each man's Christian hope is made to rest on his receiving the Christian Ordinances at the hands of a Minister to whom the sacramental virtue that gives efficacy to those Ordinances has been transmitted in unbroken succession from hand to hand, every thing must depend on *that particular* Minister: and *his* claim is by no means established from our merely establishing the uninterrupted existence *of such a class of men as Christian Ministers.* "You teach me," a man might say, "that my salvation depends on the possession by *you*—the *particular* Pastor under whom I am placed—of a certain qualification; and when I ask for the proof that you possess it, you prove to me that it is possessed *generally*, by a *certain class* of persons of whom you are one, and probably by a large majority of them!" How ridiculous it would be thought, if a man laying claim to the throne of some Country should attempt to establish it without producing and proving his own pedigree, merely by showing that that Country had *always been under hereditary regal government!*

§ 31. Then as to the danger of Schism, nothing can be more calculated to create or increase it, than to superadd to all the other sources of difference among Christians, those additional ones resulting from the theory we are considering. Besides all the divisions liable to arise relative to the essential *doctrines* of Scripture, and to the most important points in any *system* of Church-Government, Schisms, the most difficult to be remedied, may be created by that theory from *individual cases* of alleged irregularity.

A most remarkable instance of this is furnished in the celebrated schism of the Donatist, in Africa, in the beginning of the fourth century.† They differed in no point of doctrine or Church-discipline from their opponents, the Orthodox, (that is, the predominant party;) but were at issue with them on the question as to an alleged irregularity in the appointment of a certain Bishop; whose ordinations consequently of other Bishops and Presbyters, they inferred, were void; and hence the baptisms administered by those ministers were void, and their whole ministration profane; so that they rebaptized all who joined their party, (as I believe the Greek Church does, to this day,) and regarded their opponents in the light of Heathen. And this schism distracted the greater part of the Eastern portion of the Church for upwards of two hundred years.

And an attempt was made in the last century, by the Non-jurors, to introduce, in these realms, the everspreading canker of a similar schism. They denied the episcopal character of those who had succeeded the displaced prelates; and, consequently, regarded as invalid the Orders conferred by them; thus preparing the way for all the consequences resulting from the Donatist schism.

The sect died away before long, through a happy inconsistency on the part of its supporters; who admitted the claims of the substituted Bishops *on the death of their predecessors*; though it is hard to understand how those who were not true Bishops at first, could *become* such, through a subsequent event, without being reconsecrated: the Presbyters ordained by them becoming at the same time true Presbyters, though their Ordination *had been* invalid. It seems like maintaining that a woman, who during her husband's life-time marries another man, and has a family, becomes, on her real husband's death, the lawful wife of the other, and her children legitimate.

More recently still, an attempt was made of the same nature, on the occasion of the suppression (as it was called) of some of the Irish Bishoprics; that is, the *union* of them with others.* It has been publicly and distinctly declared that an effort was made to represent this measure as amounting to an "interruption of Apostolical succession:" though it is not very easy to say how this was to be made out, even on the above principles.†

* Short Method with Deists.

† See Waddington's Ecclesiastical History, &c.

* I do not mean to maintain that this was seriously believed by all those—some of them men of intelligence and learning—who put it forward. It may very likely have been one of their "*exoteric* doctrines," designed only for the Multitude. But, be this as it may, they evidently meant that it should be believed by others, if not by themselves.

† According to this view, the Apostolical succession must have been long since lost in some parts of England, and the greatest part of Ireland. For there were many such unions existing *before* the Act in question: such as Cork and Ross, Ferns and Leighlin, and several others.

In short, there is no imaginable limit to the schisms that may be introduced and kept up through the operation of these principles, advocated especially with a view to the repression of schism.

§ 32. Some have imagined however that since no rule is laid down in Scripture as to the number of persons requisite to form a Christian Community, or as to the mode in which any such Community is to be set on foot, it must follow that persons left to Scripture as their sole decisive authority, will be at liberty,—all, and any of them,—to form and dissolve religious Communities at their pleasure; —to join and withdraw from any Church, as freely as if it were a Club or other such institution; and to appoint themselves or others to any ministerial Office, as freely as the members of any Club elect Presidents, Secretaries, and other functionaries.

And it is true that this license has been assumed by weak and rash men; who have thus given occasion to persons of the class who "mistake reverse of wrong for right," to aim at counteracting one error by advocating another. But so far are these anarchical consequences from being a just result of the principles here maintained, that I doubt whether, on any other subject besides Religion, a man would not be reckoned insane who should so reason.

To take the analogous case of civil government: hardly any one in his right mind would attempt a universal justification of rebellion, on the ground that men may be placed in circumstances which morally authorize them to do what, in totally *different* circumstances, *would* be rebellion.

Suppose, for instance, a number of emigrants, bound for some Colony, to be shipwrecked on a desert island, such as afforded them means of subsistence, but precluded all reasonable hope of their quitting it: or suppose them to have taken refuge there as fugitives from intolerable oppression, or from a conquering enemy; (no uncommon case in ancient times) or to be the sole survivors of a pestilence or earthquake which had destroyed the rest of the nation: no one would maintain that these shipwrecked emigrants or fugitives, were bound, or were permitted, to remain—themselves and their posterity—in a state of anarchy, on the ground of there being no one among them who could claim hereditary or other right to govern them. It would clearly be right, and wise, and necessary, that they should regard themselves as constituted, by the very circumstance of their position, a civil Community; and should assemble to enact such laws, and appoint such magistrates, as they might judge most suitable to their circumstances. And obedience to those laws and governors, as soon as the Constitution was settled, would become a moral duty to all the members of the Community: and this, even though some of the enactments might appear, or might be, (though not at variance with the immutable laws of morality, yet) considerably short of perfection. The King, or other Magistrates thus appointed, would be legitimate rulers: and the laws framed by them, valid and binding. The precept of "submitting to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake," and of "rendering to all their due," would apply in this case as completely as in respect of any Civil Community that exists.

And yet these men would have been doing what, *in ordinary circumstances*, would have been manifest rebellion. For if these same, or any other individuals, subjects of our own, or of any existing Government, were to take upon themselves to throw off their allegiance to it, *without* any such necessity, and were to pretend to constitute themselves an independent Sovereign State, and proceed to elect a King or Senate,—to frame a Constitution, and to enact laws, all resting on their own self-created authority, no one would doubt that, however wise in themselves those laws might be, and however personally well qualified the magistrates thus appointed,—they would not be legitimate governors, or valid laws; and those who had so attempted to established them, would be manifest rebels.

A similar rule will apply to the case of ecclesiastical Communities. If any number of individuals,—not having the plea of an express revelation to the purpose, or again, of their deliberate conviction that the Church they separate from is fundamentally erroneous and unscriptural—take upon themselves to constitute a new Church, according to their own fancy, and to appoint themselves or others to ministerial offices, without having any recognized authority to do so, derived from the existing religious Community of which they were members, but merely on the ground of supposed personal qualifications, then however wise in them-

selves the institutions, and however, in themselves, fit, the persons appointed, there can be no more doubt that the guilt of Schism would be incurred in this case, than that the other, just mentioned, would be an act of rebellion.

Or again, if certain members, lay or clerical, of any Church, should think fit to meet together and constitute themselves a kind of Synod for deciding some question of orthodoxy, and should proceed to denounce publicly one of their brethren as a heretic, there can be no doubt that—whether his doctrines were right or wrong,—these, his self-appointed judges (whatever abhorrence of Schism they might express, and however strongly they might put forth their own claim to be emphatically the advocates of Church unity) would be altogether schismatical in their procedure. If the Apostle's censure of "those that cause divisions" does not apply to this case, it may fairly be asked what meaning his words can have.

On the other hand, men placed in the situation of the supposed shipwrecked emigrants or exiles above spoken of, would be as much authorized, and bound, to aim at the advantages of a Religious, as of a Civil Community; only with this difference, arising out of the essential characters of the two respectively; that they would not be authorized in the one case, as they would in the other, to resort to *secular coercion.** Compliance with civil regulations may and must be *absolutely enforced;* but not so, the profession of a particular Creed, or conformity to a particular mode of Worship.

Another point of distinction between the formation of a Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution arises out of this circumstance, that it was plainly the design of the Apostles that there should be as much as possible of *free intercommunion*, and facility of interchange of members, among Christians Churches. Consequently, when it is said, here and elsewhere, that each of these is bound to make such enactments respecting non-essentials, as its governors may judge best, it is not meant that they have to consider merely what would seem *in itself* best, and supposing *they* were the *only Christian Community* existing; but they must also take care to raise up no *unnecessary barrier* of separation between the members of their own and of other—essentially pure—Churches. Any arrangements or institutions, &c., which would tend to check the free intercourse, and weaken the ties of brotherhood, among all Christ's followers throughout the world, should be as much as possible avoided.

This, however, is no exception to the general rule, but an application of it. For, those enactments which should tend to defeat, without necessity, one of the objects which the Apostles proposed, would (however good in themselves) evidently *not* be the best, for that very reason.

But it would be absurd to maintain that men placed in such a situation as has been here supposed, are to be shut out, generation after generation, from the Christian Ordinances, and the Gospel covenant. Their circumstances would constitute them (as many as could be brought to agree in the essentials of faith and Christian worship) a Christian Community; and would require them to do that which, if done *without* such necessity, would be schismatical. To make regulations for the Church thus constituted, and to appoint as its ministers the fittest persons that could be found among them, and to celebrate the Christian Rites, would be a proceeding not productive, as in the other case, of division, but of union. And it would be a compliance, —clearly pointed out to them by the Providence which had placed them in that situation,—with the manifest will of our Heavenly Master, that Christians should live in a religious Community, under such Officers and such Regulations as are essential to the existence of every Community.

To say that Christian ministers thus appointed would be, to all intents and purposes, real legitimate Christian ministers, and that the Ordinances of such a Church would be no less valid and efficacious (supposing always that they are not in themselves superstitious and unscriptural) than those of any other Church, is merely to say in other words, that it would *be* a real Christian Church; possessing, consequently, in common with *all Communities* of whatever kind, the essential rights of a Community to have Officers and By-laws; and possessing also, in common with all *Christian* Communities, (*i. e.* Churches) the especial sanction of our Lord, and his promise of ratifying ("binding in Heaven") its enactments.*

* See Appendix, Note (A.)

* See in Appendix, Note (N,) a quotation

It really does seem not only absurd, but even impious, to represent it as the Lord's will, that persons who are believers in his Gospel, should, in consequence of the circumstances in which his Providence has placed them, condemn themselves and their posterity to live as Heathens, instead of conforming as closely as those circumstances will allow, to the institutions and directions of Christ and his Apostles, by combining themselves into a Christian Society, regulated and conducted, in the best way they can, on Gospel principles. And if such a Society does enjoy the divine blessing and favour, it follows that its proceedings, its enactments, its officers, are legitimate and apostolical, as long as they are conformable to the principles which the Apostles have laid down and recorded for our use: even as those (of whatever race "after the flesh") who embraced and faithfully adhered to the Gospel, were called by the Apostle, "Abraham's seed,"* and "the Israel of God."†

The Ministers of such a Church as I have been supposing, would rightly claim "Apostolical succession," because they would *rightfully hold the same office* which the Apostles conferred on those "Elders whom they ordained in every City.' And it is impossible for any one of sound mind, seriously to believe that the recognition of such claims in a case like the one here supposed, affords a fair precedent for men who should wantonly secede from the Church to which they had belonged, and take upon themselves to ordain Ministers and form a new and independent Church according to their own fancy.

§ 33. I have spoken of seceding from "the Church to which they had belonged," because, in each case the presumption‡ is in favour of *that*; not, necessarily, in favour of the Church to which a man's *ancestors* may formerly have belonged,§ or the one which can boast the greatest *antiquity*, or, which is *established* by the Civil Government. The Church, whatever it is, in which each man was originally enrolled a member, has the first claim to his allegiance, supposing there is nothing in its doctrines or practice which he is convinced is unscriptural and wrong. He is of course bound, in deference to the higher authority of Christ and his Apostles, to renounce its communion, if he does feel such a conviction; but not from motives of mere fancy, or worldly advantage.

All separation, in short, must be *either* a *duty*, or a *sin*.*

And the Christian's obligation to submit to the (not unscriptural) Laws and Officers of his Church, being founded on the principles above explained, is independent of all considerations of the regularity or irregularity of the original formation of that Church; else, indeed, no one could be certain what were his duties as a member of a certain Church, without entering on long and difficult researches into ecclesiastical history: such as are far beyond the reach of ninety-nine persons in the hundred. A certain Church may, suppose, have originated in a rash separation from another Church, on insufficient grounds; but for an individual to separate from it *merely for that reason*, would

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from an Appeal of Luther's in 1520, cited in D'Aubigné's "History of the Reformation."

* Rom. v. 16. † Gal. vi. 16.

‡ See Rhetoric, Part I. ch. 3, § 2.

§ Accordingly, if we suppose the case of the Romish Church reforming all its errors, and returning to the state of its greatest purity, although we should with joy "give the right hand of fellowship" to its members, it would be utterly unjustifiable for any member of our Church to throw off his allegiance to it and go over to the Church of Rome, on the ground of his *ancestors* having belonged to that; nor would such a reform confer on the Bishop of Rome any power over the Anglican Church.

* It may be necessary perhaps here to remind the reader that I am speaking of *separating* from, and *renouncing*, some Church: not of merely *joining* and becoming a member of some other. This latter does not imply the former, except when there is some *essential point of difference* between the two Churches. When there is none, a man's becoming a member of another Church on changing his residence,—as, for instance, a member of the Anglican Church, on going to reside in Scotland or America, where Churches essentially in agreement with ours exist,—this is the very closest conformity to the principles and practice of the Apostles. In their days (and it would have been the same, always, and every where, had their principles been universally adhered to) a Christian of the Church of Corinth for instance, on taking up his abode, suppose, at Ephesus, where there was a Christian Church, differing perhaps in some non-essential customs and forms, but agreeing in essentials, was received into that Church as a brother; and this was so far from implying his *separation* from the former, that he would be received into the Ephesian Church only on letters of recommendation* from the Corinthian.

* Ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαί. See 2 Cor.

be not escaping but incurring the guilt of Schism.*

It may indeed often be very desirable to attempt the re-union of Christian Communities that had been separated on insufficient grounds; but no individual is justified in renouncing, from motives of mere taste or convenience, the communion of the Church he belongs to, if he can remain in it with a safe conscience.

As for the question, what are, and what are not, to be accounted essential points, —what will, and what will not, justify, and require, separation,—it would be foreign from the present purpose to discuss it. The differences between two Churches may appear essential, and non-essential, to two persons equally conscientious, and equally careful in forming a judgment. All I am insisting on is, that the matter is one which does call for that careful and conscientious judgment. A man should, deliberately, and with a sense of deep responsibility, make up his mind, as to what is, or is not, to the best of his judgment, essential, before he resolves on taking, or not taking, a step which must in every case be either a duty or a sin.

§ 34. It may be said however that it is superfluous to enter at all on the consideration of what *would* be allowable and right under some *supposed* circumstances, which are not our own; and to decide beforehand for some imaginary emergency that may never occur; at least never to ourselves.

It may be represented as an empty and speculative question to inquire whether our Ministry derive their authority from the Church, or the Church from them, as long as the rights *both* of the Church and its Ministers are but acknowledged. And if any one is satisfied both that our Ministers are ordained by persons descended in an unbroken series of Episcopal Ordination from the Apostles, and also that they are the regularly appointed and recognized Officers of a Christian Community constituted on Apostolical principles, it may be represented as impertinent to trouble him with questions as to *which* of these two things it is that gives them the rightful claim to that deference which, as it is, he is willing to pay to them.

It is in this way that the attempt is often made, and not seldom with success, to evade the discussion of important general principles, and thus to secure an uninquiring acquiescence in false assumptions which will not stand the test of examination, and which when once admitted will lead to very important and very mischievous practical results. Why should we unsettle men's minds—one may hear it said—by speculations on any imaginary or impossible case, when they are satisfied as they are? As long as any one will but believe and do what he ought, what matters it whether his reasons for acquiescence are the most valid or not? And then, when, in this way, men's minds have been "settled" in false notions, some of them are likely to follow out a wrong principle into the pernicious consequences to which it fairly leads; and others again become most dangerously, and perhaps incurably, *unsettled*, when the sandy foundation they have been taught to build on happens to be washed away.

If, as has been above remarked, a man is taught that view of Apostolical succession which makes every thing depend on the unbroken series between the apostles and the *individual* minister from whom each man receives the Sacraments, or the individual bishop conferring Ordination,—a fact which never can be ascertained with certainty—and he is then presented with proofs, *not* of *this*, but of a different fact instead,—the Apostolical succession, *generally*, of the great Body of the ministers of his Church;—and if he is taught to acquiesce with consolatory confidence in the regulations and ordinances of the Church, not on such grounds as have been above laid down, but on the ground of their exact conformity to the model of the "ancient Church, which exact conformity is, in many cases, more than can be satisfactorily proved, and in some can be easily *dis*proved, the result of the attempt so to settle men's minds, must be, with many, the most distressing doubt and perplexity. And others again, when taught to "blend with Scripture," as a portion of Revelation, the traditions of the first three, or first four, or first seven, or fifteen centuries, may find it difficult to understand, when, and where, and why, they are to stop short abruptly in the application of the principles they have received: why, if one general Council is to be admitted as having divine authority to bind the conscience, and supersede private judgment, another is to be rejected by private judgment: and that too by the judgment of men who are not agreed with each other, or even themselves, whether the

* For some very sensible and valuable remarks on this subject, see Hinds' History of the Rise and Early Progress of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 42.

Council of Trent, for instance, is to be regarded as the beginning of the Romish Apostacy, or as a promising omen of improvement in the Church of Rome. That man must be strangely constituted who can find consolatory security for his faith in such a guide;—who can derive satisfactory confidence from the oracles of a Proteus!

§ 35. Moreover, the supposed case of Christians deprived of regular succession of Episcopally ordained Ministers, and left to determine what course they ought, under such circumstances, to take, is *not* inconceivable, or impossible, or unprecedented; nor again, *even if it were*, would the consideration of such a question be necessarily an unprofitable speculation; because it will often happen that by putting a supposed case (even when such as could not possibly occur) we can the most easily and most clearly ascertain on what *principle* a person is acting. Thus when Plato* puts the impossible case of your possessing the ring of Gyges,† which, according to the legend, could make the bearer invisible, and demands how you would then act, he applies a kind of test, which *decomposes*, as the chemists say, the complex mass of motives that may influence a man, and calls on you to consider whether you abstain from bad actions through fear of the censure of the world, or from abhorrence of evil in itself.

So again—to take another instance—if any one is asked how men ought to act when living under a Government professing, and enforcing under penalties, a false religion, and requiring of its subjects idolatrous worship, and other practices contrary to Scripture, if he should object to the question, on the ground that there is no prospect of *his* being so circumstanced, and that he is living, and may calculate on continuing to live, under a Government which inculcates a true religion, it would be justly inferred that he was conscious of something unsound in his principles, from his evading a test that goes to ascertain whether he regards religious truth and the command of God, as things to be adhered to at all events, or merely, when coinciding with the requisitions of Government.

So also, in the present case: when a Church possesses Ministers who are the regularly appointed officers of a Christian Community constituted on evangelical principles, and who are also ordained by persons descended in an unbroken series from those ordained by the Apostles, the two circumstances *coincide*, on which, according to the two different principles, respectively, above treated of, the legitimacy and apostolical commission of Christian Ministers may be made to depend. Now in order to judge fairly, and to state clearly the decision, *which* foundation we resolve to rest on, it is requisite to propose a case (even supposing—which is very far from being the fact—that it could not actually occur) in which these two circumstances do *not* come together; and then to pronounce which it is that we regard as essential.

§ 36. As a matter of fact, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Apostles did "ordain Elders in every city." Even if there had been no record of their doing so, we might have inferred it from the very fact of their instituting Christian Societies; since every Society must have Officers; and the founder of a Society will naturally take upon him to nominate the first Officers; as well as to "set in order the rest" of the appointments.* And those Officers, acting in the name and on the behalf of the Community, would, of course, appoint others to succeed them; and so on, from generation to generation. As long as every thing went on correctly in each Church, and its doctrines and practices remained sound, there would be nothing to interrupt this orderly course of things. But whenever it happened that the Rulers of any Church departed from the Christian faith and practice which it is their business to preserve,—when, for instance, they corrupted their worship with superstitions, made a traffic of, "indulgences," and "taught for doctrines the commandments of men," by "blending" human traditions with Scripture, and making them, either wholly, or

* "Atque hoc loco, philosophi quidam, minime mali illi quidem, sed non satis acuti, fictam et commentitiam fabulam prolatam dicunt a Platone: quasi vero ille, aut factum id esse, aut fieri potuisse defendat. Hæc est vis hujus annuli et hujus exempli, si nemo sciturus, nemo ne suspicaturus quidem sit, cum aliquid, divitiarum, potentiæ, dominationis libidinis, causâ feceris,—si id diis hominibusque futurum sit semper ignotum, si ne sciturus. Negant id fieri posse. Quanquam potest id quidem; sed quæro, quod negant posse, id si posset, quidnam facerent? Urgent rustice sane: negant enim posse, et in eo perstant. Hoc verbum quid valeat, non vident. Cum enim quærimus, si possint celare, quid facturi sint, non quærimus, possintne celare," &c.—*Cic. de Off.* b. iii. c. 9.

† Rhetoric, p. i. c. 2, § 8.

* 1 Cor.

in part, the substitute as a rule of faith, for the records of inspiration,—in any such case, it became the duty of all those who perceived the inroads of such errors, to aim at the reformation of them; and when all or any of the Spiritual Pastors of such a Church obstinately stood out against reform, to throw off their subjection to persons so abusing their sacred office, and, at all events, reform themselves as they best could. It is as plain a duty for men so circumstanced to obey their Heavenly Master, and forsake those who have apostatized from Him, as it would be for the loyal portion of a garrison of soldiers to revolt from a general who had turned traitor to his King, and was betraying the city into the enemy's hands. So far from being rebellious subjects in *thus* revolting, they would be guilty of rebellion if they did not.

In like manner, the very circumstances in which such a Body of reformers, as I have been alluding to, are placed, confer on them that independence which they would have been unjustifiable in assuming wantonly. The right is bestowed, and the duty imposed on them, of separation from the unreformed, which, under opposite circumstances, would have been schismatical. They are authorized, and bound, by the very nature of their situation, either to subsist as a distinct Community, or to join some other Church;* even as the vitality which Nature has conferred on the scion of a tree, enables it, *when cut off* from the parent stock, either to push forth fresh roots of its own, or to unite, as a graft, with the stock of some kindred tree.

It is for men so circumstanced to do their best according to their own deliberate judgment, to meet their difficulties, to supply their deficiencies, and to avail themselves of whatever advantages may lie within their reach. If they have among their number Christian Ministers of several Orders, or of one Order,—if they can obtain a supply of such from some other sound Church,—or if they can unite themselves to such a Church with advantage to the great ultimate objects for which Churches were originally instituted,—all these are advantages not to be lightly thrown away. But the unavoidable absence of any of these advantages, not only is not to be imputed to them as a matter of blame, but, by imposing the *necessity*, creates the *right*, and the *duty*, of supplying their deficiencies as they best can. Much as they may regret being driven to the alternative, they ought not to hesitate in their decision, when their choice lies between adherence to the human Governors of a Church, and to its divine Master;—between "the form of Godliness, and the power thereof;"—between the means and the end;—between unbroken apostolical succession of individuals, and uncorrupted Gospel principles.

§ 37. Persons so situated ought to be on their guard against two opposite *mistakes*: the one is, to underrate the privileges of a Christian Community, by holding themselves altogether debarred from the exercises of such powers as naturally and essentially belong to every Community; the other mistake is to imagine that whatever they have an undoubted *right* to do, they would necessarily be *right* in doing. In no other subject perhaps would such a confusion of thought be likely to arise, as is implied by the confounding together of things so different as these two. Although the legislature (as I have above remarked) has an undoubted right to pass, or to reject, any Bill, a man would be deemed insane who should thence infer that they are *equally right* in doing either the one or the other. So also the Governors of a Church are left, in respect of ordinances and regulations not prescribed or forbidden in Scripture, to their own judgment; but they are bound to act according to the *best* of their judgment. What is left to their discretion is not therefore left to their caprice; nor are they to regard every point that is not *absolutely essential*, as therefore *absolutely indifferent*.

They have an undoubted right, according to the principles I have been endeavouring to establish, to appoint such Orders of Christian Ministers, and to allot to each such functions, as they judge most conducive to the great ends of the Society; they may assign to the *whole*, or to a *portion* of these, the office of ordaining others as their successors; they may appoint *one* superintendent of the rest, or *several*; under the title of Patriarch, Archbishop, Bishop, Moderator, or any other that they may prefer; they may make the appoint-

* An instance of this was very recently afforded by the people of Zillerthal, in the Austrian dominions; who, being deliberately convinced of the errors of the Church in which they had been brought up, underwent, in consequence of their refusal of compliance, a long series of vexatious persecution, and ultimately forsook their home, and found refuge and freedom of conscience in the territory of Prussia.

ment of them for life, or for a limited period,—by election, or by rotation,—with a greater, or less extensive, jurisdiction; and they have a similar discretionary power with respect to Liturgies, Festivals, Ceremonies, and whatever else is left at large in the Scriptures.

Now to infer that all possible determinations of these and similar points would be equally expedient, and equally wise, and good, would be an absurdity so gross that in no other case, not connected with religion, would men need even to be warned against it. In fact, it would go to do away the very existence of any such attributes as "wisdom"—"prudence,"—"discretion,"—"judgment," &c. altogether: for there is evidently no room for the exercise of them in matters *not* left to our *choice*, and in which the course we are to pursue is decided *for* us, and distinctly marked out, by a higher Authority; nor again is there any room for them in matters in which there is not a right and a wrong,—a better and a worse; and where the decision is a matter of total indifference; as in the choice between two similar sheets of paper to begin writing on, when both are lying within one's reach. The *sole* province of prudent and cautious deliberation is in cases which *are* left to our decission, and in which we may make a *better or a worse* decision. And yet I should not wonder if some persons were to take for granted that any one who does not presume at once to exclude from the Gospel covenant all professed Christians who do not strictly conform to what we regard as the purest primitive practice, and to deny altogether the validity of all their Ordinances, must, as a matter of course, place *exactly on a level* a system founded on the most diligent, sober, and deliberate inquiry after ancient and well-tried models, and the most rash, ill-advised, and fanciful innovations that ever were devised by ignorance or presumption. As well might one infer from the Apostle's declaration that "the Powers that be are ordained of God," his complete approval of the Constitution of the Roman Empire, of its laws, and of the mode of appointing Emperors; or his total indifference as to the best or the worst system of civil Government. If all laws were equally good, or if wise laws and unwise were a matter of indifference, or if it did not rest with each Government to make either wise or unwise enactments, what room could there be for political *wisdom*?

The mistakes, however, which I have been alluding to, have been not unfrequently made in what relates to the powers possessed by Christian Communities, and the mode of exercising these powers. For instance, at the time of the great Reformation, some Bodies of Christians found themselves without any Bishop among their number; and formed what are called Presbyterian Churches. Some members accordingly of these Churches have felt themselves called upon in self-defence to decry Episcopacy, as a form of Government not instituted by the Apostles, and, *consequently*, as one which all Christians are *bound to reject*. Erroneous as, I am convinced, their premise was, they were, on the above principles, still more erroneous in drawing that conclusion from it. Others of them again lamented their want of Episcopacy; considering that form of government as *having* the apostolical sanction, and *consequently*, as *obligatory* and *indispensable* to be retained, when possible; but to them, *unattainable*, from the interruption of episcopal succession. And while some persons presume to exclude all Presbyterians from the pale of Christ's universal Church—professing at the same time, in words, what they virtually nullify by their interpretations, that "Holy Scripture contains all things *necessary to salvation*," others again compassionate and sympathize with the supposed *unavoidable* deficiency in the Presbyterian Churches.

Now that all these parties are mistaken in their views (though a mere mistake, when not accompanied with a want of charity, is not deserving of severe censure) must be evident to any one who embraces the principles which in the outset I endeavoured to establish. It follows from those principles, that the Bodies of Christians we have been speaking of, *had* full power to retain, or to restore, or to originate, whatever form of Church government they, in their deliberate and cautious judgment, might deem best for the time, and country, and persons, they had to deal with; whether exactly similar, or not, to those introduced by the Apostles; provided nothing were done contrary to Gospel precepts and principles. They were, therefore, perfectly at liberty to appoint Bishops, *even if they had none* that had joined in the reformation; or to discontinue the appointment, *even if they had:* whichever they were convinced was the most conducive, under existing circumstances, to the great ob-

jects of all Church government. And though their decision of this point ought to have been very greatly influenced by their belief as to what were the forms adopted by the Apostles (which must have been not only wise, but the very wisest, *for those times and persons*) they had no reason to hold themselves *absolutely bound* to adhere, always and every where, to those original models. Indeed, to so considerable a degree have all Churches judged themselves at liberty to depart from the exact model of the earliest institutions—especially (as I formerly remarked) in respect of that important change introduced,—whether wisely or unwisely,—by, I believe, all of what are called Episcopal Churches; that of having several bishops in one Church instead of making each Diocess, as appears to have been the apostolical system, an entire and distinct Church;—so considerable, I say, is the liberty in this respect, that has been assumed by all Churches, that those who speak of all Christians being strictly bound to conform in every point to the exact pattern of the primitive institutions, can hardly wonder if they find imputed to them either great want of knowledge, or of reflection, in themselves, or else, a design to take advantage of the ignorance or inattention of others.

§ 38. I have specified the want of "attentive reflection" in applying rightly in practice the knowledge men do possess as tending to foster erroneous notions, because it is probably both a more common and a more dangerous defect than mere want of sufficient *knowledge*. And it may be added, that it arises not so often from original deficiency in the mental powers, as from neglect to exercise them. There are many who inadvertently, and not a few who advisedly and designedly, resign themselves, in all matters pertaining to morals or religion, to the impressions produced on their imagination and feelings; and rather applaud than reproach themselves for not awaiting the decisions of calm judgment, or for allowing their judgment to be biassed. To such persons there is, it must be acknowledged, something very captivating and seductive in the notions I have been censuring; and not the less, from their being somewhat vague and dimly apprehended, incapable of abiding the test of sober examination, and invested with some of that "mysterious and solemn gloom," which has been put forth expressly by some of their advocates, as a recommendation. There is something to many minds awfully and mystically sublime in the idea of the "decisions of the Catholic Church," and of "Catholic Councils, convened in the name of Christ, and whose deliberations are overruled, and their decrees authoritative,"—in the idea of the "Sacramental character of Ordination," conferred by persons who have derived a mystical virtue from the successive imposition of hands up to the times of the Apostles;—and of the "priestly" character, (that of Hiereus) thus imparted, and the "Sacrifices" offered at an "altar;"—of a "primitive doctrine always to be found somewhere in the Catholic traditions," &c.; especially when these matters are treated of in solemn and imposing language, of that peculiar kind of dazzling mistiness whose effect is to convey, *at first*, to ordinary readers, a striking impression, with an appearance of being perfectly intelligible at the first glance, but to become more obscure and doubtful at the *second* glance, and more and more so, the more attentively it is studied by a reader of clear understanding; so as to leave him utterly in doubt, at the last, which of several meanings it is meant to convey, or whether any at all.

The rule of "omne ignotum pro mirifico," applies most emphatically to such doctrines treated of in such language. The very simplicity and plainness of the reasoning by which, in the foregoing pages, the divine authority of a Christian Church, and consequently of its regulations and its ministers, are deduced direct from the sanction given by Christ Himself as interpreted by his Apostles, is likely to be, to some minds, no recommendation, but the contrary.

And as men are of course less likely to exercise a clear and unbiassed judgment in respect of any theory which tends especially to exalt their own persons, and invest them with mysterious powers and awful dignity, the *Clergy* accordingly are under a peculiar temptation* to lean too favourably and with too little of rigorous examination, towards a system which confers the more elevation and grandeur on *them*, in proportion as it detracts from

* The minds of many persons among the Laity are so constituted as to make the same temptation very little less powerful to them, than to the Priesthood; for reasons set forth in the Essay (3d Series) on "Vicarious Religion."

the claims of the entire Community. It is not the most flattering to them to be urged to say continually, not only in words, but by their conduct, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and us, your Servant, for Jesus' sake;"—to be taught that they are merely the Functionaries of the particular Church of which they are members,—that it is in that capacity only that they derive their station and power from Christ, by virtue of the sanction given by Him to Christian Communities;—that their authority therefore comes direct from the society so constituted, in whose name and behalf they act, as its representatives, just to that extent to which it has empowered and directed them to act. These views do indeed leave them a most awfully important and dignified office, as Servants in "the House of God,"—(the "Temple of the Holy Ghost,")—as Stewards (*i. e.* dispensers; οἰκονόμοι) of divine truth to his People, and as Messengers from Christ, (so far as they "set forth his true and lively word, and duly administer his Holy Sacraments,") as having been appointed conformably to his will. But although their title is thus placed on the secure basis of a clear divine sanction given, once for all, to *every* regularly-appointed Minister of any Christian Community constituted on Gospel principles, instead of being made to depend on a long chain, the soundness of many of whose links cannot be ascertained, yet this last is a system more flattering to human weakness; inasmuch as it represents the Priesthood as comparatively independent of each particular Church, and derives their Church's authority rather from them than theirs from it. And accordingly so strong is the prejudice in the minds of many persons in favour of this system, that to rest the claims of a Christian *Ministry* on the basis of the *divinely sanctioned* institution of a Christian *Church*, would appear to them to be making the Ministry altogether a *human* ordinance, though in truth, its claim to be a divine Ordinance rests on that very sanction: so completely do they lose sight of the whole character of a *Church*, and of a *Community*. I remember seeing a censure passed on some one who had presumed to appoint another as a Bishop; not on the ground (which would have been a very just one) of his having no authority from any Church to make the appointment, but on the ground of his not being *himself* a Bishop: for how—it was urged—can a spring rise above th level of its source? how can an individu appoint another to an ecclesiastical offi higher than he himself holds? How i deed,—it might have been added—ca *any* individual, whether Bishop or nc appoint another to *any* office,—high low—unless authorized by the Comm nity to do so? For an individual to pr tend to create another a King, or Magistrate of any other description, the humblest civil Functionary,—eve though he were himself a King,—*witho lawful authority from the Community make such appointment*, would be regarde as a most extravagant and absurd assum tion. On the other hand a *Community*, ar consequently those acting under its san tion, *may* appoint a man to an offi higher than is possessed by any of th individuals who perform that act; as the case, for instance, in the election of member of Parliament. And in the ca of the supposed shipwrecked emigran above adverted to, no reasonable ma could doubt their right to elect one their number as their King. But in th case of *ecclesiastical* Communities, mar persons are found to advocate that fanc ful and groundless system which goes deprive *these* of all the rights whi Christ's sanction of such a Communi confers. For, according to this syste the sacramental virtue of Holy Orde which is indispensable for all the Chri tian Ordinances and means of Grace, inherent indefeasibly in each individu who has derived it, in no degree fro any particular Community, but sole from the Bishop whose hands were la on him; who derived *his* power to a minister this sacrament, altogether fro Consecration by another Bishop—n necessarily a member of the same par cular Church, but obtaining his pow again from another; and so on, up the apostolic times. On this system th Church is made a sort of appendage the Priesthood; not the Ministry, to th Church.* A People separated from the

* That pernicious popular error, which co founds the Church with the *Clergy* (see note § 33,) as if the Spiritual Community consist only of its Officers, is partly kept up perhaps l men's neglecting to notice one peculiarity belon ing to Christ's kingdom, at its first *establishmen* viz., that it did, then, consist of Ministers onl though it was by no means designed so to co tinue. *All* the Disciples who constituted t infant Church were those destined to be employ in various offices therein: so that an inattenti

Ministers by some incurable disagreement as to Christian doctrine, even supposing these last to have occasioned it by an utter apostacy from Gospel truth,—would be left (supposing they could not obtain other ministers qualified by the same kind of transmission of sacramental virtue) totally and finally shut out from the pale of Christ's universal Church, and from his "covenanted mercies;" while the Ministers, on the contrary, though they might be prohibited by civil authority, or prevented by physical force, from exercising their functions within a particular district, would still, even though anti-christian in doctrine and in life, retain their office and dignity unimpaired,—the sacramental virtue conferred on them by Ordination, and the consequent efficacy of their acts, undiminished.

§ 39. And this is not merely an inference fairly deducible from the principles of the system. I have even met with persons who acknowledged that, if a Bishop, of our own Church for instance, who had been, for some crime, removed and degraded by regular process, should think proper afterwards, to ordain men Priests or Deacons, though he and they would be legally punishable, still his Ordinations would be valid, and these men consequently (however morally unfit) real Clergymen, capable of exercising the spiritual functions. This is to recognize a fearful power, and that, placed in the very worst hands, of producing and keeping up schism with something of an apparent divine sanction to give it strength.* For, on this principle, a Bishop of some other Church—the Roman Catholic for instance, or the Greek—who should have been ejected from his Diocess, might take upon him to ordain men according to the rites of *our* Church, and we should be bound to recognize his ordinations as valid.

I need hardly remark, that, according to the principles I have been endeavouring to maintain, a Bishop when removed from his Diocess, (whether for any crime, or otherwise) and not appointed to any other, though he may continue a member of the Episcopal *Order*, (unless regularly removed from it by competent authority,†) ceases altogether, ipso facto, to be a Bishop, in respect of Episcopal *functions*; and has no more right to ordain, or to perform any other act, in the capacity of a Bishop, than a Layman would have: that is, till the same, or some other Christian Church shall think proper to receive him in that capacity.*

If indeed any Church should be so very unwise as to recognize as Clergymen persons ordained by a deprived Bishop, these would undoubtedly be Ministers of that Church; because that recognition would constitute them such; and a Christian Community has power (though in that case there would be a gross abuse of its power) to determine who shall be its Officers. But what I am contending against is, the notion of an inherent indefeasible sacramental virtue conveyed by the imposition of hands, and giving validity to the official acts, regular or irregular, of the persons possessing it. And this does seem to me a most pernicious as well as groundless tenet, tending to destroy the rightful authority of a *Church*, by unduly exalting the pretended privileges of its Functionaries.

On the same principle which has been now set forth in respect of Bishops, the acts of a Presbyter or Deacon, or other Minister of any Church, cease to be valid, as soon as ever the Christian Community in which he was appointed, withdraws its sanction from his acts. If another Church think fit to receive him as a Minister, they have an undoubted right to do so; and he then becomes a Minister of that Church. So he does also, when *not* expelled from the Society to which he originally belonged, supposing the Church to which he transfers himself *thinks fit to recognize* the Ordinations of the other; which they may do, or refuse to do, entirely at their own discretion. This is a point which every

reader is liable to confound together what our Lord said to them *as Ministers*, and what as *Members*;—as Rulers of a Church, and as the Church itself.

* See above, § 32.

† For it is evident that as, in respect of Church regulations, the powers of "binding" and of "loosing" have, equally, the divine sanction, so, the power of any Christian Church to *admit* any one, either simply into the number of its *Members*, or into any particular *Order* or Office, implies a power to *remove* him from either, when the case shall be such as to call for his removal.

* For a Bishop, it should be observed, does not, in becoming such, enter on a new *Profession*, (as he did on taking orders) but only on a new description of *Office* in his profession. A person may indeed, as I have said, continue to belong to a certain *Order* of Clergy, though with suspended functions; but the important point to be insisted on is, that no *official acts* have any validity but what is *derived from the Community* to which, in each case, the Officer belongs.

Church has a full right to determine according to its own judgment.

And as for the individual himself who is regularly deprived by his Church, if, on becoming a Clergyman, he engaged (as is required by, I believe, most existing Churches) that he would follow *no other* profession,* of course he cannot absolve himself from that engagement; but must continue so far a Clergyman, though with suspended functions. Moreover a Church has a *right*,—though I think such a regulation a very unwise one,—to recognize as valid the acts of a degraded Minister; (while subjecting him nevertheless to penalties for performing such acts) or of a Layman.

Concerning several points of this class, —such as the validity of lay-baptism, or of baptism by heretics or schismatics, &c., questions have been often raised, which have been involved in much unnecessary perplexity, from its being common to mix up together what are in fact *several distinct questions*, though relating to the *same subject*. For instance, in respect of the validity of Lay-baptism, three important and perfectly distinct questions may be raised; no one of which is answered by the answering, either way, of the others: viz., 1st. What has a Church the *right* to determine as to this point? 2dly. What is the *wisest* and best determination it can make? and, 3dly. What *has* this or that particular Church *actually* determined? Now persons who are agreed concerning the answer to one of these questions, may yet differ concerning the others; and *vice versâ*.†

§ 40. But to return to the consideration, generally, of the whole system of what is called "Catholic tradition," &c., which I have been censuring; it is calculated, as has been said, to produce at the first glance a striking and imposing effect, and to recommend itself strongly to the imagination and the feelings of some persons: but will not stand the test of a close examination. The advocates of these doctrines, accordingly, either from a consciousness of this, or else from indistinctness in their own conception, often set them forth with something of oracular obscurity and ambiguity, half concealed behind a veil, as it were, of mystery; as something of which the full import and complete proof were to be reserved for a chosen few. And when clear evidence is demanded of a sufficient foundation for the high pretensions put forth, and the implicit submission that is demanded, we are sometimes met by a rebuke of the "pride of human intellect," and of the presumptuous expectation of having every thing that we are to believe made perfectly level to our understanding, and satisfactorily explained.

No one, it may be said, would believe in God, if he were to insist on first obtaining a clear and full comprehension of the nature and attributes of such a Being; an explanation,—such as no man of sense would think of giving, or of seeking,—of the divine attributes, brought down to the capacity of such a Being as Man. Nor would any one believe in the Christian Revelation, if he were to require, previously, to have a clear and full comprehension of the mysteries of the Incarnation, of the Redemption, of the Trinity, and of every thing else appertaining to the Gospel scheme. We must content ourselves, therefore, we are told, with faint, indistinct, and imperfect notions on religious subjects, unless we would incur deserved censure for want of faith.

How often and how successfully the fallacy here sketched out has been employed, is really wonderful, considering how totally different and entirely unconnected are the two things which are thus confounded together; the clear or indistinct notion of the *subject matter* itself,—of the fact or proposition—that is before us; and, the clear or indistinct *notion of the evidence* of it,—of the reasons for believing it. A moment's reflection is sufficient for any one to perceive the difference between the two; and yet, in the loose language of careless or sophistical argument, they are continually confused together, and spoken of indiscriminately, as if they were the same thing.

Every one, whether possessing Christian faith or not, believes firmly,—and must believe,—and that, on the clearest evidence,—in the existence of many things concerning which he has but a very imperfect knowledge, and can form but indistinct and confused ideas of their nature; while to believe in whatever is proposed to us without any *clear proof* that it is *true*,—with an imperfect and indistinct apprehension of any *reason* for believing it,—

* It would be, I am convinced, very advantageous that this rule should be modified as regards *Deacons*. We might avail ourselves of the services of some very useful assistants, if we would admit to this subordinate office some who could not maintain themselves wholly, without resorting (as the Apostle Paul did) to some secular employment.

† See Appendix, Note (O.)

is usually regarded as a mark of credulous weakness. And on the other hand, some description, narrative, or statement, may be, in itself, perfectly clear and intelligible, and yet may be very doubtful as to its truth, or may be wholly undeserving of credit.

For instance, there is, I suppose, no one who seriously doubts the existence of something which we call Soul—or Mind—be it Substance or Attribute, material or immaterial—and of the mutual connexion between it and the Body. Yet how very faint and imperfect a notion it is that we can form of it, and of many of its phenomena that are of daily occurrence! The partial suspension of mental and bodily functions during Sleep,—the effects of opium and other drugs, on both body and mind; the influence again exercised by volition, and by various mental emotions, on the muscles, and on other parts of the bodily frame, and many other of these phenomena, have exercised for ages the ingenuity of the ablest men to find even any approximation towards but an imperfect explanation of them. Yet the *evidence on which we believe in the reality* of these and of many other things no less dimly and partially understood, *is* perfect.

On the other hand, the characters, transactions, &c., represented by dramatic writers, or described by historians, are often as *clearly intelligible* as it is possible for any thing to be; yet from the total want of evidence, or from the want of clear and decisive evidence, as to their *reality*, we regard them as either entire fictions, or mixtures of fable and truth, or as more or less likely to have actually existed.* The character and conduct of Lear, for instance, or Othello, of Hamlet, and Macbeth, are perfectly intelligible; though it is very doubtful how far the tales which suggested to Shakspeare the idea of most of his dramas had any foundation in fact, or were originally fictitious. Many, again, of the Orations recorded by the ancient Greek and Roman historians are as easily and plainly to be understood as any that are reported in our own times; but in what degree each of these is a faithful record of what was actually spoken, is a point on which we have, in some cases, a slight and imperfect evidence; and in others, none that deserves the name.

§ 41. In all subjects where religion is not concerned, no one of ordinary good sense ever confounds together two things so dissimilar and unconnected as those I have been speaking of. But in what pertains to religion, the fallacy is, as I have said, often introduced. Yet Religion does not, in this respect, really differ from other subjects.

Our Saviour's character and his teaching were matter of wondering perplexity to all around Him; even in a far greater degree than after the establishment of his Kingdom, on his personal ministry being completed; both because the Jews were full of the expectation of a totally different kind of Deliverer, and because great part of his discourses were not even designed to be fully intelligible, at the time, to his own disciples; but to be explained afterwards by the occurrence of the events He alluded to. Some of his followers, accordingly, "went back and walked no more with him," on the occasion of one of those discourses. But the Apostles, who adhered to Him, did so, neither from having any clearer notions concerning his revelations (for we often find it recorded that "they understood not this saying," &c.;) nor again, from being satisfied to believe without any clear proof of his high pretensions; but because they "believed, and were sure that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God," on such evidence as He had Himself appealed to: "the works that I do in my father's name, they bear witness of me." Dim, and indistinct, and imperfect as were still their notions (as, to a great degree, ours must be also) concerning "the Son of God," it was no indistinct or imperfect evidence on which they believed that He was so.

A converse case is that of the several false Christs who afterwards arose. "I am come," says our Lord, "in my Father's name," (with such manifestations of divine power as testified his coming from God) "and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name," (*viz.* requiring acceptance on his own bare word, without any miraculous credentials) "him ye will receive."* "*Their* teaching, their pretensions, and promises, were as clearly intelligible to the greater part of the Jews—because falling in with the prevailing belief and expectations,—as those of Jesus had been (even to his own disciples) obscure, perplexing, or unintelligible. Accordingly, vast multitudes fol-

* See Rhetoric, part i. c. 2, § 2. "On the plausible and the historically probable."

* See Sermon, on the "Name Emmanuel;" and also Cruden's Concordance on the word "Name."

lowed these pretenders, without requiring any clear and sufficient evidence of the *truth* of their pretensions: and they followed them to their own and their Country's ruin.

The very history of our own religion, therefore, supplies us here with an illustration of the distinction I have been speaking of. On the one side we have a revelation, itself dimly and partially understood, and doubtful, in great part, as to its meaning, but with clear evidence that it really came from God: on the other, a pretended revelation, containing, to those it was proposed to, no doubts or difficulties as to its sense and its design, but supported by no evidence that could satisfy an unprejudiced mind, bent on the attainment of truth.

§ 42. However plausible then the system I have been objecting to may appear to any one,—however imposing and mysteriously sublime,—however gratifying and consolatory to the feelings—let him not therefore neglect to inquire for the proofs by which its high pretensions are to be sustained; but rather examine with the more care the foundation on which so vast a superstructure is made to rest. Let no one be deterred from this by fierce denunciations against the presumptuousness of all inquiry, and all use of private judgment in religious matters; and by eulogies on the virtue of faith; remembering that the "*faith*" thus recommended is precisely that *want of faith* for which those Jews just mentioned were so severely condemned. They refused to listen to good evidence, and assented to that which was worthless.

And let no one allow himself to be persuaded that he is evincing an humble piety, acceptable to the "*jealous* God," in hastily giving credence to the pretensions to divine authority put forth in behalf of uninspired men, (not producing the miraculous "Signs of an Apostle") by those who are for blending "Tradition with Scripture," and "following the dictates of inspiration wherever found, whether in Scripture or Antiquity;" and who pronounce according to their own arbitrary choice, what are, and what are not, the general Councils whose "deliberations were overruled by the Holy Spirit, and their decrees consequently authoritative."

"If any of these entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go after other Gods, thou shalt not hearken unto him." And those who speak in the name of Jehovah, saying, "Thus saith the Lord; when the Lord hath not spoken," are no more exempt from the guilt of enticing to idolatry, than the worshippers of Baal.

The more disposed any one is to submissive veneration, the greater the importance of guarding him against misdirected veneration;—against false piety; against reverencing as divine, what in reality is human. And the more awfully important any question is, the greater is the call for a rigid investigation of what may be urged on both sides; that the decision may be made on sound, rational, and scriptural grounds, and not according to the dictates of excited feelings and imagination.

And in these times especially, and in respect of this subject, men need to be warned against a mistake which at all times is not uncommon;—that of allowing themselves to be misled by names and professions, which are often—apparently by designed choice,—the most opposite to the things really intended. Thus, for instance, the term "Apostolical" is perpetually in the mouths of some who the most completely set at nought the principles which the Apostles have laid down for our guidance in the inspired writings; and who virtually nullify these by blending with them the traditious of uninspired men. None more loudly censure the "pride of human intellect," and inculcate "pious humility," than those who are guilty of the profane presumption of exalting fallible Man to a level with God's inspired messengers, and of deciding how far they shall impart, or "reserve," the truths which God has revealed.* The evils of "schism" again, are especially dwelt on by some who maintain principles the tendency of which has been shown to be to generate and perpetuate schism. To satisfy and "settle men's minds," is the profession of some whose principles lead (as has been above remarked) in proportion as each man has the most tender conscience, and the greatest anxiety about religious truth, to perplex and torment him with incurable doubts and scruples. "Church-principles" is a favourite phrase with some who are, in fact, lowering the just dignity and impairing the divinely-conferred rights of a Church. And none more loudly profess devoted and submissive admiration for the Anglican Church, than many of those who are emphatically

* See Appendix, Note (P.)

opposed, in some of the most important points, to the principles on which our Reformers proceeded, and the spirit which actuated them throughout.

If any one is deliberately convinced that those their fundamental principles are erroneous, and that they rested the doctrines and institutions of our Church on a wrong basis, he deserves credit at least for honest consistency in leaving its communion.

§ 43. But to me it does appear, that—without attributing to them an infallibility which they expressly disclaim—we may justly give our Reformers credit for such sound views, and such resolute adherence to evangelical truth, combined with such moderation and discretion, as were—considering the difficult circumstances they were placed in,—truly wonderful; and such as are, in all times, and not least in the present, well worthy of imitation. It was their "wisdom to keep the mean" (as is expressed in the preface to the Book of Common Prayer) "between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and too much easiness in admitting, any variation." It was their wisdom also to "keep the mean" between the claims—never conflicting, except when misunderstood—of Scripture and of a Church. It was their wisdom to keep the mean between a slavish bondage to ancient precedents on the one hand, and a wanton and arrogant disregard of them, on the other. It was their wisdom—their pious and Christian wisdom—to keep the mean between rash and uncharitable judgment of other Churches, and equally rash carelessness, or fondness for innovation, in the regulations of their own. They conformed as closely as, in their judgment, circumstances would warrant, to the examples of the earliest Churches, without for an instant abandoning the rightful claims of their own, and without arrogantly pronouncing censure on those whose circumstances had led *them* to depart farther from those ancient precedents. Their "Faith" they drew from the Scriptures; their "Hope" they based on the Scriptures; their "Charity" they learned from the Scriptures.

A member of the Anglican Church,—I mean, a sincere and thoroughly consistent member of it—ought to feel a full conviction—and surely there are good grounds for that conviction,—both that the reforms they introduced were no more than were loudly called for by a regard for Gospel truth, and that the Church as constituted by them does possess, in its regulations and its officers, "Apostolical succession," in the sense in which it is essential that a Christian Community *should* possess it; viz.:—it being a regularly constituted Christian Society, framed in accordance with the fundamental principles taught us by the Apostles and their great Master.

Successors, in the Apostolic office, the Apostles have none. As *witnesses* of the *Resurrection*,—as *Dispensers* of *miraculous* gifts,—as inspired *Oracles* of divine *Revelation*,—they have no successors. But as *Members*,—as *Ministers*,—as *Governors*—of Christian Communities, their successors are the regularly admitted Members,—the lawfully ordained Ministers,—the regular and recognized Governors,—of a regularly subsisting Christian Church; especially of a Church which, conforming, in fundamentals,—as I am persuaded ours does,—to Gospel principles, claims and exercises no rights beyond those which have the clear sanction of our great Master, as being essentially implied in the very character of a Community.

May the members of a Church which our Reformers cleansed of so much corruption, and placed on its true basis, have the grace to profit by their example, and follow out their fundamental principles; labouring to be apostolical "not in mere words and names but in deed and truth;" actuated by the same spirit which was found in those great and good men, so far as they decreed what is agreeable to God's word, and to the "pure and peaceable wisdom that is from above." And especially may all who profess Church principles be careful to guard themselves and others against the two most prevailing errors of these days;—the two kinds of encroachments on the legitimate rights of a Church; on the one side by presumptuous and self-sufficient irregularities, and defiance of lawful authority; and by the pretensions of supposed "Antiquity" and "Tradition," on the other; that they may be enabled, under the divine blessing, to carry into effect more and more fully, and to bring to completion "all the holy desires, all the good counsels, and all the just works" of our Reformers, and of all other our predecessors, as many as have endeavoured, in simplicity and truth, to conform to the instructions of our divine Master and his Apostles.

APPENDIX.

NOTE (A.) Pp. 71, 18, 63.

I HAVE said, "*secular* empire" and a "monopoly of *civil* privileges and powers," because the rule does not apply to such as are purely *ecclesiastical*. The government of the *Church* (except as far as relates to temporalities, which are clearly the property of the Nation) *ought* to be monopolized by members of that Church. It is an unseemly, and in many respects mischievous, anomaly, that, in purely religious matters any authority should be possessed (as is the case in this country) by those who are not members of the religious community. [See "Appeal on behalf of Church-government," a valuable and well-written pamphlet. Houlston and Co.]

It is true that the *greatest* evils that *might* arise from such an anomaly,—vexatious and oppressive interference in matters that affect the conscience—do *not* arise in this country. No greater evil does result in practice than that (no small one however) of leaving the Church virtually *without any* legislative Government. But even if this were a less evil than it is, it would not be the less true as a principle, that none ought to have any share in the government (except—as I have said—in respect of secular matters) of a Church, who are not members of it.

There are some however who, from want of the habit of attentive reflection, are with difficulty brought to perceive the unsoundness of any false principle, except when it is fully developed in practice, and produces, *actually, all* the ill effects that it can consistently lead to. They cannot perceive which way a wind is blowing unless it blows a perfect gale. They not merely know a tree only by its fruits, but, except when it is actually bearing its fruits and when it has brought them to the full perfection of poisonous maturity, they do not recognize the tree.

This defect may often be observed in men's judgments on another point also,—the employment of secular coercion in religious matters, with a view either to compel men to conform to the faith and mode of worship prescribed by the Civil government, or to give more or less of political ascendency, and monopoly of civil rights and power, to those of a particular persuasion. To burn dissenters under the title of heretics,—or to put them to a less cruel death;—or to banish, or fine and imprison them,—or to exclude from all, or from some, of the rights of citizens, and reduce, more or less, to the condition of vassals or Helots, those who do not profess the religion which the State, as such, enjoins,—these are widely different indeed, in respect of the *actual amount* of evil inflicted, or of good denied to individuals; but the *principle* is in all these cases the same; viz.: the assumed right of the Secular Government, as such, to interfere with men's conscience, and consequently (when the Government calls itself Christian) to make Christ's kingdom, so far, "a kingdom of this world." One of the causes that have contributed to the prevalence of this error, is, a mistaken view of the nature of that *supremacy* which is possesed by a *political* Community.

The office of a Political Society or State,—to afford *protection* (as all admit it is bound to do) to the citizens, necessarily implies a *coercive* power over *all* of them; and thence over other Societies of which any of them may be members. Hence the political Society must be (in respect of power) the "highest;" and the Secular Government—the person or persons in whom that power is vested, being as it were the *centre of gravity* in which the whole physical force of the Community is collected, and acts,—must be, in this sense, "Supreme" or "Sovereign;" (*κύριον*, according to the ancient Greek Philosophers) as not being *responsible* or *subject* to any other.

Much confusion of thought, and practical error has thence arisen in some minds; especially since, in any question that may arise whether the State (the Political Society) have gone beyond its proper province, it must *itself* be, in practice, the judge; there being no higher authority, on earth, to appeal to. It can do nothing (humanly speaking) *unlawful*, since it has the power to make and absolutely enforce laws.

It has been supposed, for instance, that since the Political Society is the *highest* (which in a certain sense it is) it must have for its ends the *highest objects*;—that it ought to propose to itself, not, like any other kind of Society, some *particular* good, but, *human good, generally*;—the welfare, in all respects, of the citizens;—and that since every human good is therefore equally within the province of the Secular Government, the *greatest* good,—the moral welfare of the citizens, and the salvation of their souls,—must be especially its care: and hence follows the right, and the duty, of

putting down heresy by the civil sword; since if it would be unjustifiable for the Magistrate to tolerate the circulation of counterfeit money, much more, that of false doctrine. And the *moral* as well as *religious* welfare of the citizens being entrusted to his care, he must take upon himself to determine both what is *true Religion*, and also what is *morally right*; according to the doctrine of Hobbes in his "Leviathan."

I have no doubt that many advocates of the principle in question do not *mean* to advocate either religious persecution or Hobbism: but I am speaking of the logical connexion of these consequences with that principle.

All this perplexity and error might be escaped by merely recollecting that the Political Society has, like any other, its own appropriate objects; and that any other desirable objects which it may be enabled, incidentally, to promote, more effectually than could otherwise be done, and without interfering with its main objects, are yet (however intrinsically important) only secondary and subordinate; and that it is "*Sovereign*" only in this sense, that its proper and main object is one which necessarily implies the exercise of *coercive power*. In fact, the very circumstance which gives to the Political Community that kind of sovereignty which it does possess, is exactly what places beyond its own proper province the very noblest and highest objects of all. Pure *Morality* as existing in the motives and not in mere outward acts, and sincere belief in a true *Religion*, are precisely what cannot be produced, directly and immediately, by the coercive power of the Civil Magistrate.

NOTE (B.) P. 24.

"THAT no society can exist without some rules, and without some means of enforcing obedience to those rules, is obvious. When therefore it is asked, whether Christ or the Holy Spirit left any ecclesiastical laws, or vested any where power to enforce those laws? if the question is put with a view to ascertain whether Church government be of divine origin, it is idle; inasmuch as the very institution of the ecclesiastical society, the Church, implies the design that rules should be established, and means provided to enforce them.

"But another object may be intended by the question. It may be put with the view of ascertaining what those rules are whereby this society is designed to be governed. For, it may be said, and plausibly enough, that granting the intention of the Church's Founder to have laws established to be ever so apparent, how are we to know *what kind of government* he intended?

"On one point the inquirer must satisfy himself. If, from the nature of the Church, and from existing circumstances, the members were already possessed of the means of acquiring this knowledge, in that case neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit would be likely to leave any code of ecclesiastical laws, on precisely the same principle, as no code of ethics was left.

"Now, is there any thing in the nature of the Church to guide us, as to what are ecclesiastical offences? Undoubtedly there is. In every society there must be such a principle; and by reference to it in each, are formed laws for the government of each. Every society recognizes peculiar offences, arising out of, and depending solely on, the peculiar nature of the society; so that, in proportion as this latter is understood, the former are defined. Much mischievous confusion in some instances arises from a want of attention to this connexion; and the attention is frequently diverted from it by the accidental circumstance, that the same act often becomes an offence against many societies. Thus, theft is at once an offence against the supreme Ruler of the universe,—against the political body to which the thief is attached,—against some certain class of society, perhaps, in which he moves, and so on. The act being one, it is only by reflection that we are enabled to separate the different views which render it in each case an offence, and in each of a different magnitude. Again, what becomes a crime because violating the principle of one society, may be none in another; if, namely, it does not interfere with the object proposed in the formation and preservation of that other society. Thus, the violation of the academical rules of our Universities does not render the offending member amenable to the laws of the land. Thus, too, the very conduct which recommends a smuggler or a robber to his confederacy, becomes an offence against the political body with which he is associated.

"In order, therefore, to ascertain what are inherent offences or crimes in any society, it is necessary that we should know with what object or objects such society is formed. If information of this kind then be found in the sacred record, respecting the Christian society, ecclesiastical law by revelation was no more to be expected, than a code of ethics to tell men what their own consciences were already constituted by God to declare.

"It is certain, however, that if the question need not be answered in the affirmative, in order either to establish the divine origin of ecclesiastical government, or to determine what offences come under its cognizance, there is yet a third object which may be proposed in urging it. What *punishments* are authorized, in order to check those offences? Ought not these to have been specified? and, not having been specified, does the nature of the case here also supersede the necessity of a revelation, and enable us to know what coercion is, and what is not, agreeable to the Divine will? The inquiry, too, seems to be the more reasonable, because

in looking to the methods by which various societies are upheld, we find the punishment even in similar societies by no means the same. Military discipline, for instance, in different countries, and at different periods, has been enforced by penalties unlike in degree and in kind. In different countries and ages, the social tie between the master and the slave has been differently maintained. All this is true, but still, in looking at the question so, we take only a partial view, and lose one important feature in the establishment of coercion,—the right.

"Now, this right is either inherent in the society, or conventional, or both, as is the case in most confederate bodies. When the right is limited to what the society exercises as inherent and indispensable,—inherent in its nature, and indispensable to its existence,—the extreme punishment is, *exclusion*; and the various degrees and modifications of punishment are only degrees and modifications of exclusion. When the right is conventional also, (as far as it is so,) the punishment is determined by arbitrary enactment, proceeding from some authority acknowledged by all parties, (whether that authority be lodged in the parties themselves, or in competent representatives, or in other delegated persons,) and therefore styled conventional. Few societies have ever existed without a large portion of these latter. Hence the anomaly above alluded to, and hence too the vulgar impression, that all punishments are arbitrary, and depend solely on the caprice and judgment of the government. What is popularly and emphatically termed *society*, affords a good instance of the first; that is, of a social union regulated and maintained only by a right inherent. In this, excessive ill-manners and the gross display of ungentlemanly feelings are punished by absolute exclusion. According as the offence is less, the party offending is for a time excluded from some select *portion* of good society, or from certain meetings and the like, in which more particularly the spirit and genuine character of gentility are to be cherished. All its lawful and appropriate punishments are a system of exclusion, in various shapes and degrees."—*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, (Historical Division,) vol. ii. pp. 744, 745.

NOTE (C.) P. 25, 29.

"HEREUPON doth the Apostle lay a divine directory before him, concerning their manner of praying, choosing and ordaining of ministers, approving deacons, admitting widows, and regulating the people that nothing could be wanting to the healthy temper of that church, if they receive and embrace these applications; in the most of which prescriptions, he useth exceeding much of their synagogue-language, that he may be the better understood; and reflecteth upon divers of their own laws and customs, that what he prescribeth, may imprint upon them with the more conviction. He calleth the minister 'Episcopus,' from the common and known title 'the chazan' or 'overseer' in the synagogue: he prescribeth rules and qualifications for his choice, in most things suitable to their own cautions in choosing of an elder: he speaketh of 'elders ruling only, and elders ruling and labouring in the word and doctrine;' meaning, in this distinction, that same that he had spoken of in chap. iii. 'bishops and deacons.' Both those, in the common language, then best known, were called, 'elders,' and both owned as 'rulers.' Yea, the very title, that they usually termed 'deacons,' (Parnasin), was the common word that was used to signify, a 'ruler.' The Jerusalem Talmud, speaking of the three 'Parnasin,' or 'deacons,' that were in every synagogue, hath these two passages, which may be some illustration to two passages in this epistle:—'They appoint not less than three Parnasin in the congregation: for if matters of money were judged by three, matters of life much more require three to manage them.' Observe that the deacon's office was accounted as an office that concerned life; namely, in taking care for the existence of the poor. According to this, may that in chap. iii. 12, be understood. 'For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree;' a good degree towards being entrusted with souls, when they have been faithful in the discharge of their trust concerning the life of the body."—*Lightfoot's Harmony of the New Testament. Edited by the Rev. John Pitman.* Vol. iii. p. 257.

"The Apostles at Jerusalem, hearing the glad tidings of the conversion of Samaria, send down Peter and John; and why these two rather than any other of the twelve, is not so easy to resolve, as it is ready to observe, that if, in this employment, there was any sign of primacy, John was sharer of it as well as Peter. Being come, they pray, and lay their hands upon them, and they receive the Holy Ghost. Here episcopacy thinketh it hath an undeniable argument for proof of its hierarchy, and of the strange right of confirmation. For thus pleadeth Baronius for the former: 'From hence (saith he) it may be seen, that the hierarchial order was instituted in the church of God, even in this time; for Philip doth so baptize those that believe, that yet he usurpeth not the apostolical privilege,—namely, the imposition of hands granted to the Apostles.' And thus the Rhemists both for it, and for the latter, in their notes on Acts viii. 17:—'If this Philip had been an Apostle, (saith St. Bede,) he might have imposed his hands, that they might have received the Holy Ghost; but this none can do, saving bishops. For though priests may baptize and anoint the baptized also with chrism consecrated by a bishop,—yet can he not

sign his forehead with the same holy oil; because that belongeth only to bishops, when they give the Holy Ghost to be baptized.' And after this testimony of Bede, they subjoin their inference: 'This imposition therefore of hands, together with the prayers here specified (which no doubt was the very same that the church useth to that purpose) was the ministration of the sacrament of confirmation.'

"Now let the reader, with indifferency and seriousness, but ruminate upon these two queries, and then judge of these two inferences:—

"First, whether apostleship were not an order for ever, inimitable in the church: for besides the reason given to prove that it was, upon the choosing of Matthias, others may be added to make it more clear:—as, 1. The end of their election was peculiar, the like to which was not to be in the church again; for they were chosen to be with Christ, Mark iii. 14; to be eye-witnesses of his resurrection, Acts i. 22, ii. 32, and x. 41; as they had been of his actions and passion, Luke i. 2. And, therefore, Paul pleading for his apostleship, that, 'he had seen the Lord,' 1 Cor. ix. 1; and in the relation or story of his calling, this particular is singularly added, that 'he saw that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth,' Acts xxii. 14.

"Secondly, the name of 'Apostles' keepeth itself unmixed or confounded with any other order. It is true indeed, that the significancy of the word would agree to other ministers that are to preach; but there is a peculiar propriety in the sense, that hath confined the title to the twelve and Paul: as any indifferent eye will judge and censure upon the weighing of it in the New Testament.

"Thirdly, When Paul reckoneth the several kinds of ministry, that Christ Jesus left in the Church at his ascension, Eph. iv. 11, and 1 Cor. xii. 28,—there is none that can think them all to be perpetuated, or that they should continue successively in the like order from time to time. For within a hundred years after our Saviour's birth, where were either prophets or evangelists, miracles or healings? And if these extraordinary kinds of ministration were ordained but for a time, and for special occasion, and were not to be imitated in the church unto succeeding times; much more, or at the least as much, were the Apostles, and order much more, at least, as much extraordinary, as they.

"Fourthly, The constant and undeniable parallel, which is made betwixt the twelve Patriarchs, the fathers of the twelve tribes, and the twelve Apostles, not only by the number itself, but also by the New Testament, in the four-and-twenty Elders, Rev. iv. 4,—and in the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 12, 14,—doth argue and prove the latter order as inimitable as the first. These things well considered, if there were no more, it will show, how improbable and unconsonant the first inference is, that is alleged, that because there was a subordination betwixt the Apostles and Philip, therefore, the like is to be reputed betwixt bishops and other ministers, and that bishops in the church are in the place of the Apostles."—*Lightfoot's Commentary on the Acts*, vol. viii. p. 125.

"1. Here beginneth 'the kingdom of heaven;' when the Gentiles are received to favour and to the Gospel, who had been so long cast off, and lain in ignorance and idolatry; and when no difference is made betwixt them and the Jews any longer,—but, of every nation, they that fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him as well as Israel. This is the very first beginning or dawning to the kingdom of heaven; and so it grew on more and more, till Jerusalem was destroyed; and then was the perfect day, when the Gentiles only were become the church of Christ: and no church or commonwealth of Israel to be had at all, but they destroyed and ruined.

"2. Here 'Peter hath the keys of the kingdom,' and unlocked the door for the Gentiles to come in to the faith and gospel, which, till now, had been shut, and they kept out. And Peter only had the keys, and none of the apostles or disciples but he, for though they from henceforward brought in Gentiles daily into the kingdom of heaven, by converting them to the Gospel,—yet it was he that first and only opened the door; and the door, being once opened, was never shut, nor never shall be to the end of the world. And this was all the priority that Peter had before the other apostles, if it were any priority; and how little this concerneth Rome, or the Papacy, as to be any foundation of it, a child may observe.

"3. Peter here looseth the greatest strictness, and what was the straitest bound-up of any thing that was in all the policy of Moses and customs of the Jews,—and that was, the difference of clean and unclean, in the legal sense. And this he looseth on earth, and it is loosed in heaven; for from heaven had he an immediate warrant to dissolve it. And this he doth, first declaratively, showing that nothing henceforward is to be called common or unclean, and showing his authority for this doctrine; and then practically conforming himself to this doctrine that he taught, by going in unto the uncircumcised, and eating with them. "Binding and loosing,' in our Saviour's sense, and in the Jews' sense, from whose use he taketh the phrase, is 'of things and not of persons;' for Christ saith to Peter, ὁ ἐὰν *δήσῃς*, and ὁ ἐὰν *λύσῃς*; ὁ and not ὅν; 'whatsoever' thou bindest, and not 'whomsoever;' and to the other apostles, ὅσα ἐὰν *δήσητε*, Matt. xviii. 18, ὅσα and not ὅσους, 'whatsoever *things*,' and not, 'whatsoever *persons*;' so that, though it be true and indeed, that Jews and Gentiles are loosed henceforward one to the communion of another,—yet the proper object of this loosing, that is loosed

by Peter, was that law or doctrine that tied them up. And so concerning the eating of those things that had been prohibited,—it is true, indeed, that the Jews were let loose henceforward to the use of them in diet, and to eat what they thought good; but this loosing was not so properly of the men, as the loosing of that prohibition that had bound them before. And this could be no way but doctrinally, by teaching that Christian liberty that was given by the Gospel.

"Now, though Peter only, and none but he, had 'the keys of the kingdom' of heaven, yet had all the apostles the 'power of binding and loosing,' as well as he; and so have all the ministers of the gospel as well as they; and all in the same sense, namely, doctrinally to teach what is bound and loose, or lawful and unlawful; but not in the same kind: for the apostles, having the constant and unerring assistance of the Holy Ghost, did nullify, by their doctrine, some part of Moses' law, as to the use of it, as circumcision, sacrifices, purifyings, and other legal rites,—which could not have been done by men, that had not had such a Spirit; for there must be the same Spirit of prophecy to abrogate a law which had set it in force." —P. 219.

"Besides these there was 'the public minister of the synagogue,' who prayed publicly, and took care about the reading of the law, and sometimes preached, if there were not some other to discharge this office. This person was called, "The Angel of the Church,' and 'the Chazan or Bishop of the Congregation.' The public minister of the synagogue himself read not the law publicly; but, every sabbath, he called out seven of the synagogue (on other days, fewer) whom he judged fit to read. He stood by him that read, with great care observing, that he read nothing either falsely, or improperly,—and calling him back, and correcting him, if he had failed in any thing. And hence he was called, 'Ἐπισκοπος,' or 'Overseer.' Certainly, the signification of the word 'Bishop,' and 'Angel of the Church,' had been determined with less noise, if recourse had been made to the proper fountains,—and men had not vainly disputed about the signification of words, taken I know not whence. The service and worship of the temple being abolished, as being ceremonial, God transplanted the worship and public adoration of God used in the synagogues, which was moral, into the Christian church; to wit, the public ministry, public prayers, reading God's word, and preaching, &c. Hence the names of the ministers of the Gospel were the very same, 'The Angel of the Church,' and 'The Bishop,'—which belonged to the ministers in the synagogues." —*Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark*, vol. xi. p. 88.

"Ver. 19; Καὶ δώσω σοι τὰς κλεῖς τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν. 'And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' That is, 'Thou shalt first open the door of faith to the Gentiles.' He had said, that he would build his church to endure for ever, against which the 'gates of hell should not prevail,' which had prevailed against the Jewish Church: and 'To thee, O Peter, (saith he,) I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; that thou mayest open a door for the bringing in of the Gospel to that church.' Which was performed by Peter in that remarkable story concerning Cornelius, Acts x. And I make no doubt, that those words of Peter respect these words of Christ, Acts xv. 7; Ἀφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν ἐξελέξατο διὰ τοῦ στόματός μου ἀκοῦσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὸν λόγον τοῦ λόγου τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, καὶ πιστεῦσαι. 'A good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel by mouth, and believe.'

"Καὶ ὃ ἐὰν δήσης ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, &c. '*And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth*,' &c. Καὶ ὃ ἐὰν λύσης ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, &c. '*And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth*,' &c.

"I. We believe the keys were committed to Peter alone, but the power of binding and loosing to the other apostles also, chapter xxviii. 18.

"II. It is necessary to suppose, that Christ here spake according to the common people,—or he could not be understood without a particular commentary, which is nowhere to be found.

"III. But now 'to bind and loose,' a very usual phrase in the Jewish schools, was spoken of things, not of persons; which is here also to be observed in the articles, ὁ and ὅσα, 'what,' and 'whatsoever,' chap. xviii." —*Lightfoot*, p. 226.

Note (D.) 29.

"It was indeed not at all to be expected that the Gospels, the Acts, and those Epistles which have come down to us, should have been, considering the circumstances in which they were written, any thing different from what they are: but the question still recurs, why should not the Apostles or their followers have also committed to paper, what we are sure must have been perpetually in their mouths, regular instruction to Catechumens, Articles of Faith, Prayers, and directions as to Public Worship, and administration of the Sacraments?

"Supposing that the other avocations of the Apostles would not allow any of *them* leisure for such compositions,—though we know that some of them did find time for writing, two of them, not a little,—even this supposition does not at all explain the difficulty; for the Acts, and two of the Gospels, were written by men who were only attendants on the Apostles. Nor would such writings as I am speaking of have required an *inspired* penman; only one who had *access* to persons thus gifted. We know with what care the Apostolic Epistles were

preserved, first by the Churches to which they were respectively sent, and afterwards, by the others also, as soon as they received copies. How comes it then that no one of the Elders (Presbyters) of any of these Churches should have written down, and afterwards submitted to the revision of an Apostle, that outline of catechetical instruction—that elementary introduction to the Christian faith—which they must have received at first from that Apostle's mouth, and have afterwards employed in the instruction of their own converts? Why did none of them record any of the Prayers, of which they must have heard so many from an Apostle's mouth, both in the ordinary devotional assemblies, in the administration of the Sacraments, and in the 'laying on of hands,' by which they themselves had been ordained?

"Paul, after having given the most general exhortations to the Corinthians for the preservation of decent regularity in their religious meetings, adds, 'the rest will I set in order when I come.' And so doubtless he did; and so he must have done, by verbal directions, in all the other churches also; is it not strange then that these verbal directions should nowhere have been committed to writing? This would have seemed a most obvious and effectual mode of precluding all future disorders and disputes: as also the drawing up of a compendious statement of Christian doctrines, would have seemed a safeguard against the still more important evil of heretical error. Yet if any such statements and formularies *had* been drawn up, with the sanction, and under the revision of an Apostle, we may be sure they would have been preserved and transmitted to posterity, with the most scrupulous and reverential care. The conclusion therefore seems inevitable, that either no one of the numerous Elders and Catechists ever thought of doing this, or else, that they were forbidden by the Apostles to execute any such design; and each of these alternatives seems to me alike inexplicable by natural causes.

"For it should be remembered that when other points are equal, it is much more difficult to explain a *negative* than a *positive* circumstance in our Scriptures. There is something, suppose, in the New Testament, which the first promulgators of Christianity, —considered as mere unassisted men,— were not likely to write; and there is something else, which they were, we will suppose, equally unlikely to omit writing; now these two difficulties are by no means equal. For, with respect to the former, if we can make out that *any one* of these men might have been, by nature or by circumstances, qualified and induced to write it, the phenomenon is solved. To point out even a single individual able and likely to write it, would account for its being written. But it is not so with respect to the other case, that of omission. Here, we have to *prove a negative*;—to show, not merely that this or that man was likely not to write what we find omitted, but, that *no one was* likely to write it.

* * * * *

"Although however we cannot pretend, in every case, to perceive the reasons for what God has appointed, it is not in the present case difficult to discern the superhuman wisdom of the course adopted. If the hymns and forms of Prayer,—the Catechism, —the Confessions of Faith,—and the Ecclesiastical regulations, which the Apostles employed, had been recorded, these would all have been regarded as parts of *Scripture*: and even had they been accompanied by the most express declarations of the lawfulness of altering or laying aside any of them, we cannot doubt that they would have been in practice most scrupulously retained, even when changes of manners, tastes, and local and temporary circumstances of every kind rendered them no longer the most suitable. The Jewish ritual, designed for one Nation and Country, and intended to be of temporary duration, was fixed and accurately prescribed: the same Divine Wisdom, from which both dispensations proceeded, having designed Christianity for all Nations and Ages, left Christians at large in respect of those points in which variation might be desirable. But I think no *human* wisdom would have foreseen and provided for this. That a number of *Jews*, accustomed from their infancy to so strict a ritual, should, in introducing Christianity as the second part of the same dispensation, have abstained not only from accurately prescribing for the use of all Christian Churches for ever, the mode of divine worship, but even from recording what was actually in use under their own directions, does seem to me utterly incredible, unless we suppose them to have been restrained from doing this by a special admonition of the Divine Spirit.

"And we may be sure, as I have said, that if they *had* recorded the particulars of their own worship, the very words they wrote would have been invested, in our minds, with so much sanctity, that it would have been thought presumptuous to vary or to omit them, however inappropriate they might become. The Lord's Prayer, the only one of general application that is recorded in the Scriptures, though so framed as to be suitable in all Ages and Countries, has yet been subjected to much superstitious abuse." * * * * *

"Each Church, therefore, was left, through the wise foresight of Him who alone 'knew what is in man,' to provide for its own wants as they should arise!—to steer its own course by the Chart and Compass which his holy Word supplies, regulating for itself the Sails and Rudder, according to the winds and currents it may meet with.

"'The Apostoles had begun and estab-

lished precedents, which, of course, would be naturally adopted by their uninspired successors. But still, as these were only the formal means of grace, and not the blessing itself, it was equally to be expected that the Church should assume a discretionary power whenever the means established became impracticable or clearly unsuitable, and either substitute others, or even altogether abolish such as existed. . . . . It might seem at first that the apostolical precedents were literally binding on all ages; but this cannot have been intended; and for this reason, that the greater portion of the apostolical practices have been transmitted to us, not on apostolical authority, but on the authority of the uninspired church: which has handed them down with an uncertain mixture of its own appointments. How are we to know the enactments of the inspired rulers from those of the uninspired? and if there be no certain clue, we must either bring down the authority of apostolical usage to that of the uninspired church, or raise that of the uninspired church to that of the apostolical. Now the former is, doubtless, what was, to a certain extent, intended by the Apostles themselves, as will appear from a line of distinction by which they have carefully partitioned off such of their appointments as are designed to be perpetual from such as are left to share the possibility of change, with the institutions of uninspired wisdom.

"'If then we look to the account of the Christian usages contained in Scripture, nothing can be more unquestionable, than that while some are specified, others are passed over in silence. It is not even left so as to make us imagine that those mentioned may be all: but while some are noted specifically, the establishment of others is implied, without the particular mode of observance being given. Thus, we are equally sure from Scripture, that Christian ministers were ordained by a certain form, and that Christians assembled in prayer; but while the precise process of laying on of hands is mentioned in the former institution, no account is given of the precise method of church service, or even of any regular forms of prayer, beyond the Lord's Prayer. Even the record of the Ordination Service itself admits of the same distinction. It is quite as certain that, in it, some prayer was used, as that some outward form accompanied the prayer; but the form is specified, the prayer left unrecorded.

"'What now is the obvious interpretation of the holy Dispenser's meaning in this mode of record? Clearly it is, that the Apostles, regulated, under His guidance, the forms and practices of the church, so as was best calculated to convey grace to the church *at that time*. Nevertheless, part of its institutions were of a nature, which, although formal, would never require a change; and these therefore were left recorded in the Scriptures, to mark this distinction of character. The others were not, indeed, to be capriciously abandoned, nor except where there should be manifest cause for so doing; but as such a case was supposable, these were left to mingle with the uninspired precedents; the claims of which, as precedents, would be increased by this uncertain admixture, and the authority of the whole rendered so far binding, so far subject to the discretion of the Church. They might not be altered unless sufficient grounds should appear; but the settling of this point was left to the discretion of the church.'*

"The Apostles themselves, however, and their numerous fellow-laborers, would not, I think, have been, if left to themselves, so far-sighted as to perceive (all, and each of them, without a single exception) the expediency of this procedure. Most likely, many of them, but according to all human probability, some of them, would have left us, as parts of Scripture compositions such as I have been speaking of; and these, there can be no doubt, would have been scrupulously retained for ever. They would have left us Catechisms, which would have been like precise directions for the cultivation of some plant, admirably adapted to a particular soil and climate, but inapplicable in those of a contrary description: their Symbols would have stood like ancient sea-walls, built to repel the encroachment of the waves, and still scrupulously kept in repair, when perhaps the sea had retired from them many miles, and was encroaching on some different part of the coast.

"There are multitudes, even as it is, who do not, even now, perceive the expediency of the omission; there are not a few who even complain of it as a defect, or even make it a ground of objection. That in that day the reasons for the procedure actually adopted should have occurred, and occurred to *all* the first Christians, supposing them mere unassisted men, and men too brought up in Judaism, is utterly incredible."—*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 15—19; 24—27; 30—34.

NOTE (E.) P. 33.

"It is not, I think, unlikely that some hasty and superficial reasoners may have found an objection to Christianity in the omission of which I have been speaking. It is certain that there are not a few who are accustomed to pronounce this or that supposition improbable, as soon as they perceive that it involves great difficulties; without staying to examine whether there are more or fewer on the *other side* of the alternative: as if a traveller, when he had the choice of two roads, should, immediately on perceiving that there were impediments in the one, decide on taking the other, before

* Hinds' History, vol. ii. pp. 113—115.

he had ascertained whether it were even possible. I can conceive some such reasoners exclaiming, in the present case, 'Surely, if the Apostles had really been inspired by an all-wise God, they would never have omitted so essential a provision as that of a clear systematic statement of the doctrines to be believed, and the worship to be offered, so as to cut off, as far as can be done, all occasions of heresy and schism. If the Deity had really bestowed a revelation on his creatures, He would have provided rules of faith and of practice so precise and so obvious, as not to be overlooked or mistaken; instead of leaving men, whether pretending to infallibility as the Romanists, or interpreting Scripture by the light of reason as the Protestants, to elicit by a laborious search, and comparison of passages, what doctrines and duties are, in their judgment, agreeable to the Divine Will.'

"You think it was to be expected (one might reply) that God would have proceeded in this manner; and is it not at least as much to be expected *that Man would?* It is very unlikely, you say, that the Apostles would have omitted these systematic instructions, if they had really been inspired; but if they were *not*, they must have been impostors or enthusiasts; does then that hypothesis remove the difficulty? Is it not at least as unlikely, on that supposition, that no one of them, or of their numerous followers, should have taken a step so natural and obvious? All reasonable conjecture, and all experience show, that any men, but especially *Jews*, when engaged in the propagation and establishment of a religion, and acting, whether sincerely or insincerely, on their own judgment as to what was most expedient, would have done what no Christian writer during the age of (supposed) inspiration *has* done. One would even have expected indeed, that, as we have four distinct Gospels, so, several different writers would have left us copies of the Catechisms, &c., which they were in the habit of using orally. This or that individual might have been prevented from doing so by accidental circumstances; but that every one of some hundreds should have been so prevented, amounts to a complete moral impossibility.

"We have here, then, it may be said, a choice of difficulties: if the Christian religion came from God, it is (we will suppose) very strange, and contrary to all we should have expected from the Deity, that He should have permitted in the Scriptures the omission I am speaking of: if, again, it is the contrivance of men, it is strange, and contrary to all we could have expected from *men*, that *they* should have made the omission. And now, which do we know the more of, God or Man? Of whose character and designs are we the more competent judges, and the better able to decide what may reasonably be expected of each, the Creator, or our fellow-creatures? And as there can be no doubt about the answer to this question, so, the conclusion which follows from that answer is obvious. If the alternative were presented to me, that either something has been done by persons with whose characters I am intimately acquainted, utterly at variance with their nature, and unaccountable, or else that some man to whom I am personally a stranger, (though after all, the nature of every human Being must be better known to us, than, by the light of reason, that of the Deity can be,) had done something which to me is entirely inexplicable, I should be thought void of sense if I did not embrace, as the less improbable, this latter side of the alternative.

"And such is the state of the present case, to one who finds this peculiarity in the Christian Scriptures quite unaccountable on either supposition. The argument is complete, whether we are able, or not, to perceive any wise reasons for the procedure adopted. Since no one of the first promulgators of Christianity did that which they must, some of them at least, have been *naturally* led to do, it follows that they must have been *supernaturally*, withheld from it; how little soever we may be able even to conjecture the object of the prohibition. For in respect of this, and several other (humanly speaking, unaccountable) circumstances in our religion, especially that treated of in the Fourth of the Essays above referred to, it is important to observe, that the argument does not turn on the supposed *wisdom* of this or that appointment, which we conceive to be worthy of the Deity, and thence infer that the religion must have proceeded from him; but, on the utter improbability of its *having proceeded from Man*; which leaves its divine origin the only alternative. The Christian Scriptures considered in this point of view, present to us a standing Miracle; at least, a Monument of a Miracle; since they are in several points such as we may be sure, according to all natural causes, they would *not* have been. Even though the character which these writings do in fact exhibit, be such as we cannot clearly account for on *any* hypothesis, still, if they are such as we can clearly perceive no false pretenders would have composed, the evidence is complete, though the difficulty may remain unexplained."—*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 19—24.

NOTE (F.) P. 34.

"THE three great principles, then, on which every Church, or Christian society, was formed by the apostles, were SPIRITUALITY, UNIVERSALITY and UNITY. Out of these arose one important limit to the discretionary powers of the uninspired Church, when deprived of extraordinary authority. It is of the last importance that this fact should be borne in mind, in every appeal to

the practice and authority of the primitive Church. There is (even among protestant divines) a vague method of citing the authority of the early Churches in matters of discipline and practice, without any distinct view of the exact weight of that authority. In quoting doctrinal statements we are generally more accurate in our estimate! but it is undeniable, that the practices and discipline of the primitive Churches, are subject to the same kind of check from Scripture as are their opinions and faith; and are in no instance to be received as if they were matters left altogether to their discretion. The *principles*, although not the specific rules, are given in the New Testament: and this is, perhaps, nearly all that is done in the case of the doctrines themselves. Only the elements, out of which these are to be composed, are furnished by Scripture. So far from being stated in a formal way, some of the abstract terms for these doctrines are not found in the Scriptures; such a statement and enunciation of them being left to the discretion of the Church. So, too, the principles of the Church establishment were given, and were put in practice for illustration; and the application of these principles was all that was left to the discretion of its uninspired rulers. In short, every Church, in all ages, holds Scripture in its hand as its warrant for its usages as well as for its doctrines; and had the immediate successors and companions of the apostles, from the very first, corrupted the government and constitution of the Church, *we* should be enabled to condem them, from the New Testament; and to this test it is the duty of all ages to bring them. Their management of those matters which are said to be left indeterminate has only the authority of an experiment; it is a practical illustration of Scripture principles. Whenever they have been successful in this experiment, it would, indeed, generally be unwise and presumptuous in us to hazard a different mode of attaining the same result; but even here, any deviation is authorized by difference of circumstances; the same principle which guided them being kept in view by us. But, in whatever stage of ecclesiastical history the principle itself has been forgotten,—it matters not how far back the practice may be traced,—it has no authority as a precedent. The Bible is our only attested rule; and we must appeal to it with the boldness recommended by the apostle to his converts; and though an angel from heaven preach unto us any other rule than that we have received, let him be accursed.

"This boundary line to the discretionary powers of the Church would be quite clear, supposing the ecclesiastical principles to have been left only as above considered, in the form of abstract instruction, whether formally enunciated, or certainly deducible from the Scriptures. But far more than this was done. On these very principles the apostles actually formed and regulated societies of Christians; so as to leave them not merely abstractly propounded but practically proved. This proceeding, while it lightened the difficulty of the uninspired Church, (especially of those who first received the guidance of it from the apostles, and who most needed it,) proportionably contracted the discretionary powers with which they were invested. If only abstract principles had been left, uninspired authorities would have been justified in regarding solely these, and regulating the means of conformity to them by their own unbiassed judgment. But the apostolical precedents created a new restriction. Rulers of infallible judgment had not only taught the principle, but the precise method by which that principle was best preserved had been practised by them, and set forth, apparently for the guidance of their less enlightened successors.

"Was the Church of all ages bound to follow their track without any deviation? If so, where was any room for discretionary power? If not, on what authority was the deviation to be made, and how far was it authorized? Here the most accurate view of the character and object of the Christian's sacred record is necessary, in order to remove all obscurity from the question. That record, as far as the agency of human ministers is its object, is partly historical, partly legislative. The two terms are not, perhaps, quite expressive of the distinction intended; but by Scripture being partly legislative, is meant, that it is partly concerned in conveying the rules and principles of religion—the revealed will, in short, of God. It is also partly historical; and of the historical portion no inconsiderable share is solely or principally a practical illustration of these rules. History and legislation are indeed both blended; and it is because they are thus connected; but the respective uses of them, as distinct portions of Scripture, are here, as in other questions of a similar nature, very important. When the historical incidents, the *facts* recorded, are recorded as specimens of the fulfiment of God's will, their only authority, as precedents and examples, arises from their conformity to the principle which they illustrate. Now it is conceivable and likely, that a change of circumstances may render a practice inconsistent with such a principle, which originally was most accordant with it, and *vice versâ*. The principle is the fixed point, and the course which has first attained it may become as unsuitable to another who pursues it, as the same line of direction would be for two voyagers who should be steering for the same landmark at different seasons, and with different winds. Still, as in this latter case, the first successful attempt would be, to a certain extent, a guide to those which follow; and this, exactly in proportion to the skill of the forerunner. The apostles were known to be infallible guides; and those who immediately succeeded them, and all subsequent ages, are quite sure that they must have pursued that which was,

under the existing circumstances, the most direct line to their object,—that, situated as Christianity was in their hands, all their regulations were the best possible for preserving the principles of the Church establishment and government. The uninspired Church was therefore bound to follow them, until any apostolical practice should be found inadequate to accomplish its original purpose. Here commence the discretion and responsibility; the first obligation being to maintain the principle according to the best of their judgment, as the prudent steersman alters his track and deviates from the course marked out in his chart, when wind or tide compel him to the deviation.

"And thus we shall be at no loss for the precise difference of authority between the precedents of the apostolical and of the primitive uninspired Church. In matters which admit of appeal to the usage of the apostolical Church, we are sure, not only that the measure was wise, but the very wisest; and, accordingly, the only question is, whether its suitableness has been affected by any change of circumstances. On the other hand, in a similar reference to the uninspired Church of any age, the measure is first of all pronounced wise or unwise—lawful or unlawful, as it conduces or not to the maintenance of the revealed principles of ecclesiastical society. And, supposing the measure under consideration be proved to have been so conducive, still it is not at once certain as in the former case, that it was the wisest and most judicious measure which the existing circumstances required or admitted. It emanated from fallible wisdom. Accordingly, in canvassing the authority of such a precedent, we are authorized and bound to institute two inquiries:—Was the measure the most accordant with ecclesiastical principles *then*? Is it so *now*? Whereas, in the former appeal to apostolic usage, the only question is, whether it is convenient now? —*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, (Historical Division,) vol. ii. pp. 775, 776.

Note (G.) P. 38.

"Supposing such a summary of Gospel-truths had been drawn up, and could have been contrived with such exquisite skill as to be sufficient and well-adapted for all, of every age and country, what would have been the probable result? It would have commanded the unhesitating assent of all Christians, who would, with deep veneration, have stored up the very words of it in their memory, without any need of laboriously searching the rest of the Scriptures, to ascertain its agreement with them; which is what we do (at least are evidently *called on* to do with a *human* exposition of the faith; and the absence of this labour, together with the tranquil security as to the correctness of their belief which would have been thus generated, would have ended in a careless and contented apathy. There would have been no room for doubt,—no call for vigilant attention in the investigation of truth,—none of that effort of mind which is now requisite, in comparing one passage with another, and collecting instruction from the scattered, oblique, and incidental references to various doctrines in the existing Scriptures; and, in consequence, none of that excitement of the best feelings, and that improvement of the heart, which are the natural, and doubtless the designed result of an humble, diligent, and sincere study of the Christian Scriptures.

"In fact, all study, properly so called, of the rest of Scripture,—all lively interest in its perusal,—would have been nearly superseded by such an inspired compendium of doctrine; to which alone, as far the most convenient for that purpose, habitual reference would have been made, in any questions that might arise. Both would have been regarded, indeed, as of divine authority; but the Compendium, as the fused and purified metal; the other, as the mine containing the crude ore. And the Compendium itself, being not, like the existing Scriptures, that *from which* the faith is to be learned, but *the very thing to be learned*, would have come to be regarded by most with an indolent, unthinking veneration, which would have exercised little or no influence on the character. Their orthodoxy would have been, as it were, petrified, like the bodies of those animals we read of incrusted in the ice of the polar regions; firm-fixed, indeed, and preserved unchangeable, but cold, motionless, lifeless. It is only when our energies are roused, and our faculties exercised, and our attention kept awake, by an ardent pursuit of truth, and anxious watchfulness against error,—when, in short, we feel ourselves to be doing something towards acquiring, or retaining, or improving our knowledge,—it is then only, that that knowledge makes the requisite practical impression on the heart and on the conduct." —*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 34—37.

Note (H.) P. 41.

Many persons are so accustomed to hear "the tradition of the primitive Church" spoken of as "designed to be the *interpreter of Scripture*," that they insensibly lose sight of the well-known facts of early Christian History. Conformably with those facts it would be much more correct to speak of *Scripture* as having been designed to be the *interpreter of Tradition*. For, the first Churches did not, it should be remembered, receive their religion from the Christian *Scriptures*, (as the Israelites did theirs from the books of Moses) but from *oral* teaching.

To guard against the errors, and doubts, and defects, and corruptions, to which oral

Tradition must ever be liable, the sacred books,—*all of them addressed to persons who were already Christians*—were provided as a lasting, pure, and authoritative record; "that they might know the certainty of those things wherein they had been instructed."

We find accordingly, as might have been expected, the references to Scripture in the works of the early Fathers, less and less frequent and exact, the higher we go back towards the days of the Apostles; *i. e.* towards the time when the Churches had received Christian history and doctrines by oral instruction *only*.

The scattered notices however in the works of the early Fathers, of facts and doctrines substantially the same as we find in the Sacred Books, and also of those books themselves, is a most valuable evidence, that (as Paley remarks) the Gospel which Christians have now is the same as Christians had then. This evidence has been well compared to that afforded by the fossil remains of antediluvian animals which Geologists have examined, and which prove that elephants, for instance, and such other animals, inhabited the earth at a certain remote period.

And it may be added, that Naturalists are accustomed, in examining fossil remains,—often mere fragments of skeletons,—to compare them with such existing animals as appear to be of kindred nature; *interpreting*, if we may so speak, the less known by the better known, and thus forming reasonable conjectures as to the general appearance and character of the fossil animal as it formerly existed. But no one would think of *reversing* this process, and taking the fossil elephant, for instance, as a standard by which to correct and modify the description and delineation of the animal now existing among us.

Even so, when we meet with any thing in the Ancient Fathers which was likely to have been derived by tradition from the Apostles, the obviously rational procedure is, to expound and interpret this by the *writings* of the Apostles that have come down to us.

Note (I.) P. 45.

"Some one may perhaps ask you, how you can know, except by taking the word of the learned for it, that there *are* these Greek and Hebrew originals which have been handed down from ancient times? or how you can be sure that our translations of them are faithful, except by trusting to the translators? So that an unlearned Christian must, after all, (some people will tell you,) be at the mercy of the learned, in what relates to the very foundations of his faith. He must take their word (it will be said) for the very existence of the Bible in the original languages, and for the meaning of what is written in it; and, therefore, he may as well at once take their word for every thing, and believe in his religion on their assurance.

"And this is what many persons do. But others will be apt to say, 'How can we tell that the learned have not deceived us? The Mohammedans take the word of the learned men among them; and the Pagans do the same; and if the people have been imposed upon by their teachers in Mohammedan and Pagan countries, how can we tell that it is not the same in Christian countries? What ground have we for trusting with such perfect confidence in our Christian teachers, that they are men who would not deceive us?'

"The truth is, however, that an unlearned Christian may have very good grounds for being a believer, without placing this entire confidence in any man. He may have reason to believe that there are ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, though he never saw one, nor could read it if he did. And he may be convinced that an English Bible gives the meaning of the original, though he may not trust completely to any one's word. In fact, he may have the same sort of evidence in this case, which every one trusts to in many other cases, where none but a madman would have any doubt at all.

"For instance, there is no one tolerably educated who does not know that there is such a country as France, though he may never have been there himself. Who is there that doubts whether there are such cities as London, and Paris, and Rome, though he may have never visited them? Most people are fully convinced that the world is round, though there are but few who have sailed round it. There are many persons living in the inland parts of these islands who never saw the sea; and yet none of them, even the most ignorant clowns, have any doubt that there is such a thing as the sea. We believe all these, and many other such things, because we have been told them.

"Now suppose any one should say, 'How do you know that travellers have not imposed upon you in all these matters; as it is well known travellers are apt to do? Is there any traveller you can so fully trust in, as to be quite sure he would not deceive you?' What would you answer? I suppose you would say, *one* traveller might, perhaps, deceive us; or even two or three might possibly combine to propagate a false story, in some case where hardly any one would have the opportunity to detect them: but in these matters there are hundreds and thousands who would be sure to contradict the accounts if they were not true; and travellers are often glad of an opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes. Many of them disagree with each other in several particulars respecting the cities of Paris and Rome; and if it had been false that there are any such cities at all, it is impossible but that

the falsehood should have been speedily contradicted. And it is the same with the existence of the sea,—the roundness of the world,—and the other things that were mentioned.

It is in the same manner that we believe, on the word of the astronomers, that the earth turns round every twenty-four hours, though we are insensible of the motion; and that the sun, which seems as if you could cover it with your hat, is immensely larger than the earth we inhabit; though there is not one person in ten thousand that has ever gone through the mathematical proof of this. And yet we have very good reason for believing it; not from any strong confidence in the honesty of any particular astronomer, but because the same things are attested by many different astronomers, who are so far from combining together in a false account, that many of them rejoice in any opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes.

"Now an unlearned man has just the same sort of reason for believing that there are ancient copies, in Hebrew and Greek, of the Christian sacred books, and of the works of other ancient authors, who mention some things connected with the origin of Christianity. There is no need for him to place full confidence in any particular man's honesty. For if any book were forged by some learned men in these days, and put forth as a translation from an ancient book, there are many other learned men, of this, and of various other countries, and of different religions, who would be eager to make an inquiry, and examine the question, and would be sure to detect any forgery, especially on an important subject.

"And it is the same with translators. Many of these are at variance with each other as to the precise sense of some particular passage; and many of them are very much opposed to each other, as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture. But all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the discourses recorded: and therefore an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and could examine it for himself; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians, who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works; and therefore the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other, proves that where they all agree they must be right.

"All these ancient books, in short, and all the translations of them, are in the condition of witnesses placed in a witness-box, in a court of justice; examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light."—*Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences*, pp. 23—27.

Note (K.) Pp. 48, 53.

I will take the liberty of here inserting extracts from the articles "Authority" and "Church," in the Appendix (on Ambiguous Terms) to the Elements of Logic.

"*Authority.*—This word is sometimes employed in its primary sense, when we refer to any one's example, testimony or judgment: as when, *e. g.*, we speak of correcting a reading in some book, on the Authority of an ancient MS.—giving a statement of some fact, on the authority of such and such historians, &c.

"In this sense the word answers pretty nearly to the Latin 'Auctoritas.'

"Sometimes again it is employed as equivalent to 'Potestas,' Power: as when we speak of the Authority of a Magistrate, &c.

"Many instances may be found in which writers have unconsciously slid from one sense of the word to another, so as to blend confusedly in their minds the two ideas. In no case perhaps has this more frequently happened than when we are speaking of the Authority of the Church: in which the ambiguity of the latter word (see the Article Church) comes in aid of that of the former. The Authority (in the primary sense) of the Catholic, *i. e.* Universal Church, at any particular period, is often appealed to, in support of this or that doctrine or practice: and it is, justly, supposed that the opinion of the great body of the Christian World affords a presumption (though only a presumption) in favour of the correctness of any interpretation of Scripture, or the expediency, at the time, of any ceremony, regulation, &c.

"On the other hand, each *particular* Church has Authority in the other sense, *viz.*, Power, over its own members, (as long as they choose to remain members,) to enforce any thing not contrary to God's Word. But the *Catholic or Universal* Church, not being one religious community on earth, can have no authority in the sense of *power;* since it is notorious that there never was a time when the power of the Pope, of a Council, or of any other human Governors, over *all* Christians, was in fact admitted, or could be proved to have any just claim to be admitted."—Pp. 349, 350.

"*Church* is sometimes employed to signify *the* Church, *i. e.* the Universal or Catholic Church,—comprehending in it all Christians; who are 'Members one of another,' and who compose the body, of which Christ is the Head; which, collectively taken, has no visible supreme Head or earthly governor, either individual or council; and which is *one*, only in reference to its One invisible Governor and Paraclete, the Spirit

of Christ, dwelling in it,—to the one common faith, and character, which ought to be found in all Christians,—and the common principles on which all Christian societies should be constituted. See Hind's *History of the Rise of Christianity*.

"Sometimes again it is employed to signify *a* Church; *i. e.* any one Society, constituted on these general principles; having governors on earth, and existing as a community possessing a certain power over its own members; in which sense we read of the 'Seven Churches in Asia;'—of Paul's having 'the care of all the Churches,' &c."—P. 353.

The two senses of the word "Authority" are in most cases so easily and completely distinguished, even by persons of no more than ordinary accuracy in the use of language, that many would be disposed, at the first glance, to wonder how any confusion ever could arise from the ambiguity. Men receive, for instance, on the "authority" of certain experienced Physicians the description of the symptoms of the Plague or some other disease, and their method of treating it; and on the "authority" of Astronomers, statements and theories relative to the heavenly bodies. So also, it is on the authority of the ancient Romans,—not of the Roman *State*, but the Roman Public,—that we acknowledge the works of Cicero and Horace and other classical authors. In all these and innumerable similar cases, no such idea as *coercive power* or claim of submission as a matter of *obligation*, is ever suggested to the mind by the word "authority." But it often happens that the *judgment* is even much more influenced by authority in this sense, than it would have been by a formal *decree* of some regularly constituted Body. For instance, if any one happened to have conversed on some subject with all, or nearly all, the individual members of the House of Commons separately and independently, and had found them all to concur in respect of some fact or opinion, this concurrence, though destitute of all *legal* force, would doubtless have more weight with his judgment than a regular *vote* of the House, if carried by a bare majority, in a House consisting, perhaps, of not one-fifth of the whole number of members, and perhaps opposed by the most judicious and best informed of them. And even so, if the Roman senate, or some regularly constituted academy at Rome, had formally pronounced on the genuineness of the Æneid, our conviction would not certainly have been stronger, and would most likely have been much weaker, than now that it is based on the independent, spontaneous, and undisputed belief of all who took an interest in the subject.

The authority on which we rest our conviction of the genuineness of the New Testament Scriptures, is of the same *kind*, though incomparably *stronger in degree*. For it is not to the Roman world in its widest acceptation, but to the *literary* portion of it, that we appeal, in respect of any volume of the Classics. On the contrary, the Christian Scriptures were addressed to all classes; (the doctrine of what is called "Reserve"—of putting the light of the Gospel under a bushel—being no part of the Apostolic system) so that probably for one reader of Cicero or Livy there were more than fifty persons,—even in a very early period of the Church,—anxious to possess copies of the New Testament Scriptures, and careful, in proportion to the high importance of the subject, as to the genuineness and accuracy of what they read. On this point I will take the liberty of citing the words of an eminent writer from an unpublished discourse, delivered a good many years ago at Oxford, in a course of lectures. . . . . "Nothing is more remarkable in Christianity than the care and anxiety with which the early Christians examined the pretensions of any writing to be received as the work of an Apostle. This will also account for the interval of time which elapsed before all the books of the Canon became generally received. It does not indeed appear that the genuineness of any of the four Gospels was ever doubted; but the Epistles being addressed to particular Churches, and at various times, it must have required for one of these some interval before its communication could take place throughout every country in which the Gospel was preached, accompanied by such evidence as should be satisfactory to every other Church. . . . . As soon as can be supposed possible the Christians of all countries remarkably agreed in receiving them as canonical; while the hesitation of a few proves only that this agreement was not a hasty or careless assent, but a deliberate and unbiassed judgment. . . . . It cannot be too strongly pressed upon your attention that the credit of a canon thus composed is infinitely greater than if it had rested *on the authority of some general Council*. For the decision of a Council is the decision of a majority only; whereas this is ratified by the voice of every separate church. It is moreover the decision not of one meeting, or of one age, but the uncontradicted *belief* of *all* the first churches, spreading gradually and naturally as the Gospel spread:—a belief which was not imposed *by authority*, but was the result of their own cautious and independent examination."

I have dwelt thus fully on this subject because I believe there are not a few who being accustomed to hear the authority of the primitive church spoken of as that on which we receive the New Testament Scriptures, are led to fancy it the authority of *some one society acting collectively*, and in its corporate capacity: and thus they lose sight of the very circumstance on which the chief force of this testimony depends; namely, that there was no decree or decision of any *one* Society, but—what has far more weight

—the concurring, independent convictions of a great number of distinct Churches in various regions of the world.

Note (L.) P. 53.

"We are often too much disposed, perhaps, not indeed to lay it down, but tacitly to assume, that those who sat at the feet of Apostles must be secure from error. It is more probable that they would hold substantial truth not unmixed with subordinate deviations from it. It was so even during the life-time of the Apostles, and why not after their decease? If indeed the good providence of God had not directed the Apostles themselves to bequeath to the Church their own instructions in writing, and we had to gather them only from the writings of their successors, then it might have been hoped that such very important witnesses, as the Apostolical Fathers would have thus become, would have been secured from every mistake, from every error at least which could seriously mislead us. But as it is, there was no more need of a perpetual miracle to give such an immunity from error to the immediate successors of the Apostles than to us. Moreover, we have an unhappy advantage over them, in that we know by sad experience the fatal consequences which by degrees resulted from even slight deviations from the language and sentiments of Inspiration; such as a sacrificial character gradually ascribed to the Eucharist, or an improper exaltation of the Christian ministry, or praise allotted upon unscriptural grounds to celibacy or asceticism. If Antiquity, quo propius aberat ab ortu et divinâ progenie, hoc melius ea fortasse, quæ erant vera, cernebat, she may have been for that very reason, knowing what was true, and meaning what was right, the less suspicious of the effect of slight deviations from the exact truth of Holy Scripture. We may lament, indeed, but we cannot be surprised, that uninspired men, holding the truth substantially both as to doctrine and discipline, should slide into error here and there in tone, or sentiment, or subordinate opinion. Doubtless their errors should be our warning. Only let us be careful to detect the seeds of error even in the writings of good and holy men in primitive times, not in order to censure them, but to secure ourselves; to counteract our natural tendency to confound the uninspired with the inspired, and to make us doubly grateful that God has blessed His Church with the unerring records, written by inspired Apostles, of Gospel truth."—*Hawkins' Sermon on the Ministry of Men*, pp. 41, 42.

Note (M.) p. 55.

"'But are we then,' (all Romanists and some Protestants would ask) 'to be perpetually wavering and hesitating in our faith?—never satisfied of our own orthodoxy?—always supposing or suspecting that there is something unscriptural in our Creed or in our worship? We could but be in this condition, if Christ had *not* promised to be with his Church, "always, even to the end of the world;"—had *not* declared by his Apostle, that his "Spirit helpeth our infirmities;" had *not* taught us to expect that where we are "gathered together in his Name, there is He in the midst of us." Are we to explain away all that Scripture says of spiritual help and guidance? Or are we to look for a certain *partial and limited* help;—that the Holy Spirit will secure us from *some* errors, but lead us, or leave us, to fall into others?'

"Such is the statement, the most plausible I can give in a small compass, of the Romish (but not exclusively Romish) argument, which goes to leave no medium between a claim to infallibiliy, on the one hand, and universal hesitation,—absolute Scepticism, on the other. An appeal to the common sense which every one, Romanist or Protestant, exercises on *all but religious* subjects, might be sufficient to prove, from the practice of those very men who use such reasoning, not only its absurdity, but their own conviction of its absurdity. In all matters which do not admit of absolute demonstration, all men except a few of extravagant self-conceit, are accustomed to regard themselves or those under whose guidance they act, as fallible; and yet act, on many occasions,—after they have taken due pains to understand the subject, to ascertain their own competency, and to investigate the particular case before them,—without any distressing hesitation. There are questions in Medicine, in Agriculture, in Navigation, &c., which sensible men, well versed in their respective arts, would decide with sufficient confidence for all practical purposes: yet without holding themselves to be infallible, but on the contrary always keeping themselves *open* to conviction,—always *on the watch* against error,—attentive to the lessons which observation furnishes,—ready to stand corrected if any argument shall be adduced (however little they may anticipate this) which will convict them of mistake.

"'Yes,' (it may be replied) 'all this holds good in worldly matters; but in the far more important case of religious concerns, God has graciously promised us spiritual assistance, to "lead us into all truth."'

"It is most true that He has. Christ has declared, 'If any man keep my saying, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him:' 'without Me ye can do nothing;' for 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.'

"But some distinction there must be between the spiritual guidance granted to the Apostles, which was accompanied by *sen-*

sible miracles, and all that has ever been bestowed, since the cessation of miracles. I do not mean a difference as to the *evidence for the existence* of each; for both are equally to be believed, if we have faith in the divine promises: but there must be a difference in the character of the divine assistance in the two cases, arising out of the presence, in the one, and the absence, in the other, of sensibly miraculous attestation. And this difference evidently is, that, in the one case, the divine agency is, in each individual instance *known*; in the other *unknown*. If an Apostle adopted any measure, or formed a decision on any doctrine, in consequence of a perceptible admonition from Heaven, he *knew* that he was, in this point, infallibly right. A sincere Christian, in the present day, may be no less truly guided by the same Spirit to adopt a right measure, or form a correct decision; but he never can *know* this with certainty, before the day of judgment. It is not that spiritual aid is now *withdrawn*, but that it is *imperceptible*; as indeed its ordinary sanctifying influence *always was*. It is to be known only by its fruits; of which we may judge by a diligent and candid examination of Scripture, and a careful, humble, self-distrusting exercise of our own fallible judgment.

"It is conceivable, therefore, that an individual or a Church may be, in fact, *free* from error; but none can ever be (either at the present moment, or in future) *secure* from error. We are not bound to believe, or to suspect, that any of the doctrines we hold are erroneous; but we are bound never to feel such a confidence in their correctness, as to shut the door against objection, and to dispense with a perpetual and vigilant examination. Even the fullest conviction that a complete perfection in soundness of doctrine is attainable has in it nothing of arrogance,—nothing of a presumptuous claim to infallibility, as long as we steadily keep in view, that even one who should have attained this, never can, in this life, be *certain* of it. We are taught, I think in Scripture, to expect that the pious and diligent student will be assisted by the divine guidance; and that in proportion as he is humble, patient, sincere, and watchfully on his guard against that unseen current of passions and prejudices which is ever tending to drive him out of the right course,—in the same degree will he succeed in attaining all necessary religious truths. But how far he *has* exercised these virtues, or how far he may have been deceiving himself, he never can be certain, till the great day of account. In the mean time, he must *act* on his convictions, as if he were certain of their being correct; he must *examine* and re-examine the grounds of them as if he suspected them of being erroneous.

"In this it is that great part of our trial in the present life consists: and it is precisely analogous to what takes place in the greater part of temporal concerns. The skilful and cautious navigator keeps his reckoning with care, but yet never so far trusts to that as not to 'keep a look-out,' as it is termed, and to take an 'observation,' when opportunity offers. There is no risk incurred, from his strongly hoping that his computations will prove correct; provided he never resigns himself to such an indolent reliance on them as to neglect any opportunity of verifying them. The belief, again, whether true or false, that it is possible for a time-keeper to go with perfect exactness, can never mislead any one who is careful to make allowance for the possibility of error in his own, and to compare it, whenever he has opportunity, with the Dial which receives the light from heaven."—*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 43—49.

Note (N.) P. 62.

"It has been said that the Pope, the Bishops, the Priests, and those who dwell in convents, form the spiritual, or ecclesiastical State; and that the princes, nobles, citizens, and peasants, form the secular state or laity. This is a fine story, truly. Let no one, however, be alarmed at it. *All* Christians belong to the spiritual State; and there is no other difference between them than that of the functions they discharge. * * * * * If any pious laymen were banished to a desert, and having no regularly consecrated priest among them, were to agree to choose for that office one of their number, married or unmarried, this man would be as truly a priest as if he had been consecrated by all the bishops in the world. Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian were chosen in this manner. Hence it follows that laity and priests, princes and bishops, or as they say, the Clergy and the Laity, have, in reality, nothing to distinguish them, but their *functions*. They all belong to the same Estate; but all have not the same work to perform," &c.—*Luth. Op.* l. xvii. f. 457, et seq.

It may be needful to add, that if in a Church thus constituted, or in any other, the *Laity* are admitted to a share in the government of it, and to ecclesiastical offices, this would be, not only allowable, but wise and right. That laymen,—that is, those who hold no *spiritual* office—should take part in legislating for the Church, and should hold *ecclesiastical* offices, as in the Scotch Kirk, and in the American Episcopalian Church, (always supposing, however, that they are Members of the Church; not, as in this country, belonging to other Communions) is far better than that the whole government should be in the hands of men of one Profession, the clerical.

That this has nothing of an *Erastian* character, it would be unnecessary to mention, but that I have seen the observation—in itself perfectly true—made in such a manner as to imply what is not true; *i. e.* so as to imply that some persons do, or may, main-

tain that there is something of Erastianism in such an arrangement. But who ever heard of any such charge being brought? Who, for instance, ever taxed the Scotch Kirk, or the American Episcopalian, with being Erastian, on account of their having Lay-Elders? Erastianism has always been considered as consisting in making the *State as* such,—the Civil *Magistrate by virtue of his office*,—prescribe to the People what they shall believe, and how worship God.

Note (O.) P. 71.

With respect to the first question (in reference to lay-baptism) it is plain that, according to the above principles, a Church has a right to admit, or refuse to admit, Members. This right it possesses as a *Society:* as a *Christian* Society, sanctioned by our Heavenly Master, it has a right to administer his Sacraments; and it has a right to decide who shall or shall not exercise certain functions, and under what circumstances. If it permit Laymen (that is, those who are excluded from *other* spiritual functions) to baptize, it does, by that permission, *constitute* them its functionaries, in respect of that particular point. And this it has a right to do, or to refuse to do. If a Church refuse to recognize as valid any baptism not administered by such and such officers, then the pretended administration of it by any one else, is of course null and void, as wanting that sanction of a Christian Church which alone can confer validity.

With respect to the second question, it does appear to me extremely unadvisable, —derogatory to the dignity of the ordinance, —and tending both to superstition and to profaneness, that the admission, through a divinely-instituted Rite, of members into the Society, should be in any case entrusted to persons not expressly chosen and solemnly appointed to any office in that Society.

Nearly similar reasoning will apply, I think, to the case of Ordinations. What appears to me the wisest course, would be that each Church should require a distinct appointment *by that Church* itself, to any ministerial office to be exercised therein; whether the person so appointed had been formerly ordained or not, to any such office in *another* Church. But the form of this appointment need not be such as to cast any stigma on a former Ordination, by implying that the person in question had *not* been a real and regular minister of *another* distinct Society. For any Church has a fair right to demand that (unless reason be shown to the contrary) its acts should be regarded as valid within the pale of that Church itself: but no Church can reasonably claim a right to ordain ministers for *another* Church.

As for the remaining question,—What is the actual determination as to this point,—*this* is of course a distinct question in reference to each Church.

On this point it is only necessary to remark how important it is, with a view to good order and peace, that *some* determination should be made, and should be clearly set forth, by any Church, as to this and other like practical questions; and that they should not be left in such a state of uncertainty as to furnish occasion for disputes and scruples.* Many points of *doctrine*, indeed, that may fairly be regarded as non-essential, it may be both allowable and wise for a Church to leave at large, and pronounce no decision on them; allowing each Minister, if he thinks fit, to put forth his own exposition, *as* the result of his own judgment, and not as a decision of the Church. But it is not so, in matters even intrinsically indifferent, where Church *discipline* is concerned. A Minister ought to be as seldom as possible left in the predicament of *not knowing what he ought to do* in a case that comes before him. And though it is too much to expect from a Church composed of fallible men that its decisions on every point should be such as to obtain universal *approbation* as the very best, it is but fair to require that it should at least *give* decisions, according to the best judgment of its Legislators, on points which, in each particular case that arises, *must* be decided on one way or another.

That so many points of this character should in our own Church be left in a doubtful state, is one out of the many evils resulting from the want of a Legislative Government for the Church: which for more than a century has had none,† except the Civil Legislature; a Body as unwilling, as it is unfitted, to exercise any such functions. Such certainly was not the state of things designed or contemplated by our Reformers; and I cannot well understand the consistency of those who are perpetually eulogizing the Reformers, their principles and proceedings, and yet so completely run counter to them in a most fundamental point, as to endeavour to prevent, or not endeavour to promote, the establishment of a Church government; which no one can doubt *they* at least regarded as a thing essential to the well-being, if not to the permanent existence, of a Church.‡

I have never heard any thing worth notice urged on the opposite side, except the apprehension that such a Church government as would be probably appointed would be likely to be *objectionable;*—would probably be a *bad* one. I have no doubt of this; if by "bad" be meant, *faulty*. In this sense, I am convinced that no government, civil or ecclesiastical, ever existed, or will exist, that is not "*bad*." All governments being form-

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* See "Appeal on behalf of Church government."

† See "Case of Occasional Days and Prayers," by John Johnson, A. M., Vicar of Cranbrook, in the Diocese of Canterbury.

‡ See "Speech on presenting a Petition from the Diocese of Kildare, with Appendix," reprinted in a volume of Charges and other Tracts.

ed and administered by fallible men, it would be absurd to look for any that shall be exempt from errors, both in design and execution.* But the important question, and that which alone is really to the present purpose, is, whether it is likely a Government should be established that is *worse* than the absence of government.

As for the specific objections entertained against a Church government, I believe the particular evils most commonly apprehended from the establishment of one, are these two: the conferring of an excessive power on the *Clergy*, who, it is hastily assumed, are to be sole Governors of the Church; and the predominance, in any Assembly to which the supreme power might be entrusted, of some one of the exclusive and violent parties existing in the Church; who would accordingly, it is concluded, establish and enforce such regulations as would drive out of its Communion a large portion of its members.

The former of the above objections will disappear, I think, on a very moderate degree of reflection. The idea that all ecclesiastical government must of course be vested in the Clergy, arises, partly perhaps, from the common error of using the terms "Church" and "Clergy" as synonymous, partly, from men's recollecting that the *Convocation* (of which the shadow still remains) consisted of Clergy, and forgetting that it had not the government of the Church solely, but conjointly with the King and the Parliament;—that Parliament consisted of *members* indeed, but not of *ministers* of the Church; and that the Prayer-book does not rest on the sole authority of Convocation, but is part and parcel of an Act of Parliament. And whether we look to the actual condition of our own Church, in which the appointment to all the Bishoprics, and to most of the Parishes, is in lay-hands, or to the offshoot of our Church in the United States, which is governed partly by lay-members, we cannot consider it as any thing unprecedented that the Laity should have a share in Ecclesiastical government.

In truth, nothing can be more unlikely than that either the Clergy should think of excluding the Laity, or the Laity, themselves, from all voice in ecclesiastical regulations.

The other apprehension,—that of a complete preponderance of some extreme party,—arises, I conceive, from not taking into account the influence which, in every Assembly and every Society, is always exercised,—except in some few cases of very extraordinary excitement, and almost of temporary disorganization,—by those who are in a *minority*. It might appear at first sight—and such is usually the expectation of a child of ordinary intelligence, and of all those who are deficient in an intelligent study of history, or observation of what is passing in the world,—that whatever Party might in any Meeting or in any Community, obtain a *majority*, or in whatever other way, a *superiority*, would be certain to carry out their own principles to the utmost, with a total disregard of all the rest; so that in a Senate for instance, consisting, suppose, of 100 members, a majority, whether of 51 or 49, or of 70 to 40, or of 95 to 5, would proceed in all respects as if the others had no existence: and that no *mutual concessions* or compromises could take place except between parties exactly balanced. In like manner a person wholly ignorant of Mechanics might suppose that a body acted on by several unequal forces in different directions would obey altogether the strongest, and would move in the direction of that; instead of moving, as we know it does, in the *diagonal*;—in a direction approaching *nearer* to that of the strongest force; but not coinciding with it.

And experience shows that in human affairs as well as in Mechanics, such expectations are not well founded. If no tolerable wise and good measures were ever carried except in an Assembly where there was a complete predominance of men sufficiently enlightened and public spirited to have a decided preference for those measures above all others, the world would, I conceive, be much worse governed than it really is.

No doubt, the larger the proportion of judicious and patriotic individuals, the better for the community; but it seems to be the appointment of Providence that the prejudices and passions, and interests of different men should be so various as not only to keep one another somewhat in check, but often to bring about, or greatly help to bring about, *mixed* results, often far preferable to any thing devised or aimed at by *any* of the parties.

The British Constitution, for instance, no intelligent reader of history would regard as wholly or chiefly the work of men fully sensible of the advantages of a government so mixed and balanced. It was in a great measure the result of the efforts, partially neutralizing each other, of men who leaned, some of them towards pure Monarchy, and others towards Republicanism. And again, though no one can doubt how great an advance (it is as yet only an *advance*) in the principles of religious *toleration*, and of making a final appeal to *Scripture alone*, is due to the Reformation, yet the Reformers were slow in embracing these principles. They were at first nearly as much disposed as their opponents to force their own interpretations of Scripture on every one, and to call in the Magistrate to suppress heresy by force. But not being able to agree among themselves *whose* interpretation of Scripture should be received as authoritative, and *who* should be entrusted with the Sword that was to extirpate heresy, compromises and mutual concessions gradually led more and more to the *practical* adoption of principles whose

* "Erun vitia, donec homines."

theoretical truth and justice is, even yet, not universally perceived.

And similar instances may be found in every part of history. Without entering into a detailed examination of the particular mode in which, on each occasion, a superior party is influenced by those opposed to them, —either from reluctance to drive them to desperation, or otherwise,—certain it is, that looking only to the results,—the practical working of any Government,—in the long run and in the general course of its measures,—we do find something corresponding to the composition of forces in Mechanics; and we find oftener than not, that the course actually pursued is better (however faulty) than could have been calculated from the character of the greater part of those who administered the Government. The wisest and most moderate, even when they form but a small minority, are often enabled amidst the conflict of those in opposite extremes, to bring about decisions, less wise and just indeed than they themselves would have desired, but far better than those of either of the extreme parties.

The above views are the more important, because any one who does not embrace them, will be likely, on contemplating any wise institution or enactment of *former times*, to be thrown into indolent despondency, if he find, as he often will, that the majority of those around us do not seem to come up to the Standard which those institutions and enactments appear to him to imply. He takes for granted that the whole or the chief part of the members of those Assemblies, &c., in which such and such measures were carried, must have been men of a corresponding degree of good sense, and moderation, and public spirit: and perceiving as he thinks that an Assembly of such men could not now be found, he concludes that wisdom and goodness (in Governments at least) must have died with our ancestors; or at least that no good is *at present* to be hoped from any Government. And yet perhaps the truth will be that the greater part of the very Assemblies whose measures he is admiring may have consisted of men of several parties, each of which would, *if left entirely to itself*, have made a much worse decision than the one actually adopted; and *that one* may have been such, as, though not actually to coincide with, yet most nearly to approach to the opinions of the wisest and best members of the Assembly, though those may have been but a small minority. And it may be therefore, that he may have around him the materials of an Assembly not at all inferior in probity or intelligence to that which he is contemplating with despairing admiration.

To apply what has been said to the case now before us; it does seem to me that in a Church Government established on any tolerably fair and natural principles, though we must calculate on such imperfections as must attend every thing wherein imperfect man is concerned, there would be no reason to apprehend *more* imperfections than the best *civil* Government is liable to, (which every one admits to be on the whole a most important benefit) or than are to be found in the Ecclesiastical Government of the American Episcopalians; which though administered by fallible mortals like ourselves, is found, on the whole, to work very satisfactorily.

To expect that any extreme party would exercise such uncontrolled sway as materially to corrupt or subvert the Church, would be against all experience.

Suppose for instance that the principal legislative power of some Church were lodged in some Body of men the majority of whom were attached, more or less, to two or more Parties, entertaining extreme views: one, suppose, leaning a good deal towards the system of the Greek and Romish Churches, another towards that of the Puritans, &c. It would argue, I think, great ignorance of the lessons of History to conclude that one or other of these Parties must carry out their own views in the most unmitigated excess; and that the only question would be, *which* of the Parties would succeed in completely crushing the other, and would thenceforward domineer over, and rigidly coerce, or expel, all other Members of the Church. The conclusion warranted by analogy would, I think, be, that the opposite extremes would temper and partially neutralize each other;—that the moderate and judicious portion of the Assembly, and who were themselves the most exempt from party bias, would persuade the least *im*moderate of each party to make some concessions for the sake of peace, and to forego some of the most unreasonable of their requisitions;—that these mediators, by supporting what was wrong, in each party (for almost every party has something of each) would go a good way towards ultimately rejecting the worst part, and retaining the best part, of each proposal;—and that the final result would be, that many points would be left at large, which would have most probably been determined in an objectionable way by either party if left wholly unchecked; and that other points, (such as require to be determined one way or another in order to avoid future dissension) would be determined on wiser and better principles than the greater part of the Assembly would, in the first instance, have adopted; while an opening would remain for continual progress in the removal of such defects, and the adoption of such improvements, as experience and reflection might point out.

Another consideration which ought not to be lost sight of is that for any evils which *might* be produced through the fault of Legislators, *those Legislators* would be *responsible.*: while for the evils (not, which *may* arise, but which are *actually existing*, notorious and grievous,) caused by the *want* of a Legislature, every Prelate, every Minis-

ter, and every Member of the Church is responsible who has it in his power to do any thing—much or little—towards the remedy of that want, and neglects to do his utmost.

NOTE (P.) P. 73.

IT might be added that, among those who express the greatest dread and detestation of "German Neology,"—"German Philosophy,"—the "daring speculations of the Germans," &c., are to be found some of that class of Anglican Divines, whose doctrines apparently correspond the most closely (as far as we can judge respecting two confessedly mystic schools) with those of that very Neology. The very circumstance itself that both *are* schools of Mysticism,—that both parties have one system for the mass of mankind, and another—whether expressed in different language or in the same words understood in a totally different sense—for the initiated, affords a presumption, when there are some points of coincidence in the doctrine *divulged*, that a still further agreement may be expected in the *reserved* doctrines.

As the advocates of reserve among us speak of not intending to inculcate generally such conclusions as a logical reasoner will correctly deduce by following out their principles, and again speak of an ordinary reader being likely to "miss their real meaning, by not being aware of the peculiar sense in which they employ terms," so those German Transcendentalists whom I allude to, —whose system of Theology—or rather of Atheology—is little else than a new edition of the Pantheism of the ancient Heathen Philosophers, of the Brahmins, and the Buddhists, —use a similar double-meaning language. They profess Christianity, and employ profusely such terms as a "God," "Faith," "Incarnation," "Miracle," "Immortality," &c., attaching to these words, a meaning quite remote from what is commonly understood by them. Their "God" is the God of Pantheism; not a personal agent, but a certain vital principle diffused through the Material Universe, and of which every human soul is a portion; which is at death to be reabsorbed into the infinite Spirit, and become just what it was before birth,* exactly according to the ancient system of philosophy described by Virgil: "Mens agitat molem et toto se corpore miscet; Inde hominum pecudumque genus," &c. And the other terms alluded to are understood by them in a sense no less wide from the popular acceptation.

Both parties again agree in deprecating all employment of reasoning in matters pertaining to religion: both decry the historical evidence of Christianity, and discourage as profane all appeal to evidence; and both disparage Miracles considered as a proof of the divine origin of Christianity, alleging that *every* event that occurs is equally a miracle; meaning therefore exactly what in ordinary language would be expressed by saying that *nothing* is miraculous.

Other coincidences may be observed; such as the strong desire manifested by both parties to explain away, or soften down the line of demarcation between what ordinary Christians call the *Scriptures*, and every thing subsequent; between what *we* call the Christian Revelation, considered as an historical transaction recorded in the new Testament; and any pretended after revelation, or improvement, or completion, or perfect developement, of "the system of true Religion." To Christianity *as a Revelation completed* in our sacred *books*, both parties, more or less openly, according to circumstances, confess their objection.

And it is remarkable that even the vehement censures pronounced by one of these schools, on the speculations of the other, is far from being inconsistent with their fundamental agreement in principles. For of the German Neologists themselves, some of the leading writers strongly condemn the rashness, with which some conclusions have been openly stated by others of the same school, and confessedly proceeding on principles fundamentally the same.

If any one therefore who belongs to a school of mystical reserve, should be suspected, in consequence of a remarkable agreement between some of his acknowledged tenets and the German Neology, of a further degree of secret concurrence, beyond, perhaps, what he is really conscious of, he must not wonder at, or complain of such suspicion; nor expect at once to repel it by the strongest censure of those writers, and professed renunciation of their doctrines; unless he can also make up his mind to renounce, likewise the system of a "Double doctrine" altogether, resolving, and proclaiming his resolution to speak henceforth "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," respecting his religious tenets, and foreswearing totally the practice of employing language "in a peculiar sense" different from what is ordinarily understood by it.

* See Essay 1st, First Series.

THE END.

THE

ERRORS OF ROMANISM

TRACED TO

THEIR ORIGIN IN HUMAN NATURE

BY RICHARD WHATELY, D. D.

ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Eccles. i. 9.

.... γιγνόμενα μὲν, καὶ ἀεὶ ὁμοῖα, ἕως ἄν ἡ ΑΥΤΗ ΦΥΣΙΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ ᾖ μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαίτερα, καὶ τοῖς εἰδόσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται. Thucyd. b. iii. ch. 82.

SECOND EDITION.

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1847.

THE PUBLISHER'S

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE following work ought to need no other recommendation than the name of its distinguished author, and none other has been found necessary, to secure the attention of the well informed and candid portion of the religious public.

Confident of this, the publisher sent forth his first edition without any words of explanation or commendation; and such has been its reception, that a second edition is now required to meet the demand. Its success, however, has been in despite of a desperate attempt to depreciate the literary and theological pretensions of its author, and on this account the publisher takes occasion to adduce a few facts and testimonies, calculated to secure from all, a dispassionate perusal of the work.

When the "Kingdom of Christ" was published in this country, two years ago, the editor of one of our periodicals described its author as one of "those men, who are indebted for all their importance and consideration, to the *station* which they happen to occupy." And the author of a recent review of that work, seems determined to deprive him of this only claim, by omitting all reference to the station which he occupies, either in the title page, or throughout his work—styling him simply Dr. Whateley. The admirers of our author need have no objection to this omission, since he is one of those men who have derived *least* notoriety from official station.

He had earned an extended fame, as a writer on many branches of science, and many departments in Theology; and it was on this account *principally*, that Dr. Whateley was preferred to the Arch Bishopric of Dublin. Previously, he was a Divine of Oxford, though not an "Oxford Divine," and how he was there esteemed is evident from the fact that he was appointed a Fellow of Oriel College, a Bampton Lecturer, and thrice "Select Preacher" before the University.

He has long been known in this country. Thirteen years ago, Dr. Whittingham, the present bishop of Maryland, introduced him more especially to our notice, by re-publishing his Essays on St. Paul's Epistles, with scarce a criticism, declaring himself "unwilling that a work combining so much candor and humility in the search for truth, with such abilities in its manifestation, should remain any longer inaccessible to his countrymen."

In all his subsequent writings Dr. Whateley has maintained his high reputation as a Theologian and a controversialist. Even the British Critic, in a review of his last work, has these candid observations—"that Dr. Whateley's writings all display great sincerity, that the writer's strong conviction of the truth and importance of his principles has been the main reason of their publication, and that he carefully avoids giving utterance to any sentiment which is not the genuine expression of his own mind—all this it would be the height of prejudice to doubt. He possesses originality of expression, fertility of illus-

tration, ingenuity of argument, and what is much higher praise, general candour, simplicitly and moral courage."

Nor is he chargeable with any declension in his theological system during the interval which has elapsed. It was said indeed in the periodical first mentioned above, that he was "so fast descending from one heresy to another, that even dissenters must soon become ashamed of quoting him as authority." But it is often the case that, as we sail upon the stream of religious enquiry, objects on land seem to be changing their position while we ourselves are being carried away by various influences upon our own minds.

That Bishop Whateley has not changed *his* opinions is clear, for it is mentioned as a reproach in the British Critic, that since his change to his present official station, a period which the reviewer thinks the most momentous in theological history since the Reformation, "he has sent forth from Dublin, the same sentiments, arguments and even quotations, which had been heard from his lips in the University pulpit." This period has indeed been one of mighty changes, but those who regard them as retrogradations and not improvements, will not be displeased with Dr. Whateley, for continuing as he was from the beginning.

That his opinions, as expressed in the "Kingdom of Christ," have been thus permanent, is evident from the fact, that throughout his pages, he appeals to the work now re-published. This work was itself composed at *Oxford*, as will be seen by his dedication to Blancho White, from whom he derived the original suggestion of its plan. It should be known that it was published long before the Oxford Tracts were sent forth, and while it is powerful as an analysis of Romish Errors, and searching as a discovery of protestant fallibility, its chief interest is in the fact that it is almost prophetic of the results of tendencies which were only suspected by its author at the time of its publication. It is not our purpose to detain the reader longer from the perusal of the work itself. Upon one topic a single remark will be added.

The view here given of the Christian ministry, has been severely remarked upon, and there has seemed to be an attempt to throw all its odium upon Dr. Whateley, as if his opinion with regard to the use of the terms Priest, Altar and Sacrifice were peculiar to him. It ought therefore to be known by all who inquire, and not concealed by those who write upon this subject, that Whateley's view is no other than that strenuously maintained by Bishop White in all his publications; who declared that he "perceived in the writings of those opposed to it, a train of sentiment which by a consistent progression ended in the worst of the errors of the Romish System."

Philadelphia, July 1, 1844.

TO THE

REVEREND JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE, M.A.

OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

MY DEAR FRIEND—

I AM aware that it is a violation of established forms to take the liberty of dedicating this work to you, without previously applying for your permission.

The ground on which I petition for your indulgence is, my fear that your modesty might have led you, if not to withhold your consent altogether, yet to prohibit me from speaking of you in the manner I could wish. Not that it is my design to make this dedication the vehicle of a formal panegyric; or to comment either on that part of your character and conduct which is before the public, and which it would be an affront to my readers to suppose them not to know and admire; or again, on the particulars of our private friendship, in which they have no concern. But I feel bound to take this occasion of acknowledging publicly one particular advantage which I have derived from my intercourse with you: I am indebted to you for such an insight into the peculiarities of the church of Rome, as I could never have gained, either from any one who had not been originally, or from any one who still continued, a member of that church. Your intimate acquaintance with it, has enlarged and cleared the view I had long since taken of its system; as being the gradual, spontaneous growth of the human heart;—as being, what may be called, in a certain sense, the *religion of nature*; viz., such a kind of religion as "the natural man" is disposed to frame for himself.

One who has both been so deeply versed as yourself in the learning of that church, and has also had the opportunities you have enjoyed, of not merely forming a judgment of the apparent *tendencies* of each part of the system, but observing how it *actually* works, and what are the practical results—and who has subsequently been enabled, under the divine blessing, to embrace a purer faith—must, unless he fall far short of you in candour or intelligence, be much better qualified than either a Romanist, or one brought up in our church, to estimate the true character of the two religions. As, on the one hand, (like Moses, who was "skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians,") you may be reckoned, as far as knowledge is concerned, an eminent Roman Catholic divine, so, on the other hand, you may, in one point of view, be considered as more eminently Protestant, than most members of our church. For I cannot, of course, be certain, of others, or even of myself, that, if we had, like you, been educated in the Romish church, we should have escaped, like you, from that spiritual bondage;—that we might not have either continued enslaved to her tenets, or have been plunged irrecoverably into that gulf of Atheism, to the brink of which she brings her votaries: which she does, as you have well pointed out, by sedulously presenting, as the sole alternative, implicit devotion to her decrees, or, no religion at all.

It is, as I have said, impossible to pronounce with certainty, of any one bred a Protestant, that he would have *become* so, had he been educated in the Romish system: but it might safely be pronounced, that I should *not* have done so, were I one of those who stigmatize you as an apostate, for renouncing and testifying against the system in which you were brought up. I should then deserve to be characterized as Protestant only by the accidents of country and kindred.

You are doubtless familiar however with the principle long since noticed by the great historian of Greece, and ready to make allowance for its operation, that "most men are slow to give another credit for feeling nobler sentiments, and acting on higher motives, than any that have ever found a place in their own breasts."*

* ——— εἴτι ὑπὲρ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούσι. μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἑτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἱκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαι τι ὧν ἤκουσε. τῷ δὲ ὑπερβάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες, ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστοῦσιν. Thucyd. b. ii. ch. 35.

Posterity nevertheless will, I am convinced, do justice to your character, and appreciate your services.

Diram qui contudit *Hydram*,
Comperit invidiam supremo fine domari.

You have been led, by the circumstances in which you were placed, and of which you have taken due advantage, to examine different systems carefully, and to make up your mind on mature deliberation. And the same circumstances which induced you to observe, and enabled you to estimate, the *differences* between Romanists and Protestants, have also qualified you to notice the points of *resemblance* in all men; to recognize in all, of whatever country or persuasion, the tendency towards each of those Romish errors which you have seen magnified and exaggerated in that church;—to detect the minutest drop, in the most disguised mixture, of those poisons which you have seen in their rectified and concentrated form, operating to produce their baneful results.

With a view, therefore, to the particular object of the present work, it must have been very much my own fault, if I have not derived from your conversation the most valuable suggestions and corrections. I only regret that you did not yourself undertake the task, for which no one else can be, on the whole, so well qualified.

As it is, I have only to express thus publicly my sense of the advantages I have enjoyed, and to beg your favourable acceptance of this dedication of a work, which you will thus have, indirectly, so much contributed. Should I be enabled, by placing in a somewhat new light, questions which have been long since copiously discussed, to awaken the attention even of a few, whether Romanists or Protestants, to the faults, either existing, or likely to arise, among them, you will, I am sure, rejoice to have had a share in contributing to such an effect, and to have your name connected with a work which shall have produced it. At all events, you will, I am sure, give me credit for good intentions: nor will you, I trust, be either surprised or mortified, if I should have to encounter, on this occasion especially, (the views set forth being far from flattering to human nature,) some of that opposition of various kinds, and from various quarters, with which many of my former publications have been assailed, and from which yours have not been exempt.

To myself this is not a matter of wonder, or of dissatisfaction. Not that I have any wish to excite controversy; or any intention of ever engaging in it: but he who endeavours to inculcate any neglected truths, or to correct any prevailing errors, must be prepared, if he succeed in attracting any share of public attention, to encounter more or less of opposition. It would be most extravagant to expect to convince at once, if at all, every one, or even many, who before thought differently. If, therefore, in such a case, he meet with no opposition, he may take that as a sign either that he has excited no interest at all, or that he was mistaken as to the state of the prevailing opinions among others, or that his own have not been fully understood. Opposition does not indeed, of itself, prove either that he is right, or that he is wrong: but, at all events, the discussion which results, is likely, if conducted with temper and sincerity, to lead to the ascertainment of the truth.

And it is worth remarking, that in many cases the opposition will appear even greater than it really is. For as the great majority of those who had before thought differently from an author, will, in general, continue to think so, and of course will be prepared, at once, loudly to censure him; so those, whether many or few, who are induced to alter, or to doubt, their former opinion, will seldom be found very forward to proclaim the change, at least till after a considerable interval. Even the most candid and modest, if they are also cautious, will seldom decidedly make up their minds anew, except slowly and gradually.

Hence it often happens, I believe, that while men are led, naturally enough, to estimate the effect produced by any work, from the comparative numbers and weight of those who applaud, and those who censure it, it shall, in fact, have produced little or no effect on either: those whom it may have really influenced, in bringing them to reconsider their former opinions, being rather disposed, for the most part, to say little about it.

Such as have maintained notions at variance with mine, in Christian meekness and candour, may be assured of my perfect good-will towards them, and of my earnest wish that whichever of us is in the right, may succeed in establishing his conclusions. As for any one who may have assailed, or who may hereafter assail me, with unchristian bitterness, or with sophistical misrepresentation, much as I of course lament that such weapons should ever be employed at all, I can truly say, (and I doubt not you will say the same for yourself,) that I had far rather see them employed against me, than on my side. There is also this consolatory reflection for any one who is so attacked: that weak or sophistical arguments are then the most likely to be resorted to, when better cannot be found;—that one who indulges in invective, affords some kind of presumption, that he at least can find no such reasons as are even to himself satisfactory;—and that misrepresentation is the natural resource of those who find the positions they are determined to oppose, to be such, that if fairly stated, and fully understood, they could not be overthrown. Such attacks, therefore, tend rather, as far as they go, to support, than to weaken, in the judgment of rational inquirers, the cause against which they are directed.

You may have observed too, that there are some particular charges often brought, without proof, against an author, which are not only unfounded, but are occasioned by qualities the very reverse of those imputed. You may have heard a writer censured as "sophistical," precisely because he is *not* sophistical; and as "dogmatical," *because* he is not dogmatical. With a work that is really sophistical, the obvious procedure is, either to pass it by with contempt, or, if the fallacies seem worth noticing, to detect and expose them. But if men find the arguments opposed to them to be such, that they cannot *prove* them sophistical, it is yet easy (and it is not unnatural) at least to *call* them so. The phrase "sophistical arguments," accordingly, is often in reality equivalent to, "such as I would fain answer, but cannot." Not that in such cases the imputation is necessarily insincere, or even necessarily false. One whose reasoning powers are not strong, may really suspect, though he cannot point it out, a latent fallacy in some argument which leads to a conclusion he objects to; and it may so happen that his suspicion is right, and that a fallacy may exist which he has not the skill to detect. But then, he is not justified in *pronouncing* the argument sophistical, till he is prepared to make good the charge. A verdict without evidence must always be unjust, whether the accused be, in fact, innocent of guilty.

Dogmatism again, to speak strictly, consists in assertions without proof. But one who does really thus dogmatize, you may have often seen received with more toleration than might have been anticipated. Those who think with him, often derive some degree of satisfaction from the confirmation thus afforded to their opinion, though not by any fresh argument, yet by an implied assent to such as have convinced themselves: those again who think differently, feel that the author has merely declared his sentiments, and (provided his language be not insolent and overbearing) has left them in undisturbed possession of their own. Not so, one who supports his opinions by cogent reasons: he seems, by so doing, to call on them either to refute the arguments, or to alter their own views. And however mildly he may express himself, they are sometimes displeased at the molestation thus inflicted, by one who is not content merely to think as he pleases, leaving others to do the same, but seems aiming to compel others (the very word "cogent," as applied to reasons, seems to denote this character) to think with him, whether they like it or not. And this displeasure one may often hear vented in the application of the title "dogmatical;" which denotes, when so applied, the exact reverse of dogmatism; viz., that the author is not satisfied with simply declaring his own opinions; (which is really dogmatism,) but, by the reasoning he employs, calls on others to adopt them.

I am aware, however, that truth may be advocated, and by sound arguments, in a needlessly offensive form. It has always been my aim to avoid, as far as may be without a sinful compromise of truth, every thing tending to excite hostile feelings, either within or without the pale of my own church. And I cherish a hope, that I may have done something in the present work towards softening the feelings of the candid among Romanists and Protestants towards each other. I have not indeed attempted this, by labouring to extenuate or explain away the

erroneousness of the Romish tenets and practices; because this would imply, according to my views, a sacrifice of truth. But to trace those errors to the principles of our common nature, and, while we strongly censure the faults themselves, to acknowledge our own ever-besetting danger of falling into the like, is, I trust, a more conciliating, as I am convinced it is a truer view of the subject, than to cast the whole burden of blame on a particular church, and to exult in our own supposed perfection.

You will recognize in the following pages a series of discourses delivered before the University, and the whole or the greater part of which you heard. I have inserted passages in several parts; but have made, on the whole, little other alterations. It would not have been difficult to give the work more of a systematic form, and to adopt a style more removed from that which is suited to delivery: but I was inclined to think, that such alterations would have had no tendency to make the subject better understood, and might rather have lessened the interest of it. I accordingly determined to print the whole very nearly as it was delivered.

The views I have taken are not anticipated in any work I am acquainted with. Several writers indeed have glanced slightly, incidentally and partially, at the principle here attempted to be established, or have advanced some steps towards it. Bp. Lavington has compared a part of the Romish errors with those of some modern enthusiasts; and Middleton, another part, with those of the ancient Pagans; but they have stopped short of the general conclusion to which my own observations and reflections, combined with yours, have led me.

I have, however, availed myself, in several instances, of the suggestions of various writers; to whom, as far as my memory would serve, I have made reference. It so happens that some of these, including yourself, are living authors whom I have the pleasure of knowing personally: and I am not sure that I may not, on that ground, incur censure for citing them with approbation; as if I must unavoidably be biassed by partial feelings. I would rather, however, incur the suspicion of such partiality, than of not daring to do that justice to a friend which would be due to a stranger. And it should in fairness be remembered, that though it is very possible to overrate a friend, yet, as it is also possible that a writer of real merit may possess personal friends, so, it would be hard that this should necessarily operate to his disadvantage, by precluding them from bearing just testimony in his favour.

Once more I intreat you to accept my apology for the liberty I have taken, and to believe me,

With deep-felt esteem and veneration,
Your faithful and affectionate friend,
RICHARD WHATELY.

CONTENTS.

THE

ERRORS OF ROMANISM

TRACED TO

THEIR ORIGIN IN HUMAN NATURE.

CHAP. I.

SUPERSTITION.

§. 1. THERE are few things probably that appear at the first glance more strange to a reader of the Old Testament, than the frequent lapses of the Israelites into idolatrous and other superstitious practices;—the encouragement or connivance often granted to these by such of the rulers as were by no means altogether destitute of piety;—and the warm commendations which are accordingly bestowed on such of their kings as avoided and repressed these offences. Their law had been delivered and its authority maintained with such strikingly awful solemnity, and its directions were so precise and minute, that a strict conformity to it appears, to us, hardly to amount to a virtue, and the violation of it, to an almost incredible infatuation. It is not without a considerable mental effort that we can so far transport ourselves into the situation of persons living in so very different a condition of society from our own, as to estimate duly the nature and the force of the temptations to which they were exposed, to make fair allowance for their backslidings, and to bestow adequate applause on those of them who adhered steadfastly to the divine commands.

The conduct of Hezekiah, for instance, who "removed the high-places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; (for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it;) is likely perhaps to strike some readers as so far from being any heroic effort of virtue, that the chief wonder is, how his predecessors and their subjects could have been so strangely remiss and disobedient, as to leave him so much to do. Things however being in such a state, the duty of remedying at once the abuses which had grown up, is apt to strike us, at first sight, as so very obvious and imperative, that we are hardly disposed to give him due praise for fulfilling it. But the more attentively we consider the times in which he lived, and the peculiar circumstances in which he began his reign—the successor of an idolatrous prince, and reigning over an idolatrous people—the higher admiration we shall feel for his exemplary obedience to the divine law.

It should be remembered, that not only the avowed violators of the first commandment, but those also, who, though they transgressed the second, yet professed themselves the worshippers of Jehovah exclusively, would be likely to tax with *impiety* that unsparing reform of abuses, which even those former kings, who are described as "doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord," had yet not ventured to undertake. Indeed his enemy, Sennacherib, reproaches him on this very ground: "If ye say, We trust in the Lord our God, is not that he whose high-places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away?"

But many, even of those who perhaps endured his putting a stop to the irregular and unauthorized worship of Jehovah in those high-places, might yet be scandalized at his venturing to destroy the brazen serpent; an emblem framed originally by divine command, and which had been the appointed and supernatural means of a miraculous deliverance. If such a relic were even *now* in existence, and its identity indisputable, it would not be contemplated, by any believer in the Mosaic history, without some degree of veneration. How much stronger would that veneration be in the mind of an Israelite, and

of one in that ignorant and semi-barbarous age. Yet one of these was found sufficiently enlightened to estimate the evil, and bold enough to use the effectual remedy. The king is not content to forbid this idolatrous use of the image, or even to seclude it carefully from the public gaze; it had been an occasion of superstition, and he "brake it in pieces;" applying to it at the same time the contemptuous appellation of "piece of brass,"* in order to destroy more completely that reverence which had degenerated into a sin.

Men are apt, not only in what regards religion, but in respect of *all* human concerns, to contemplate the faults and follies of a distant age or country, with barren wonder, or with self-congratulating contempt; while they overlook, because they do not search for, perhaps equal, and even corresponding vices and absurdities in their own conduct. And in this way it is that the religious, and moral, and political lessons, which history may be made to furnish, are utterly lost to the generality of mankind. Human nature is always and every where, in the most important points, substantially the same; circumstantially and externally, men's manners and conduct are infinitely various, in various times and regions. If the former were not true—if it were not for this fundamental agreement—history could furnish no instruction; if the latter were not true—if there were not these apparent and circumstantial differences—hardly any one could fail to profit by that instruction. For few are so dull as not to learn something from the records of past experience, in cases precisely similar to their own. But, as it is, much candour and diligence are called for in tracing the analogy between cases which, at the first glance, seem very different—in observing the workings of the same human nature under all its various disguises—in recognizing, as it were, the same plant in different stages of its growth, and in all the varieties resulting from climate and culture, soil and season.

But to any one who *will* employ this diligence and candour, this very dissimilarity of circumstances renders the history of past times and distant countries even the more instructive; because it is easier to form an impartial judgment concerning them. The difficulty is to apply that judgment to the cases before us. In contemplating human transactions, the law of optics is reversed; we see the most indistinctly the objects which are close around us; we view them through the discoloured medium of our own prejudices and passions; the more familiar we are with them, the less truly do we estimate their real colours and dimensions. Transactions and characters the most unconnected with ourselves—the most remote from all that presents itself in our own times, and at home, appear before us with all their deformities unveiled, and display their intrinsic and essential qualities. We are even liable to attend so exclusively to this intrinsic and abstract character of remote events, as to make too *little* allowance (while in recent cases we make too much) for the circumstances in which the agents were placed; and thence to regard as instances of almost incredible folly or depravity, things not fundamentally very different from what is passing around us.

And as the law of optics is in this case reversed, our procedure must be reversed accordingly. We judge of the nature of distant objects, by an examination of those near at hand, whose similarity to the others we have ascertained. So also must we on the contrary learn to judge impartially of our own conduct and character, and of the events of our own times, by finding parallels to these in cases the most remote and apparently dissimilar; of which, for that reason, our views are the most distinct, and our judgments the most unbiassed; and then, conjecturing what a wise and good man, ten centuries hence, would be likely to pronounce of *us*.

The errors and the vices, among the rest, the superstitions of the Israelites, and again of our ancestors under the Romish Church, did not, we may be sure, appear to them in the same light that they now do to us. No one believes his own opinions to be erroneous, or his own practices superstitious; few are even accustomed to ask themselves, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Since therefore our predecessors did not view their doctrines and practices in the same light that we do, this should lead us, not to regard them with contemptuous astonishment and boastful exultation, but rather to reflect that, like them, we also are likely to form a wrong estimate of what is around us and familiar to our minds: it should teach us to make use of the examples of others, not for the nourishment of pride, but for the detection of our own faults.

* "He called it Nehushtan." 2 Kings xviii. 4.

We are taught that Satan "transformeth himself into an angel of light; but he does not use always and every where the same disguise; as soon as one is seen through, he is ready to assume another; and it is in vain that we detect the artifice which has done its work on other men, unless we are on our guard against the same tempter under some new transformation; assuming afresh among ourselves the appearance of some angel of light.

§. 2. These reflections are perhaps the more particularly profitable at the present time, on account of the especial attention which has of late been directed to the superstitions, and other errors and enormities, of the Romish church. Unless such principles as I have adverted to are continually present to the mind, the more our thoughts are, by frequent discussion, turned to the errors of that church, and to the probability, under this or that conjuncture of circumstances, of proselytes joining that church or being gained over from it, the less shall we be on our guard against the *spirit* of popery in the human heart—against similar faults in some different shapes; and the more shall we be apt to deem every danger of the kind effectually escaped, by simply keeping out of the pale of that corrupt church.

It is indeed in *all* cases profitable to contemplate the errors of other men, if we do this "not high-minded but fearful;"—not for the sake of uncharitable triumph, but with a view to self-examination; even as the Corinthians were exhorted by their apostle to draw instruction from the backslidings of the Israelites, which were recorded, he says, "for their admonition," to the intent that they might not fall into corresponding sins, and that "he who thought he stood might take heed lest he fell." In all cases, I say, *some* benefit may be derived from *such* a contemplation of the faults of others; but the errors of the Romanists, if examined with a view to our own improvement, will the more effectually furnish this instruction, inasmuch as those errors, more especially, will be found to be the natural and spontaneous growth of the human heart; they are (as I have elsewhere remarked) not so much the effect, as the cause, of the Romish system of religion. The peculiar character of Romanism, in this respect, will be best perceived by contrasting it with Mahometism; this latter system was framed, and introduced, and established, within a very short space of time, by a deliberately designing impostor; who did indeed most artfully accommodate that system to man's nature, but did not wait for the gradual and spontaneous operations of human nature to produce it. He reared at once the standard of proselytism, and imposed on his followers a code of doctrines and laws ready framed for their reception. The tree which he planted did indeed find a congenial soil; but he planted it at once, with its trunk full-formed and its branches displayed: the Romish system, on the contrary, rose insensibly, like a young plant from the seed, making a progress scarcely perceptible from year to year, till at length it had fixed its root deeply in the soil, and spread its baneful shade far around.

Infecunda quidem, sed læta et fortia surgunt;
Quippe solo naturæ subest;

It was the natural offspring of man's frail and corrupt character, and it needed no sedulous culture. No one accordingly can point out any precise period at which this "mystery of iniquity"—the system of Romish corruptions—first began, or specify any person who introduced it: no one in fact ever did introduce any such system: the corruptions crept in one by one; originating for the most part with an ignorant and depraved *people*, but connived at, cherished, consecrated and successfully established, by a debased and worldly-minded ministry; and modified by them just so far as might best favour the views of their profligate ambition. But the system thus gradually compacted, was not the deliberate contrivance of any one man or set of men, adepts in priestcraft, and foreseeing and designing the entire result. The corruptions of the Romish church were the natural offspring of human passions, not checked and regulated by those who ought to have been ministers of the Gospel, but who, on the contrary, were ever ready to indulge and encourage men's weakness and wickedness, provided they could turn it to their own advantage. The good seed "fell among thorns;" which, being fostered by those who should have been occupied in rooting them out, not only "sprang up with it," but finally choked and overpowered it.

§. 3. The character accordingly of the Romish corruptions is precisely such as the history of that church would lead us to anticipate.

I. One of the greatest blemishes, for instance, in the church of Rome, is that

to which I have already alluded, superstitious worship; a fault which every one must acknowledge to be the spontaneous and every-where-abundant produce of the corrupt soil of man's heart. The greater part indeed of the errors of Romanism, which I shall hereafter notice under separate heads, may be considered as so many branches of superstition, or at least inseparably connected with it; but there are besides many superstitions more strictly so called, with which that system is justly chargeable; such as invocation of saints, and adoration of images and relics; corresponding to that idolatrous practice which King Hezekiah so piously and boldly suppressed.

II. The desire again of prying into mysteries relative to the invisible world, but which have no connexion with practice, is another characteristic of human nature, (on which I have elsewhere offered some remarks,*) and one to which may be traced the immense mass of presumptuous speculations about things unrevealed, respecting God and his designs, and of idle legends of various kinds respecting wonder-working saints, which have disgraced the Romish church. The sanction afforded to these, by persons who did not themselves believe them, is a fault referable to another head, (to be mentioned subsequently,) as springing from a dishonest pursuit of the expedient rather than the true: but it is probable that the far greater part of such idle tales had not their *origin* in any deep and politic contrivance, but in men's natural passion for what is marvellous, and readiness to cater for that passion in each other;—in the universal fondness of the human mind for speculative knowledge respecting things curious and things hidden, rather than (what alone the Scriptures supply) practical knowledge respecting things which have a reference to our wants.

Equally natural to man, and closely connected, as will hereafter be shown, with the error just mentioned, is the disposition to trust in *vicarious* worship and obedience—the desire and hope of transferring from one man to another the merit of good works, and the benefit of devotional exercises; so as to enable the mass of the people to serve God, as it were, by proxy. On this point I have elsewhere† offered some remarks, (which are expanded and followed up in the present work,) with a view to show that it is the main cause, rather than the consequence, of the whole Romish system of priestcraft; one of the great features of which is, the change of the very office of the Christian priest, Πρεσβύτερος, into that of the Jewish or Pagan priest, in the other sense of the word, answering to Ἱερεύς. I observed that the people were very easily deceived in this point, because they were eagerly craving for deception;—that the same disposition had manifested itself no less strongly among the Pagan nations;—and that the same tendency is, and ever will be, breaking out in one shape or another, among Protestants, and in every form of religion.

III. No less characteristic of the natural man, is a vicious preference of supposed expediency, to truth; and a consequent readiness to employ false reasons for satisfying the minds of the people;—to connive at, or foster, supposed salutary or innocent delusions; whence arose the sanction given to all the monstrous train of pious frauds, legendary tales, and lying miracles, for which the Romish church has been so justly stigmatized. And as it is notorious that the ancient lawgivers and philosophers encouraged (for political purposes) a belief in the mythological fables which they themselves *disbelieved*, there can be no doubt that this disposition also is not to be attributed to the church of Rome as its *cause*, but that *that* church merely furnishes one set of instances of its *effects*; and that, consequently, an earnest watchfulness against those effects is to be inculcated, not merely on such as may be in danger of being misled into Romanism, but on every descendant of Adam.

IV. Again, no *one* perhaps of the errors of the Romish church has exposed her to greater censure, or has been productive of more mischievous results, than the claim to infallibility;—the investing, without any sufficient grounds, weak and fallible men with an attribute of Deity. Now the ready acquiescence in such an extravagant claim (which never could have been maintained had not men been found thus ready to acquiesce in it) may easily be traced to the principles of our corrupt nature;—to that indolence in investigation, indifference about truth,* and ready acquiescence in what is put before us, of

* Essay IV. First series.

† In the last of the Five Discourses delivered before the University, and subsequently published.

* Ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἕτοιμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

hich the Greek historian complained ng before the Christian era; and to that islike of suspense—and consequent willgness to make a short and final appeal o some authority which should be rearded as decisive, with a view to quash isputes, and save the labour of inquiry. hat such a disposition is not at least eculiar to the votaries of the religion of ome, or confined even to religious subects, is evident from the appeals of preended students in philosophy to the decisions of Pythagoras, and subsequently of Aristotle, as precluding all further dispute or doubt. It is for Protestants therefore to remember, that they are not secured by the mere circumstance of their being such, from all danger of indulging this disposition. There is indeed no danger of their appealing to the *church of Rome* as an infallible authority to put a stop to all discussion; but the removal of that particular danger should only put us the more on our guard against the same fault (as it is a fault of our common nature) breaking out in some new shape.

V. One of the heaviest charges against the Romish church may be added to those already alluded to—the spirit of persecution; which is as far as any of her other enormities from being peculiar to that church, or even to the case of religion: witness, among many other instances, the furious and bitter spirit shown by the Nominalists and Realists in their contests concerning abstruse points of metaphysics. The Romish system did not properly introduce intolerance, but rather, it was intolerance that introduced and established the system of Romanism; and that (in another part of the world) no less successfully called in the sword for the establishment of Mahometism. So congenial indeed to "the natural man" is the resort to force for the establishment of one system of doctrines and the suppression of another, that we find many of the reformers, after they had clearly perceived nearly all the *other* errors in which they had been brought up, yet entertaining no doubt whatever as to the right, and the duty, of maintaining religious truth by coercive means.

VI. Another tendency, as conspicuous as those above mentioned in the Romish church, and, like its other errors, by no means *confined* to that church, is the confident security with which the *Catholics*, as they call themselves, trust in that *name*, as denoting their being members of that sacred body, the only true church, whose holy character and title to divine favour they seem to consider as a kind of common property, and a safeguard to all her members: even as the Jews of old "said within themselves, We are Abraham's children;" flattering themselves that on that ground, however little they might resemble Abraham in faith and in works, God would surely never cast them off. This error is manifestly common to the Romanists with those who put the same kind of trust in the *name* of Protestant or of Christian, and who regard their connexion with a holy and richly-endowed community, rather as a substitute for personal holiness, than as a motive for aiming at a still higher degree of it, and a privilege involving a higher responsibility.

§ 4. In treating of all these points, I shall adhere to the plan hitherto pursued, viz., of contemplating the errors of the Romanists, not with a view to our own justification in withdrawing from their communion; nor, again, for the sake of guarding against the danger of being seduced by their arguments, (important as these objects may be;) but with a view to what I cannot but regard as the much greater danger, of falling into corresponding errors to theirs—of being taken captive by the same temptations under different forms—of overlooking, in practice, the important truth, that the spirit of Romanism is substantially the spirit of human nature.

We are all of us in these days likely to hear and to read most copious discussions of the tenets and practices of the church of Rome. Whatever may be the views of each of my readers respecting the political question which has chiefly given rise to these discussions, (a question which, like all others of a political character, I have always thought had better be waived in theological works,) I would suggest these reflections as profitable to be kept in view by all, while occupied with such discussions: how far we are pure from Romish errors in another shape;—from what quarters, and under what disguises, we are liable to be assailed by temptations, substantially, though not externally, the same with those which seduced into all her corruptions the church of Rome; and which gradually changed her bridal purity for the accumulated defilements of "the mother of harlots;"—and how we may best guard against the spirit of superstition, (of which, be it remembered, none, even the most superstitious, ever suspect themselves)—the spirit of persecution—

the spirit of insincerity, of fraud, and of indifference to truth—in short, all those evil propensities which are fitly characterized in one word as, the spirit of Romanism. All these dangers, as they did not *begin* with the Romish system, cannot be expected to end with it; they emanate not from that corrupt church alone, but from the corruption of our common nature; and none consequently are more open to them, than those who are disposed to think themselves secured by merely keeping out of the pale of that church, and inveighing against her enormities.

Such a false security indeed is itself one of the worst of the Romish errors; that of mistaking *names* for things, and trusting in a specious *title*, without inquiring how far we possess the character which that title implies. "He is not a Jew," says Paul, "who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." It is for us therefore ever to remember, for thus only can we turn to account the apostle's admonition, that as that man was not, in the sight of God, a Jew, to any profitable purpose for himself, but rather to his aggravated condemnation, who was only outwardly a Jew; so neither, by parity of reasoning, is he in God's sight a Christian—a "Catholic Christian"—a "Protestant"—a "Reformed Christian—who is one outwardly; but he who is reformed inwardly,—whose heart is Christian—and who protests not with his lips only, but in his life—"in the spirit and not in the letter"—against such depravation of gospel truth, and departure from gospel holiness, as he censures in his erring brethren.

§. 5. In treating of superstitious worship, the point at present more immediately before us, it is worth remarking, that (as indeed has been already hinted) many of the Romanist practices bear a strong resemblance to those of the idolatrous Israelites. In particular, their veneration for the wood of the supposed true cross, has a correspondence approaching to identity with the veneration of the Israelites for the brazen serpent which Hezekiah destroyed; only that the more ancient superstition was one degree less irrational; inasmuch as the image was that which had itself been a more immediate instrument of a miraculous deliverance; whereas what typically corresponds to it in the Christian dispensation is (as our Lord himself points out) not the cross on which he suffered, but the very person of the suffering Redeemer.

The Romanists, in paying a *slavish* worship (it is *their own* expression, δουλεία) not only to images and relics, but also to saints, are guilty of *both* those kinds of superstition, the unsparing suppression of *both* of which constitutes the distinguished and peculiar merit of that upright and zealous prince, Hezekiah. He was not satisfied, like many other kings, with putting down that branch of superstition which involves the breach of the first commandment—the setting up of false gods; but was equally decisive in his reprobation of the other branch also—the worship of the true God by the medium of prohibited emblems, and with unauthorized and superstitious rites. Of these two kinds of superstition, the latter is continually liable, in practice, to slide into the former, by such insensible degrees, that it is often hard to decide, in particular cases, *where* the breach of the second commandment ends, and that of the first begins. The distinction is not however for that reason useless; perhaps it is even the more useful on that very account, and was for that reason preserved in those two commandments; of which the second serves as a kind of outwork to the first, to guard against all gradual *approaches* to a violation of it—to keep men at a *distance* from the danger of infringing the majesty of the jealous God.

Accordingly, besides the numerous warnings which Moses gives the Israelites against being seduced into worshipping the false gods of the nations of Canaan, he also cautions them not to imitate, in their worship of the Lord, the superstitious rites used by the heathen in the service of *their* deities. They are forbidden to inquire, "How did these nations serve their gods?" and to say, "Even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God."

Both injunctions the Israelites frequently violated; many of them, while they observed the first commandment in abstaining from the worship of Baal and the other gods of the heathen, infringing nevertheless the second, by their use of images: of which we have an instance in the case of Jeroboam "who made Israel to sin;" the golden calves which he set up being clearly designed as emblematical representations of the true God: for he

said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which *brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*" This was emphatically called "the sin of Jeroboam;" and the distinction above alluded to is noticed in the case (to omit numberless others) of Jehu; thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel: howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan."

And we find also numerous instances, (besides this direct violation of the second commandment) of the introduction of unauthorized and superstitious rites in the worship of the true God.

This two-fold division of superstition I have the more strongly dwelt on, both because it is frequently overlooked, and because inattention to it is likely to lead to dangerous consequences.

I would not however be understood as contending for any arbitrary and unusual signification of the word; but I conceive, that by superstition is commonly understood, not, as a popular though superficial writer has defined it, "an excess of religion," (at least in the ordinary sense of the word excess,) as if any one *could* have *too much* of true religion, but, any *misdirection* of religious feeling; manifested either in showing religious veneration or regard to objects which deserve *none*; i. e., properly speaking, the worship of false gods; or, in the assignment of such a degree, or such a kind of religious veneration to any object, as that object, though worthy of some reverence, does not deserve; or in the worship of the true God through the medium of improper ceremonies or symbols.

This latter branch of superstition is extremely liable, as I have already remarked, to degenerate insensibly into the former. The Israelite, e. g., who was accustomed to worship Jehovah through the medium of a sensible image, would be very likely, in time, to transfer a larger and larger portion of his adoration to the image itself; and in proportion as he annexed to it any idea of especial sanctity, he would be, insensibly, more and more falling into the error of adoring an image, in the only sense in which it is conceivable than an image *can* be adored.

In avowing my conviction that this is the case with a large proportion of the members of the Romish church, and that they are consequently most decidedly chargeable with the sin of idolatry, I am aware that I run counter to the opinions (I might rather perhaps say to the expressions) of some enlightened Protestants. But these, I conceive, are not so much mistaken in their judgment, as inaccurate in their language. It is said, e. g., that when the Romanists offer up their prayers before a crucifix, or before a piece of bread, they do not design to worship a piece of wood or a piece of bread, as such, but our Lord Jesus Christ as represented by the one, and as actually present in the other. And certainly, if they intend to direct their worship to the one true God, they are not guilty of a breach of the *first* commandment; but this does not clear them of the charge of infringing the second; they may be guilty of superstition, though not of every kind and degree of superstition: and if the practices, I have alluded to, do not constitute that kind of superstition which is properly called idolatry, let us be allowed to inquire, what does? Will it be said that idolatry consists in worshipping a piece of wood as *such*—as a mere piece of wood? I would ask in reply, Who then ever was, or can be, guilty of it? The thing is not only practically impossible, but is inconceivable, and a contradiction in terms. The most gross-minded Israelite that ever offered up his prayers before a golden calf, implied, by that very act, his belief that it was something more than a mere piece of gold, and that there resided in it a certain divine intelligence. The argument therefore is not so much a vindication of any party from the charge of idolatry, as a vindication of idolatry itself.

It has been said, I believe, by some Protestants, respecting the alleged idolatry of adoring the sacred elements at the Eucharist, "it *would* be idolatrous, if *I* were to join in it:" if this means, "supposing you to have the same belief in transubstantiation that the Romanists have," this is only a circuitous mode of saying that they are idolaters; but if it means, "were you to join in it, supposing you to have the Protestant belief that the consecrated bread is merely bread," the supposition involves an absurdity and self-contradiction. A man may indeed *feign*, and outwardly indicate, in order to deceive his fellow-man, an adoration of what he believes to be merely a piece of bread or of wood; but that he should really and inwardly adore, what he believes at the moment to be no more than mere bread or mere wood, is not only

impossible, but absolutely unmeaning, being at variance with the very notion of adoration.

If therefore a Romanist adores the true God under the form of bread,* which he holds to be the real literal body of Christ, or if, in worshipping before a crucifix, he attributes a certain sanctity to the image, as if some divine virtue were actually present in it, (and that this is done is plain from the preference shown of one image to another,) he is clearly as much guilty of idolatry as the Israelites in worshipping the golden calf and the brazen serpent: it being thus only, that any one *can* practise idolatry.

In making this declaration, however, it is not my object either to lead Protestants to exult uncharitably over their erring brethren, or to vindicate our own renunciation of their errors; but rather to point out the danger which must ever beset all of us, of falling into similar errors in another shape, and under other names; for ten thousand of the greatest faults in our neighbour are of less consequence to *us*, than one, of the smallest, in ourselves.

The Israelites of old were warned not only to worship none of the gods of the heathen, but to copy none of their superstitions: "Ye shall not do so to the Lord your God." Now *they* probably were disposed to think themselves secure from the danger of corrupting their own religion, in their deep abhorrence of the religions of those nations whom the Lord had cast out before them. The church of Rome, again, thought itself safe from superstition, by its rejection of those particular superstitions of which the Israelites and the Pagans were guilty. And Protestants, again, are no less disposed to feel the same security, on account of their abhorrence of the particular superstitions of the Romanists. The images used by the Papists are not the same with those for worshipping which the Israelites were condemned: and they again doubtless pleaded that the golden calves and the brazen serpent were not the idols of the Canaanites; and thus does each successive generation censure the faults and follies of the preceding, without taking sufficient heed to itself, or recognizing, as they arise, errors substantially the same, though under new shapes.

The superstitious and the other errors of the Romanists were, as I have already observed, not the result of systematic contrivance, but sprung up spontaneously as the indigenous growth of the human heart: they arose successively, gradually, and imperceptibly; and were, in most instances, probably first overlooked, then tolerated, and then sanctioned, and finally embodied in that detestable system, of which they are rather to be regarded as the cause than the effect. Since then, as I have said, corruptions of religion neither first sprang from Romanism, nor can be expected to end with it, the tendency to them being inherent in our common nature, it is evident that constant watchfulness alone can preserve us from, not the very same, corruptions with those of our predecessors, but, similar ones under some fresh disguise; and that this danger is enhanced by the very circumstance which seems to secure us from it—our abhorrence of those errors in them. From practices the very same in name and form with theirs, such abhorrence is indeed a safeguard; while at the same time it makes us the less ready to suspect ourselves of the faults disguised: the vain security thus generated, draws off our thoughts from self-examination; a task for which the mind is in general least fitted, when it is most occupied in detecting and exposing the faults of others. In treating then of such corruptions of religion as those into which the church of Rome has fallen, my primary object is to excite a spirit not of self-congratulation and self-confidence, but of self-distrust and self-examination.

§. 6. With respect to that particular class of corruptions now before us, which comes under the general title of superstition, it is requisite (though it is somewhat strange that it should be so) to premise a remark on the *enormity* of the evil in question. The mischiefs of superstition are, I conceive, much underrated. It is by many regarded, not as any sin, but as a mere harmless folly, at the worst;—as, in some instances, an amiable weakness, or even a salutary delusion. Its votaries are pitied, as in some cases subjected to needless and painful restraints, and undergoing groundless terrors;—sometimes they are ridiculed as enslaved to absurb and puerile observances: but whether pitied or laughed at, superstitious Christians are often re-

* For the Romish doctrine is, as Mr. Blanco White has plainly shown, not, as they themselves declare, that bread *is* transformed into the body of Christ, but that *Christ is transformed into bread*, in the sense which the words according to invariable usage convey.

garded as likely, at least as not the *less* likely on account of their superstition, to have secured the essentials of religion;—as believing and practising what is needful towards salvation, and as only carrying their faith and their practice unnecessarily and unreasonably to the point of weak credulity and foolish scrupulosity. This view of the subject has a strong tendency to confirm the superstitious, and even to add to their number. They feel that if there is any doubt, they are surely on the *safe* side. "Supposing I am in error on this or that point," (a man may say,) "I am merely doing something superfluous; at the worst I suffer some temporary inconvenience, and perhaps have to encounter some ridicule; but if the error be on the other side, I risk my salvation by embracing it; my present course therefore is evidently the safest."

What force this argument has in the hands of the Romanist, I need hardly remind my readers. Of converts to Romanism, probably three out of four, especially of the ignorant and the weak-minded, have been drawn over, in the first instance at least, by the consideration, that that is the *safe* side.*

With the danger however of being seduced into the pale of the Romish church, I am not at present concerned, but with the danger of superstition generally. In speaking of that point, as well as (hereafter) of others connected with the *spirit* of Romanism, I wish to be understood as not calling for harsh censure on individuals, but only on offences as they are in themselves. How far the superstition of any individual may be excusable or blamable in the sight of God, can be pronounced by him alone, who alone is able to estimate each man's strength or weakness, his opportunities of gaining knowledge, and his employment or neglect of those opportunities. But the same may be said of every other offence, as well as of the one in question. Of superstition itself, in all its various forms and degrees, I cannot think otherwise than that it is not merely a folly to be ridiculed, but a mischief to be dreaded; and that its tendency is, in most cases, as far as it extends, destructive of true piety.

The disposition to reverence some superhuman power, and in some way or other to endeavour to recommend ourselves to the favour of that power, is (more or less in different individuals) a natural and original sentiment of the human mind. The great enemy of man finds it easier in most cases to misdirect, than to eradicate this. If an exercise for this religious sentiment can be provided—if this natural craving after divine worship (if I may so speak) can be satisfied—by the practice of superstitious ceremonies, true piety will be much more easily extinguished;—the conscience will on this point have been set at rest;—God's place in the heart will, as it were, have been pre-occupied by an idol; and that genuine religion which consists in a devotedness of the affections to God, operating in the improvement of the moral character, will be more effectually shut out, from the religious feelings of our nature having found another vent, and exhausted themselves on vanities of man's devising.

To illustrate as fully as might be done this debasing and corrupting tendency of superstition, by an examination of the numberless instances of it which might but too readily be found, would far exceed my limits, and would be, to most of my readers, in a great degree unnecessary. But I cannot omit, in confirmation of what has been said, one general remark, which is applicable to most of these instances: that one of the most prevailing

* "The Romanists in general, but more especially those who, in the midst of doubt, are anxious to save themselves from the painful step of changing their communion, comfort themselves with the idea, that after all *Roman Catholics are in the* safe *side.* If Protestants should be saved, they themselves have made "assurance doubly sure;" if Protestanism be Christianity, Romanists have it all, and a great deal besides.

"I know of few absurdities that can be compared to this. Let me make it clear to you by a familiar example. Suppose a poor, helpless person is dying of a dreadful complaint. An eminent physician hears of his distress; calls on him, and prepares a medicine, which he desires the patient to take, under a strong injunction to trust in it alone for life. In the absence of the physician, our patient begins to think on the prescription, and because it appears to him too simple, mixes it with every quack medicine that the neighbours recommend. Having swallowed the whole, he now comforts himself with the assurance that he is on the safe side. Why! because he has mistrusted the physician, and divided his confidence between the only man whose skill can save him, and the old women of the village.

"O foolish Galatians!" (I am irresistibly impelled to exclaim with St. Paul,) "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" O blind and deluded people! how can you imagine that the eternal life promised to faith in Christ will be doubly secured by showing and proving your mistrust, through the use of the fanciful ways of pleasing God, invented and set forth by Rome?" *Blanco White's Letter to Converts from Romanism.* This excellent little tract is less known than it deserves.

characteristics of superstition, at least which is found more or less in most species of it, is the attributing of some sacred efficacy to the performance of an *outward act*, or the presence of some *material object*, without any inward devotion of the heart being required to accompany it;—without, in short, any thing else being needful, except, in some cases, an undoubting faith in that intrinsic efficacy. The tendency thus to disjoin religious observances (i. e. what are *intended* to be such) from heartfelt and practical religion, is one of the most besetting evils of our corrupt nature; and it is the very root of most superstitions. Now no one can fail to perceive how opposite this is to true piety. Empty forms not only supersede piety by standing in its place, but gradually alter the habits of the mind, and render it unfit for the exercise of genuine pious sentiment. Even the natural food of religion (if I may so speak) is thus converted into its poison. Our very prayers, for example, and our perusal of the holy Scriptures, become superstitious, in proportion as any one expects them to operate as a charm—attributing efficacy to the mere words, while his feelings and thoughts are not occupied in what he is doing.

Every religious ceremony or exercise, however well calculated, in itself, to improve the heart, is liable, as I have said, thus to degenerate into a mere form, and consequently to become superstitious; but in proportion as the outward observances are the more complex and operose, and the more unmeaning or unintelligible, the more danger is there of superstitiously attaching a sort of magical efficacy to the bare outward act, independent of mental devotion. If, for example, even our prayers are liable, without constant watchfulness, to become a superstitious form, by our "honouring God with our lips, while our heart is far from him," this result is almost unavoidable when the prayers are recited in an unknown tongue, and with a prescribed number of vain repetitions, crossings, and telling of beads. And men of a timorous mind, having once taken up a wrong notion of what religion consists in, seek a refuge from doubt and anxiety, a substitute for inward piety, and, too often, a compensation for an evil life, in an endless multiplication of superstitious observances;—of pilgrimages, sprinklings with holy water, veneration of relics, and the like. And hence the enormous accumulation of superstitions, which in the course of many centuries, gradually arose in the Romish and Greek churches.

§ 7. And it is a circumstance not a little remarkable, that, in many instances at least, superstition not only does not promote true religion, but even tends to generate *profaneness*; and that, not merely in other points, but even in respect to the very objects of the superstitious reverence. In proof of this I can cite the testimony of an eminently competent witness, as far at least as one Roman Catholic country (Spain) is concerned; the author, after having mentioned the extravagant and absurd superstitions of the ceremonies which take place on Good Friday, adds, "I have carefully glided over such parts of this absurd performance as would shock many an English reader, even in narrative. Yet such is the strange mixture of superstition and profaneness in the people for whose gratification these scenes are exhibited, that though any attempt to expose the indecency of these shows would rouse their zeal 'to the knife,' I cannot venture to translate the jokes and sallies of wit that are frequently heard among the Spanish peasantry upon these sacred topics."* The like strange mixture is found in other Roman Catholic and also in Pagan countries; particularly among the Hindoos, who are described as habitually reviling their gods in the grossest terms, on the occasion of any untoward event.

In this country a large proportion of the superstition that exists is connected more or less with the agency of evil spirits; accordingly (in conformity with the strange principle of our nature just mentioned) nothing is so common a theme of profane jests among the vulgar of all ranks, as the devil, and every thing relating to that being, including the "everlasting fire prepared for him and his angels;" and this, by no means exclusively or chiefly, among such as disbelieve what Scripture says on the subject; but, on the contrary, even the most, among those who give credit to a multitude of legendary tales also, quite unwarranted by Scripture.

This curious anomaly may perhaps be, in a great measure at least, accounted for, from the consideration, that as superstition imposes a yoke rather of fear than of love, her votaries are glad to *take revenge*, as it were, when galled by this yoke, and to indemnify themselves in

* Doblado's Letters from Spain, p. 264.

some degree both for the irksomeness of their restraints and tasks, and also for the *degradation*, (some sense of which is always excited by a consciousness of a slavish dread,) by taking liberties *wherever they dare*, either in the way of insult or playfulness, with the objects of their dread. And jests on sacred subjects, it is well known, are, when men are so disposed, the most easily produced of any; because the *contrast* between a dignified and a low image, exhibited in combination, (in which the whole force of the ludicrous consists,) is in this case the most striking.*

But how comes it that they ever do *dare*, as we see is the fact, to take these liberties? Another characteristic of superstition will perhaps explain this also. It is, as I have just said, characteristic of superstition to enjoin, and to attribute efficacy to, the mere performance of some specific outward acts—the use of some material object, without any loyal affectionate devotion of heart being required to accompany such acts, and to pervade the whole life as a ruling motive. Hence, the rigid observance of the precise directions given, leaves the votary secure, at ease in conscience, and at liberty, as well as in disposition, to indulge in profaneness. In like manner a patient, who dares not refuse to swallow a nauseous dose and to confine himself to strict regimen, yet is both vexed and somewhat ashamed of submitting to the annoyance, will sometimes take his revenge, as it were, by abusive ridicule of his medical attendant and his drugs; knowing that this will not, so long as he does but take the medicines, diminish their efficacy. Superstitious observances are a kind of distasteful or disgusting remedy, which however is to operate if it be but swallowed; and on which accordingly the votary sometimes ventures gladly to revenge himself.

The more ready therefore in any instance the superstitions of the Romish church approached to, and blended themselves with, true religion, the more did they deteriorate the spirit of it;—the more did the poisonous parasite, twining round the fairest boughs of the good tree, blight by its noxious neighbourhood the fruits which that should have borne.

We cannot indeed be too thankful to God, that by his blessing our ancestors perceived and undertook to reform these abuses: but my especial object in now adverting to the errors of the Romanists is, to call your attention to this important consideration; that such a multitude and variety of superstitions, as troublesome as they are absurd, never could have been introduced by any devices of priestcraft, had there not been in the human mind that strong natural *tendency* to superstition which has just been described. And this being the case—this tendency being, as it is, a part of our common nature, it is for us to guard against the danger in ourselves, instead of exulting in a vain confidence that we are exempt and safe from it. The things we ought to learn, and to learn with a view to our own profit, from the example of the Romish church, are, the mischievous effects of superstition, and man's proneness to it.

That superstition does exist, to no inconsiderable extent, in Protestant countries, which is what the foregoing reasonings, even independently of experience, would prepare us to expect, few, I imagine, would venture to deny; though perhaps fewer still are fully aware of its amount, or sufficiently on their guard against the danger.

§. 8. With respect to the particular points on which superstition is most to be dreaded, and towards which, consequently, our vigilance should be especially directed, I am precluded by several considerations from entering on any detailed examination.

The enumeration of all, or nearly all, the superstitions which either actually exist, or are likely to arise, would far exceed my purposed limits. And I am sensible that to advert even to a few of these is likely to be less profitable than I could wish; inasmuch as the same remarks will usually be a superfluous truism to one person, and a revolting paradox to another. For any one who practises, or tolerates and approves, any superstition, is of course not accustomed (at least should in charity not be presumed to be accustomed) to consider it as superstition, nor would be prepared to admit the censure without detailed argument and calm consideration; while one who *does* regard

* It is commonly said, that there is no wit in profane jests; but it would be hard to frame any definition of wit that should exclude them. It would be more correct to say, (and I believe that is what is really meant,) that the practice displays *no great powers* of wit, because the subject-matter renders it so particularly easy; and that (for the very same reason) it affords the least gratification (apart from all higher considerations) to judges of good taste; for a great part of the pleasure afforded by wit results from a *perception* of *skill* displayed, and *difficulty* surmounted.

it as superstitious, has himself already pronounced that censure.

To this must be added, that in most instances the very same thing will be superstitious to some persons, and not to others. The adoration of saints indeed, or of any other being besides the one true God, must always, and in itself, be superstitious: but in the great majority of instances, the very same outward rites, and sensible objects, may be either a help to devotion, or a substitute for it; such as sacred music—the repetition of prayers—the assembling in edifices set apart for divine worship—the assuming of certain bodily postures, &c. In all such cases, the religion or the superstition exists in the mind of the person, and is only incidentally connected with the external objects and observances. Of these last, the *best* that can be said of any of them is, that they are well *calculated* to cherish feelings of rational devotion: the *worst* that can be said of any of them is, that they are peculiarly *liable* to become superstitious. But even pictures and images are not in themselves superstitious; and accordingly we do not now exclude them from our houses of worship; though if we found them now liable to any of that abuse which has grown to such an enormous height among the Romanists, it would be our duty to treat them as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, which "he brake in pieces, because the Israelites burnt incense to it." And, on the other hand, there is no act or object connected with divine worship which may not *become* superstitious, through the worshipper's trusting in the efficacy of outward forms, while his heart is far from God. Our reformers therefore showed their discretion in their assertion respecting the Liturgy and Forms of Ordination which they drew up, that these "contained nothing *in itself* superstitious:" they knew by sad experience that nothing but the worshipper's vigilant self-examination can secure either human or divine ordinances from *becoming* (to him) superstitious.

What has been said may be sufficient to show that this vigilant examination and caution against superstition, on each particular point, must be practised by each person for himself, both with a view to his own conduct, and that of all those who may be more especially under his care; and that the necessity of this cannot be superseded by any general description.

Enough also has been said, I trust, to show both the vast importance of this vigilant examination, and also the principles on which it should be conducted. I will notice, however, a few, and only a few, of those practices and notions, to which, as it seems to me, especial attention should be directed, as either savouring of superstition, or peculiarly liable to lead to it. Several of my observations, I have no doubt, will appear utterly superfluous, to many of those among my readers who have not (not to those who have) been occupied diligently in the care of a parish, and in that essential part of it, frequent and confidential intercourse with all, and especially with the more unenlightened classes, of the parishioners. I pledge myself however to state nothing on the ground of mere conjecture—nothing which I have not been enabled fully to verify.

§. 9. I. That there exists among Protestants much of that branch of Romish superstition—the pretension to miraculous powers, or belief in miraculous occurrences, on slight grounds, no sober-minded person, who is not quite ignorant of the existing state of things, can doubt.* We have among us pretenders to inspiration; some using that very term, and others virtually implying as much: and we have many who see special "judgments," *or* other "interpositions" of Providence, in almost every remarkable, and in many of the most ordinary occurrences. Sometimes they apply to these the very term "miraculous;" sometimes they call them, which amounts to the very same, "providential;" for though it is literally true that nothing takes place which is not, in some sense, providential, it is plain, for that very reason, that whatever is rightly *characterized* as providential, i. e. as *more*

* It would not be suitable to my present purpose, to enter on a minute inquiry into the use of several words connected with the present subject; but it may be worth while to remark, that, according to the most prevailing usage, "fanaticism" implies superstition, (i. e. "misdirected religious feeling,") but is not necessarily implied by it. If on very insufficient grounds I believe *another* person to be inspired, or any other miracle to have taken place, I am merely *superstitious*; if I thus believe *myself* to be inspired, or gifted with miraculous powers, I am also *fanatical*.

Enthusiasm seems to be employed as a more comprehensive term than fanaticism, both as being sometimes used in a good, at least, a milder sense, and also as extending to other things besides religion.

providential than other events, is properly miraculous.*

If either Romanists, or any others, will give *sufficient proof* of the occurrence of a miracle, they ought to be listened to: but to pretend to, or to believe in, any miracle *without* sufficient proof, is clearly superstitious, whatever may be the system such a miracle is adduced to support.

Most deeply is it to be regretted, that some writers who have argued justly and forcibly against the error of looking for inspiration or other miraculous interferences, should have more than nullified the benefit done, by going on to explain away all that Scripture teaches respecting spiritual influence. Besides the danger, that they may propagate this error by means of the truth they have mixed up with it, there is also an opposite evil even much more to be apprehended; that the fanatics thus opposed may join with their opponents in representing the whole doctrine of grace as inseparably connected with their scheme of miraculous interferences and sensible inspiration; so that the whole must stand or fall together; and that they may then triumphantly urge, "See what violence one is driven to do to Scripture, and how much at variance he becomes with the church of England, whenever he attempts to oppose our doctrine!" Too much care cannot be taken to testify *simultaneously* against both of these opposite errors.

II. Again, more superstition exists than some persons are aware of, in relation to the Eucharist, and to the sacred "elements" (as they are still called†) which are administered in that rite. Several among the uneducated (and some even among the higher) classes, and those of them not least who never partake,‡ or design to partake, of the holy communion, till they believe themselves on the bed of death, have a strong faith in the efficacy, as a medicine, of what they call "sacrament wine;" i. e. wine which either has been, or is designed to be, (for they know too little of the rite to distinguish between the two,) *consecrated* for this use. They have been known to apply for it to the minister, as an infallible cure for some particular diseases of children:—confidently asserting (indeed the very existence and continuance of the superstition forbids us to hope that such applications have always been made *in vain*) that they have formerly obtained it for that use. Others have been known, when attending at the Lord's table, to secrete, for the purpose of carrying home, a portion of the consecrated bread handed to them; doubtless with a view to some similar superstitious use.* Others again, above the very poorest class, have been known to petition for a portion of the "sacrament money," i. e. the alms then collected, (offering to purchase it for the same sum in other pieces of money,) to be forged into a ring, as an infallible cure for fits. This again is a superstition which could hardly have maintained its ground, if it had never been on any occasion indulged by those whose office is to repress it.

Too common again, and well known, is the case of persons who have, during the hours of health, systematically abstained from communicating, and have pleaded, among other excuses, with great truth, their *ignorance*, while they have refused to listen to the offered instruction—of these same persons when on their death bed, though conscious of the *same ignorance* respecting the whole nature and design of the ceremony, and in no condition then to learn,† yet earnestly craving the

* I ought in justice to say, that I believe many ephemeral writers, and careless talkers, occasionally use the words "provident ly," and "miraculous," (as well as many others,) without attaching any precise notion to them. They have been used to hear the words applied to *remarkable* occurrences; and from mere force of imitation do the same, as if the words were merely synonymous with "remarkable."

† Agreeably to the language of the schoolmen; who framed the doctrine of transubstantiation, as it now stands, so completely from Aristotle's writings, that it never could have existed in any thing like its present form, had that philosopher not been studied.

‡ This is one instance out of a multitude, in which superstition, instead of promoting, as some persons vainly imagine, true religion, stands in the place of it.

* I have detected and stopped this practice among those who are called to consume the remainder of the bread and wine after the close of the service. Let me be permitted to call the attention of officiating ministers to the Rubric, and to recommend a strict adherence to it, in what relates to this matter: "if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church, but the priest and such other of the communicants as he shall then *call unto him*, shall, immediately after the blessing, reverently eat and drink the same:" i. e. the communicants (as it must be understood) *remaining* in the minister's presence, into which he had "called" them.

† Sometimes without any *wish*, even then, for previous instruction; or, consequently, any notion that the benefit of the sacrament is at all dependent on a knowledge of our religion. "Do pray, dear sir, give me the sacrament first, and then talk as much as you please," is an answer by which I

administration of this sacrament, and trusting (while their surrounding friends cherish their confidence) that the words repeated, and the bodily act of receiving the bread and wine, will operate as a charm to ensure salvation, like the "extreme unction" of the Romanists. Now if this is not a superstitious abuse of the ordinance, what is?

III. Nor has the other sacrament escaped the defilement of superstition. Not a few there are who eagerly seek it with as superstitious a reverence as that with which they shrink from the Lord's Supper, and with, if possible, a still more complete ignorance of its nature. They seem to regard the giving of a *name*† to an infant as the most essential, or one of the most essential parts of the rite: understanding by the terms "Baptism" or "Christening," the public reception in church, (about which they are frequently very indifferent,) and knowing private baptism by no other appellation than "naming." And many are anxious that the ceremony should take place (I speak advisedly) if the child is very ill, in hopes that it may save his life; at all events, with strong expectation of some benefit, while yet they have no thought or intention of bringing him up with any kind of religious instruction and training; nor indeed have themselves either any religious knowledge, or any wish to gain it. To disjoin thus the means of grace from the fruits of grace—the expected benefit of the ordinance which admits a member into the Christian church, from his care to lead a Christian life—is to convert a sacrament into a charm, and to "make the things that should have been for their health, be unto them an occasion of falling." There is no need to expatiate on the mischievous absurdity of such notions and such conduct, or (to those at least of my readers who have been engaged in the care of large parishes) on their prevalence. The point to which it is my present object to call attention is the *superstition* involved in them; which bears but too close a resemblance to those of the church of Rome relative to the same sacrament.*

Among the many evils to be traced to this particular superstition is to be reckoned, I think, in a great degree, the prevalence (among many of our own clergy) of a system of doctrine which goes to disjoin completely from "the outward visible sign of baptism" all "inward spiritual grace:" and likewise the continuance and increase of the Anabaptist system; which indeed the doctrine just alluded to tends greatly to foster. An attentive hearer of one of these divines, taught to regard his own baptism as hardly more than an empty form, is thoroughly prepared to become a convert to the first Anabaptist he meets with.†

IV. It is not perhaps generally known, how much superstition prevails in respect of the repetition of prayers. Protestants are accustomed to censure, as one of the most flagrant of Romish corruptions, the use of prayers in an unknown tongue: and it is plain that it makes no practical difference to the individual whether the

have known a sick man perseveringly repel the attempts of the minister to examine into the state of his mind, and impart to him the requisite instruction.

As for the point of *sincerity* or *insincerity*, no one of course, except the Searcher of hearts, can be sure in every instance, whether an individual is, or is not, in this respect, a fit communicant: we have only to receive his solemn professions; and our admitting him on the strength of these, does not, supposing them to be in fact hypocritical, give any countenance to the superstitious belief, that an insincere communicant derives benefit from the rite: since we admit him on the supposition of his being *not* insincere; but it is otherwise in respect of the point of *knowledge* or ignorance; *that* the minister *can* ascertain; and if he neglect to do so, and to proceed accordingly, he is manifestly fostering superstition.

† In a parish which had been grossly neglected under a former incumbent, the rite of baptism was administered to several who had grown up without it: among the applicants was a young woman, who, it came out, had been already baptized, and who gave as a reason for applying, that she was dissatisfied with the *name* that had been given her, and wished for another.

* The present instance illustrates but too well what has been above said respecting the connexion between superstition and profaneness. Both exist in a remarkable degree in relation to the sacrament of baptism. Few of my readers, I fear, will need more than to be merely reminded of the light and irreverent application of the term "Christening," on any occasion of giving "a name" to any thing. Now if there be any thing intrinsically reasonable in the third commandment, it surely is applicable, in its spirit, not merely to the name of God, but also to all the terms appropriated to his ordinances; in short, to all the language denoting any thing sacred. But in the present case, there exists a more palpable, more deliberate, and more revolting kind of profaneness, in the solemn mockery of what is called "Christening a ship;" in which the sacrament itself, not the mere name of it, is regularly, formally, and with obtrusive pomp, "taken in vain," to the secret scorn and triumph of infidels, and to the disgrace of a nation calling itself Christian and Protestant.

† See Essay IX. Second series, p. 323–6.

words he utters are Latin or English, so long as they convey no sense to his mind. Now the practice of reciting unmeaning prayers (unmeaning, that is, to the person using them) prevails to a greater extent than perhaps many persons are aware. Many probably do not even know that there are invocations to angels and to the four Evangelists, (which it is to be *hoped* are not at all understood,) in use at the present day in the devotions of some among the more ignorant classes of professed Protestants. I know that the caution given in Dr. Hawkins' excellent "Manual for Christians after Confirmation," (ch. v. §. 1.) that "to repeat the *creed* is not to *pray*," startled some persons as being manifestly needless. But the fact bears him out. The practice is by no means uncommon of reciting the Apostle's creed as a portion of prayer. Now it is manifest that whoever makes such a mistake, might just as well recite it in Latin as in English; since it is plain he cannot understand even the general sense and drift of it. And it is equally manifest that the case would not be at all altered, if the formula he recited really *were* a prayer; since it would be an evident superstition to attach any spiritual virtue to the mere utterance by rote, in whatever language, of words, however in themselves appropriate.

And this leads me to remark, that the practice of teaching or allowing very young children to learn by heart* prayers, psalms, portions of Scripture, &c., which they are incapable, at the time, of understanding, is one which is very often superstitious, and almost always leads to superstition. I say "often" superstitious, because it is not necessarily so. Some teachers make their children commit these things to memory, merely as an exercise of memory, or in order that they may know the words against the time when they shall become competent to understand them, without giving the children any notion, that in repeating these words they are performing a devotional act.* There is nothing superstitious in this; though I cannot but think it a most inju-

* It need hardly be observed how important it is, with a view to these objects, to abstain carefully from the practice, still too prevalent, though much less so, we believe, than formerly, of compelling, or encouraging, or even allowing, children to learn by rote forms of prayer, catechisms, hymns, or in short any thing connected with morality and religion, when they attach no meaning to the words they utter. It is done on the plea that they will hereafter learn the meaning of what they have been thus taught, and will be able to make a practical use of it. But no attempt at economy of time can be more injudicious. Let any child, whose capacity is so far matured as to enable him to comprehend an explanation, e. g. of the Lord's prayer, have it *then* put before him for the first time, and when he is made acquainted with the meaning of it, set to learn it by heart; and can any one doubt that in less than half a day's application he would be able to repeat it fluently? And the same would be the case with other forms. All that is thus learned by rote by a child before he is competent to attach a meaning to the words he utters, would not, if all put together, amount to so much as would cost him, when able to understand it, a week's labour to learn perfectly. Whereas it may cost the toil, often the vain toil, of many years, to unlearn the habit of *formalism*—of repeating words by rote without attending to their meaning; a habit which every one conversant with education knows to be in all subjects most readily acquired by children, and with difficulty avoided even with the utmost care of the teacher; but which such a plan must inevitably tend to generate. It is often said, and very truly, that it is important to form early habits of piety; but to train a child in one kind of habit, is not the most likely way of forming the opposite one; and nothing can be more contrary to true piety, than the Popish superstition (for such in fact it is) of attaching efficacy to the repetition of a certain form of words, as of a charm, independent of the understanding and of the heart.

"It is also said with equal truth, that we ought to take advantage of the facility which children possess of learning words: but to infer from thence, that Providence designs us to make such a use (or rather abuse) of this gift as we have been censuring, is as if we were to take advantage of the readiness with which a new born babe swallows whatever is put into its mouth, to dose it with ardent spirits, instead of wholesome food and necessary medicine. The readiness with which children learn and remember words, is in truth a most important advantage if rightly employed; viz., if applied to the acquiring that mass of what may be called *arbitrary* knowledge of insulated facts, which *can only* be learned by rote, and which is necessary in after life; when the acquisition of it would both be more troublesome, and would encroach on time that might otherwise be better employed. Chronology, names of countries, weights and measures, and indeed all the *words* of any language, are of this description. If a child had even ten times the ordinary degree of the faculty in question, a judicious teacher would find abundance of useful employment for it, without resorting to any that could possibly be detrimental to his future habits, moral, religious, or intellectual." *London Review*, No. II. p. 412, 413.

* Query. Do they always teach their children *other* prayers also, suitable to their present age? or do they account them altogether unfit for any communion with God, *as children?* This surely is supplying them with a provision of "strong meat," which they may hereafter "be able to bear," while they withhold the necessary immediate nourishment of milk.

dicious practice, inasmuch as it involves a great risk of most serious evils, for the sake of a benefit immeasurably minute. To learn the same prayers, &c., in Latin or in Greek, would be, as an exercise of the memory, equally good, and in other respects much better. For when the learner was afterwards, at a riper age, presented with a translation of these words, the sense would strike him, and would perhaps arouse his attention, and excite his devotional feelings. Every one who knows what it is to (not merely say his prayers, but) really pray, must be conscious that a continual effort is requisite to prevent a form of words, with which he is very familiar, from sliding over the ear or the tongue, without being properly attended to, and accompanied by the heart and the understanding. Now the liability to this formal repetition of words, and the difficulty of avoiding it, must be greatly increased, if the words have been familiarly learned by rote at a time when the understanding could not possibly accompany the recitation, from their being beyond a child's comprehension. Add to which, that a painful association is thus formed in the child's mind, between all the collects and texts, &c., he has been thus learning, and the idea of a dull, irksome, uninteresting, and unmeaning task.

Some however find that their children *do not* regard such repetitions as a painful, or even an uninteresting task, but consider themselves, though they do not understand what they utter, as performing an act of devotion. Now this is precisely the case I have more particularly in view at present. The other just mentioned, of learning the words merely as an exercise of memory, is likely to *lead* to superstition; but *this* is itself superstitious. For what do the Romanists more, that make devotion consist in repeating a hallowed form of words, with a general intention indeed of praying, but without accompanying with the understanding the words uttered?

But, it may be replied, a child does understand *something* of what he is saying, if he does but understand that it is a prayer for some divine blessing; (an argument which may be, and is, urged by the Romanists in behalf of their Latin prayers;) while, on the other hand, the wisest man cannot be said *completely* to understand his prayers, since the nature of the Being he addresses must be mysterious to him. In many cases it happens that it is difficult to draw a precise line in theory, while, in practice, common sense leads every one to distinguish sufficiently. It is difficult, for instance, [vid. Hor. Epist. i. b. ii. line 35,] to lay down exactly how many years ago an author must have lived to be called "ancient;"—how many grains of corn will make a heap, &c. But as in other cases, so in this, men are seldom at a loss to perceive, with a sufficient approximation to truth for practical purposes, the distinction between what is, and what is not, "understood." Whenever a child is capable (which is generally at a very early age) of comprehending what prayer is, there must be *some* mode of expressing a prayer which will be intelligible to him; let *this* expression be then adopted; let him employ the form which he can *best* understand, and which may be subsequently modified and enlarged, as his understanding advances.

No doubt, a prayer thus adapted to the capacity of a child must be *childish;* how can any *natural*, fervent, hearty devotions of a *child*, be otherwise than childish? Is it any disparagement to the devotions of grown men, that they are *human*, and not angelic? Let those who, for the sake of a form of words intrinsically better, teach children prayers not adapted to the puerile understanding—let them, I say, reflect on what grounds they can convict the Romanists of superstition on account of their Pater-nosters. If there be any intrinsic holiness in words which renders them in themselves acceptable, whether we worship "in spirit and in truth," or not, then, surely, Latin words may have this efficacy. But the intrinsic sanctity of the words of the Lord's prayer, for instance, is the same only as that of the wood of the true cross. This was an instrument of the salvation of mankind when the Redeemer was offered upon it; the other is a means of grace when devoutly offered up, "with the heart and with the understanding also," in the name of that Redeemer: but the child who repeats the words by rote is no more benefited by them, than by carrying about him a piece of the wood of the cross. And in both cases, positive harm is done instead of benefit, by the misdirection of religious feeling.

I have heard it urged, that a child would be accounted a fool, if when sent to school he should be found unable to repeat the Lord's prayer. And certainly a child of average intelligence would usually be able, before the age supposed, to comprehend an *explanation* of that prayer,

which of course should not be withheld one moment after it can be understood. But at all events, it is surely better, when that is the alternative, that a child should be reckoned a fool, without being so, than that he should *be* so, without its being detected; nor can it be doubted that there is real folly, whether apparent or not, in superstitiously attributing efficacy to an unmeaning form of words.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that the whole of the above reasoning applies equally to the practice of taking little children to church.*

V. There is also a strong tendency to superstition in all that relates to the place and mode of interment of a corpse. Many of my readers must have observed, that in a great number of church-yards, the north side is almost entirely untenanted by graves, through a certain vague notion of its being "unlucky" to be buried there. The origin I believe of this feeling is to be found in the Romish practice of praying for the dead. The principal entrance to almost all churches being on the south, one who was interred on the north, would be the less likely to obtain the passing prayers of his surviving neighbours, as they were proceeding to public worship. But however this may be, and however little the origin of any superstition may be known or remembered, every thing, it is plain, *is* superstitious, and of the most mischievous class, which goes to connect the repose of the soul with any thing that takes place after a man's death. And continual watchfulness is requisite to prevent superstitions of this kind from being engrafted on the practice of interring the dead in church-yards, and performing the funeral-service over them. Nothing can be more proper than to choose such an occasion for the performance of devotional duties;—and to set aside a spot of ground for the decent interment of the dead;—nothing more natural and blameless, than the wish that our mortal remains should repose by the side of our friends and relatives: but the best things are liable to abuse; and the more sedulously, in most places, the pastor studies the habitual sentiments of his flock, the less will he be disposed to regard as superfluous an especial watchfulness on this particular point;—a constant care to check the superstitious idea, that either the consecrated ground, (whether within or without the church,) or the funeral-service, have any thing to do with the individual's future destiny. And the more care and diligence is requisite for the *detection* of these and similar superstitions, inasmuch as those enslaved to them are often *ashamed* of them, and consequently disposed to conceal their real sentiments; especially from any one whom they perceive to be not disposed to sympathise with them. The exercise of this vigilance, accordingly, by any one who had not heretofore deemed it needful, would be very likely to bring to his knowledge much that would surprise him. I have known, for instance, a person, in speaking of a deceased neighbour, whose character had been irreligious and profligate, remark, how great a comfort it was to hear the words of the funeral-service read over her, "because, poor woman, she had been such a bad liver." I have heard of an instance again, of a superstition, probably before unsuspected, being accidentally brought to light, by the minister's having forbidden a particular corpse to be brought into the church, because the person had never frequented it when alive: the consequence of which was, that many old people began immediately to frequent the church, who had before been in the habit of absenting themselves.

§. 10. All these and numberless other such superstitions, it was the business of the Romish priesthood, not to introduce indeed, but to encourage and maintain, inasmuch as they almost all tend to increase the influence and wealth of the hierarchy: let it be the Protestant pastor's business, not only to abstain from conniving at or favouring any thing of the kind, but (remembering that the original source of superstition is not in the church of Rome, but in the heart of man) to be ever on the watch against its inroads

* Our Liturgy, however, is evidently neither adapted nor designed for children; even those of such an age as to be fully capable of joining in congregational worship, were there a service suitably composed on purpose for them. To frame and introduce such a service would not, I think, be regarded as a trifling improvement, if we could but thoroughly get rid of the *principle* of the Romish lip-service. We cannot too much "take thought for the morrow," in matters relating to "the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" now children are emphatically the morrow of society; and in all that relates to religious and moral training, they are far the more important part of it; for we know that if we "train up a child in the way that he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it:" while, on the other hand, it is too often a vain attempt to remedy, by instruction to adults, the want of this early training. If we would but duly take care of children, grown people would generally take care of themselves.

from various quarters, and in various shapes.

It is evidently not enough to avoid and discountenance every thing that is *in itself* superstitious;—such as (in addition to several of the things just mentioned) the consulting of pretended witches and soothsayers—faith in dreams and omens, and in lucky and unlucky days; with many superstitions, of the same character; from which many even of the higher orders, in point of birth and station, are by no means wholly exempt, but which prevail to a much greater extent than I believe most persons who have not been much and confidentially conversant with the lower, and those somewhat above the lower, ranks, are at all inclined to suspect. Nor again, is it enough to reject and to discourage all such practices as, without being necessarily and in themselves superstitious, are, either generally, or at any particular time and place, peculiarly liable to be abused to a superstitious purpose, while they may, without any great loss, be dispensed with; such as were many of those practices of the Romish church which our Reformers "brake in pieces," as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent; not as originally evil, but as the occasion of superstition. All this, I say, is insufficient; because there are so many things which we *cannot* dispense with, which yet are continually liable to become no better than superstitious, through the superstitious character of "the natural man." We cannot dispense with the sacraments which Christ appointed;—with prayer, both public and private;—with the reading of the Scriptures;—with instructions from the ministers of the Gospel;—with buildings and days set apart, either wholly or partly, for these purposes. Yet these, and every thing else of this kind, are perpetually liable to be abused, and indeed I fear perpetually *are* abused, into occasions of superstition. Our prayers and our study of Scripture are, as I have above remarked, superstitious, when we trust in the efficacy of the words, without earnestly praying with the heart, and labouring to gain instruction in religion: the hearing of sermons is very commonly made an occasion of superstition, when a merit is attached to the act of hearing instruction, without labouring to understand, and profitably apply, that instruction. The sanctity belonging to the "church" of Christ, i. e. to the body of believers who are "the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in them,"* is commonly transferred to the building in which a congregation assembles; while the veneration for that building is shown not so much in an earnest endeavour that the prayers offered up, and the instructions given there, may be profitable to the soul, as in a superstitious feeling of satisfaction on the supposed merit of having, in bodily presence, frequented it during life, with perhaps a hope of future security, from the lifeless body's reposing within its walls. The sacraments again, as I have said, become superstitious to those who deeply venerate, and trust in, the "outward visible sign," without thinking of any inward spiritual efforts after the inward spiritual grace. And yet all these, and many other such occasions of superstition, (for such they doubtless are often made,) are what we cannot dispense with. The more vigilance therefore must we use in our own case, and inculcate upon others, in guarding against the inroads of superstition.

In no point we may be assured is our spiritual enemy more vigilant: he is ever ready, not merely to tempt us with the unmixed poison of known sin, but to corrupt even our food, and to taint even our medicine, with the venom of his falsehood For religion is the medicine of the soul, it is the designed and appropriate preventive and remedy for the evils of our nature; the subtle tempter well knows that no other allurements to sin would be *of* so much avail, if this medicine were assiduously applied, and applied in unadulterated purity: and he knows that superstition is the specific poison which may be the most easily blended with true religion, and which will the most completely destroy its efficacy.

It is for us then to take heed that the "light which is in us be not darkness"—that our religion be kept pure from the noxious admixture of superstition: and it is for us to observe the errors of others,

* It is strange, and it is unfortunate, that so many should have not only overlooked the application of the term "temple," by the Apostles, invariably to Christians *collectively*, never to the *individual* Christian, but should have even asserted the contrary, on the strength of one text, (1 Cor. vi. 19,) which according to all fair rules of interpretation exhibits (especially in the original Greek) the same sense as the rest of the passages where the word occurs. The apostle must have had *some* meaning in his constant adherence to a form of speech by no means obvious: and that meaning, whatever it is, we are not likely to take in, if we do not attend to his language. *See Hinds' "Three Temples of the One God."*

with a view to our own correction and to our own preservation; instead of contemplating "the mote that is in our brother's eye, while we behold not the beam that is in our own eye." Our conscience, if we carefully regulate, and diligently consult it, will be ready, after we have seen and condemned (which is no hard task) the faults of our neighbour, to furnish us (where there is need) with that salutary admonition, which the self-blinded king of Israel received from the mouth of the prophet; "Thou art the man."

CHAP. II.

VICARIOUS RELIGION.

§. 1. THE Apostle Paul, in many passages in his Epistles, characterizes the Christian religion* as containing "mysteries," that is, truths not discoverable by human reason, but made known by Divine revelation: as, for instance, in his First Epistle to Timothy,† "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness."

And it is very important to observe, that in all the passages (and they are very numerous) in which he applies the word Mystery (μυστήριον) to the Christian faith, or, to any part of it, the circumstance to which he is directing the reader's attention is, not the *concealment*, but the disclosure, of the mystery. He implies indeed that the truths so described were *formerly* unknown, and could not be known by man's unaided powers; but he speaks of them as now at length laid open, by the gracious dispensation of Providence; as no longer concealed, except from those who wilfully shut their eyes against the light of divine revelation: "if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whom the god of this world hath blinded;" and his own office in "proclaiming the good tidings"‡ of this revelation, he describes as "making known the mystery of the Gospel," "which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made *manifest*."

Not that the apostle meant to imply but that, after all, the nature and designs of the Most High must be by us very imperfectly understood; but the circumstance to which he is especially calling attention is, not the unrevealed, but the revealed—not the unintelligible, but the explained—portion of the divine dispensations.

And this he does, in manifest allusion to the mysteries of the ancient Pagan religions; with which, in this respect, he contrasts Christianity; inasmuch as in this last there was not, as among the Pagans, a distinction between the initiated and the uninitiated;—a revelation to some of the worshippers of certain holy secrets from which the rest were excluded; nor *great* mysteries and *lesser* mysteries, (as the Eleusinian,) in which different persons were initiated; but, on the contrary, the "*great*" mysteries of the Christian faith (μέγα μυστήριον) were made known, as far as it is expedient and possible for man to know them, to all alike, whether Jew or Gentile, who were but willing to embrace the truth: and "to know the fellowship" (i. e. the common participation) "of the mystery," κοινωνία τοῦ μυστηρίου, was offered to all. There was not one system of religion for a certain favoured few, and another for the mass of believers; but the great "mystery of godliness" was made accessible, gradually indeed, in proportion as they were able to bear it, but universally. To all Christ's disciples it was "given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;"* there was "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and (though with diversity of gifts) one

* For that is evidently the meaning of the expression, ἡ εὐσεβεία, which our translators have rendered "godliness."

† Chap. iii. 16.

‡ This we should always remember is the strict sense of the phrase κηρύσσειν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, which we usually render, in words which by familiarity have almost lost their original force, "preaching the Gospel."

* Matt. xiii. 11. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom," &c. An objection has been raised from this passage, because it is said that the others, viz., those who were not disciples, were not admitted to the same advantage. But why did they not *become* disciples? If Jesus had rested his claims on the apparent reasonableness of what he taught, it would have been most unfair to require men to join him before they fully understood it: but his claim rested on the "mighty works," which afforded sufficient proof of his coming from God.

and the same spirit sanctifying the church, and dwelling in all its members.

The opposite system to this—that of recognizing different degrees of access to the Deity, and of keeping certain sacred rites and holy secrets confined to a few, and set apart from the multitude—is one of the most remarkable characteristics of natural religion; by which expression I mean, not what is commonly, though improperly, so called; but, such a religious system as men *naturally* fall into, when left to themselves.

The case of the Eleusinian mysteries, above alluded to, is only one instance out of many. Indeed I believe there is hardly any system of Paganism with which we are acquainted, that has not some articles of faith—some religious rites—some kind of pretended theological knowledge—confined, either to the priests or to some privileged order of men, and from which the great body of worshipers is either excluded, or at least exempted.

It might be expected therefore that this character should be found (as in fact it is) in the Romish system; which I have already described as the gradual and (if I may be allowed the expression) spontaneous corruption of Christianity, by the natural unrestrained workings of the human mind.

Men readily perceived, what indeed is very true, that those who have leisure and abilities beyond what falls to the lot of the generality, are enabled, and may be expected, to acquire a larger share of learning, generally, and, among the rest, of theological learning: while the proper *object* of this theological learning (under such a system as that of Christianity) is often lost sight of, viz., to establish the authority, and ascertain and *explain* the meaning, of the sacred writings. And again, men readily perceived, that there are many points connected with religion which are in a great degree beyond their comprehension; without accurately distinguishing *which* are so from their own deficiency in learning, and which from being beyond the reach of the human faculties.

The learned, on the other hand, or such as aspired to that character, felt, of course, the natural love of *distinction* the more gratified, in proportion as their studies were supposed to be directed to points the most abstruse and recondite—to some knowledge respecting things divine, beyond the understanding, and too sacred for the inquiries of ordinary men.

At the same time, the natural inquisitiveness of the human mind after speculative knowledge, especially on the most exalted subjects, having led theologians to overlook the *practical* character of the Christian revelation, and to indulge in presumptuous disquisitions as to the *intrinsic* nature of the Deity, this circumstance could not but contribute still more to set apart a certain portion of (supposed) divine knowledge as unnecessary, and unfit, for vulgar contemplation. Mysterious doctrines unconnected with Christian practice, at least with such practice as was required from the great mass of Christians, it was sufficient that they should assent to with implicit faith, without attempting to examine the proofs of such matters—to understand the doctrines themselves—or even to know what they were: "I do not presume, nor am able, to comprehend the mysteries of the faith, but leave them to my spiritual guides; I believe all that the holy catholic church receives;—such was the language—such the easy and compendious confession of faith—which resulted from the indolence—the spiritual carelessness—the weakness, and the dishonest ambition, of human nature.

The unprofitable, absurd, presumptuous, and profane speculations of scholastic theologians (not all of them members of the Romish church) which are extant, afford a melancholy specimen of the fruits of this mistake as to the Christian mysteries—this "corruption from the *simplicity* that is in Christ."

Specimens of this "philosophy and vain deceit,"—such as are to be found in various dissertations on what are called the mysterious doctrines of the Christian faith—such as I cannot bring myself to transcribe, and cannot even think of without shuddering—it may be sometimes a profitable though a painful task to peruse, in order to estimate duly, as a warning and admonition to ourselves, the effects of misapplied learning and misdirected ingenuity. To select one instance out of many, no point in these systems of speculative theology has so much exercised the perverted powers of divines of this stamp, as the mystery of the Trinity;* or

* The selection of this particular doctrine by way of illustration was suggested by the circumstance, that the discourse, of which the following pages contain the substance, was delivered before the University on Trinity-Sunday. I have retained the passage, because I can think of no other instance that better illustrates what has been said

as *they* might with more propriety have called it, the mystery of the divine *Unity:* for though in itself the doctrine so sedulously inculcated throughout the Scriptures, that there is but One God, seems to present no revolting difficulty, yet, on rising from the disquisitions of many scholastic divines on the inherent distinctions of the three Divine Persons, a candid reader cannot but feel that *they* have made the Unity of God the great and difficult mystery;* and have in fact so nearly explained it away, and so bewildered the minds of their disciples, as to drive them to withdraw their thoughts habitually and deliberately from every thing connected with the subject;* as the only mode left for the unlearned to keep clear of error. Yet it might have occurred, one would have thought, to both parties, that learning cannot advance one man beyond another in the comprehension of things which are confessedly beyond the reach of the human faculties altogether;—that in total darkness, or in respect of objects beyond our horizon, the clearest and the dimmest sight are on a level;—and that of matters relating to the Deity and revealed by him, not as a special secret, to a favoured few, but to all who would hear his voice, and which cannot be discovered any otherwise than through this revelation—of these, none *need* know less, and none *can* know more, than the Almighty has thus revealed.

The nature of God as he *is in himself*, can never be comprehended by the wisest of his creatures; but the doctrine of the Trinity, and the rest of the mysteries of the Gospel, as far as they *relate to us*, since he *has* thought fit to reveal these to us in the Gospel, every Christian is allowed, and is bound, to learn from that revelation "of the mystery which was secret from the beginning of the world, but now is *made manifest*;"† And the doctrine of the Trinity, (which is perhaps the oftenest of any treated as a speculative truth about which none but learned divines need trouble themselves,) as it is a summary of that faith into‡ which we

* It is, however, important to remark, that though the Unity of the Deity is not *in itself* a doctrine of very mysterious difficulty, it is one which is the more earnestly dwelt on in Scripture, besides other reasons, for one resulting from the tone of the Scriptures themselves. For they would, *but for* these express declarations, naturally lead the reader either to believe in three Gods, or at least to be in doubt on the question. The doctrine of the Trinity is not so much *declared* as a distinct article of faith, as it is *implied* by the whole history recorded, and views every where taken, in Scripture, of God's threefold manifestation of himself; which are such as would present to our minds nothing inconsistent with the agency of three Divine Beings acting in concert, were it not that such sedulous care is taken to assure us of the numerical Unity of the God thus manifested to us;—that in the Son "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," &c. &c. See Essay vii. (Second Series.) p. 234, 235, and Essay ix. p. 277—281. See also Hinds' "Three Temples of the One God," p. 129, 132, for a most luminous view of this important subject.

The reader is also referred to the Articles "One," and "Person," in the Appendix to the "Elements of Logic." It has been doubted whether there is any foundation for the suspicion I have there expressed, that the language of some divines has a leaning towards Tritheism. The following extract will at once explain my meaning, and prove, I conceive, satisfactorily, that my apprehensions are not altogether groundless. It is taken from a work of considerable merit, and which has obtained not only much popularity, but also a peculiarly high description of patronage. Several of my readers will perhaps recognize the passage; but I purposely avoid naming the book, because it is not my object to discuss the merits of this or that individual work, but to call attention to the notions which are afloat in the world, generally; and I am so far from designing to particularize the work in question, as containing any thing novel, peculiar, likely to be generally offensive, and at variance with prevailing opinions, that my meaning is the very reverse.

"When the great Creator had finished the rest of his works, wanting another creature to rule them all, and as their Priest, to adore him in their name, he said, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.' In the creation of other things all is done with the tone of command, or with a mere volition. 'Let there be light;' let there be a firmament; let the earth bring forth so and so.' But when man is to be made—a creature who is to be endued with reason and intelligence—the very image of the Maker—he uses an expression which indicates deliberation and counsel; he consults with some other august Beings, (the two remaining Persons of the Trinity, no doubt,) of whom, as well as of himself, man was to be both the workmanship and the resemblance."

If this passage had stood alone in the Jewish Scriptures, or if the Jews had interpreted it, as this writer has done, without any reference to the other passages of Scripture which serve to qualify and guard it, they would doubtless (as the above extract seems to show) have adopted nearly the same hypothesis as was long afterward broached by Arius;—that the supreme God acts in concert "with some other august Beings!"

* I am enabled to state this as no mere conjecture or suspicion, but as a matter of *fact* coming within my own experience; I mean, in respect of sundry individual cases; and it is individual cases only that come within the province of experience.

† Rom. xvi. 25.

‡ Teach all nations, baptizing them *into* the name (εις το ὄνομα) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" this is evidently the right rendering of the original words, and conveys the

are baptized, and the key-stone of the Christian system, ought to be set forth continually and universally, as the support of every part of the building of the Christian faith, and the Christian life: reference should be made to it, not merely on some stated solemn occasions, as to an abstruse tenet to be assented to, and then laid aside, but perpetually, as to a practical doctrine, connected with every other point of religious belief and conduct.

§. 2. In no point perhaps has the real origin of the Romish corruptions been more imperfectly perceived, than in the one now before us—the setting apart of certain religious dogmas—duties—privileges—in short certain portions of Christianity, as confined to a distinct class of men, and in which the laity were either not allowed or not required to have a share. We are not accustomed to hear much of priestcraft—of the subtle arts of designing men, who imposed on the simplicity of an ignorant people, and persuaded them to believe that they, the priests, alone understood the nature of the Deity—the proper mode in which to propitiate him—and the mysterious doctrines to which the others were to give their implicit assent; and the poor deluded people are represented as prevailed on against their better judgment, by the sophistry, and promises, and threats, of these crafty impostors, to make *them* the keepers of their consciences—their mediators, and substitutes in the service of God, and their despotic spiritual rulers.

There is undoubtedly much truth in such a representation; but it leaves on the mind an erroneous impression, because it is (at the utmost) only *half* the truth.

If indeed, in any country, priests had been beings of a different species—or a distinct caste, as in some of the Pagan nations where the priesthood is hereditary;—if this race had been distinguished from the people by intellectual superiority and moral depravity, and if the people had been sincerely desirous of knowing, and serving, and obeying God for themselves, but had been persuaded by these demons in human form that this was impossible, and that the laity must trust *them* to perform what was requisite, in their stead, and submit implicity to their guidance—then indeed there would be ground for regarding priestcraft as altogether the work of the priests, and in no degree of the people. But we should remember, that in every age and country, (even where they were, as the Romish priests were not, a distinct caste,) priests must have been mere men, of like passions with their brethren; and though sometimes they might have, on the whole, a considerable intellectual superiority, yet, it must always have been impossible to delude men into the reception of such gross absurdities, if they had not found in them a readiness—nay, a craving—for delusion. The reply which is recorded of a Romish priest is, (not in the sight of God indeed, but) as far as regards any complaint on the part of the laity, a satisfactory defence; when taxed with some of the monstrous impostures of his church, his answer was, "Populus vult decipi, et decipitaur." Such indeed was the case of Aaron, and similar the defence he offered, for making the Israelites an image, at their desire. Let it not be forgotten, that the *first recorded* instance of departure from purity of worship, as established by the revelation to the Israelites, was forced on the *priest* by the *people*.

The truth is, mankind have an innate propensity, as to other errors, so to that of endeavouring to serve God by proxy;—to commit to some distinct order of men the care of their religious concerns, in the same manner as they confide the care of their bodily health to the physician, and of their legal transactions to the lawyer; deeming it sufficient to follow implicitly their directions, without attempting themselves to become acquainted with the *mysteries* of medicine or of law.* Even thus are they willing and desirous that others should study, and should un-

sense which must have been meant, viz., that the baptized convert was enrolled and enlisted, as it were, into the service of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Vulgate Latin has "*in* nomine," and our translation, (perhaps from too great reverence for that authority,) "*in* the name;" which does violence to the original, and introduces a different idea, quite inappropriate.

* Nothing is more mischievous than an incorrect analogy that is constantly before us, and familiar to our minds. Like a distorted mirror in the apartment we inhabit, it produces, not an insulated or occasional error, but a deep-seated and habitual false impression. Now nothing can be more familiar than the seeming analogy between the several professions. Men may rather be said habitually to feel, than distinctly to maintain,) (indeed the falsehood would be easily detected in a formal assertion,) that as the soldier is in respect of military, and the sailor, in respect of naval affairs, and the physician, in respect of remedies for bodily disease, and the lawyer, in legal matters so is the clergyman in respect of religion.

derstand, the mysterious doctrines of religion in their stead—should practise, in their stead, some more exalted kind of piety and of virtue—and should offer prayers and sacrifices on their behalf, both in their lifetime and after their death. For man, except when unusually depraved, retains enough of the image of his Maker, to have a natural reverence for religion, and a desire that God should be worshipped; but, through the corruption of his nature, his heart is (except when divinely purified) too much alienated from God to take delight in serving him. Hence the disposition men have ever shown, to substitute the devotion of the priest for their own;—to leave the duties of piety in his hands—and to let him serve God *in their stead*. This disposition is not so much the *consequence*, as itself the origin, of priestcraft. The Romish hierarchy did but take advantage from time to time of this natural propensity, by engrafting successively on its system such practices and points of doctrine as favoured it, and which were naturally converted into a source of profit and influence to the priesthood. Hence the gradual transformation of the Christian minister—the presbyter—into the sacrificing priest, the hiereus, (in Latin, "sacerdos;" as the Romanists call theirs,) of the Jewish and Pagan religions. This last is an error of which no inconsiderable remains are to be traced in the minds of Protestants, and on which, as it appears to me to be very important, I shall beg to be indulged in making some more particular observations.

§. 3. * That the English word PRIEST is frequently employed for the rendering of two different words in Greek, *viz.*, Ἱερεὺς, and Πρεσβύτερος, (from the latter of which our "presbyter" or "priest" is derived,) is a circumstance of which no scholar can be ignorant indeed, but which is not in general sufficiently attended to: for it is not the same thing to be merely *acquainted* with the ambiguity of a word, and to be practically aware of it, and watchful of the consequences connected with it. And it is, I conceive, of no small importance that this ambiguity should be carefully and frequently explained to those who are ignorant of the original language of the Old Testament.

Our own name for the ministers of our own religion, we naturally apply to the *ministers* (in whatever sense) of any other religion; but the two words which have thus come to be translated "priest," seem by no means to be used synonymously. The priests, both of the Jews and of Pagan nations,* constantly bear, in the sacred writers, the title of *hiereus*; which title they never apply to any of the Christian ministers ordained by the apostles. These are called by the title of *episcopos*, (literally superintendent; whence our English word "bishop;") *presbyteros*, literally elder, and so rendered by our translators, probably to avoid the ambiguity just alluded to; though the very word "presbyter" or "priest," is but a corruption of that name: and—*diaconos*, literally "minister;" from which our word deacon is but slightly altered.

These titles, from their original vague and general signification, became gradually not only restricted in great measure to Christian ministers, but also more precisely distinguished from each other than at first they had been; so as to be appropriated respectively to the different orders of those ministers, instead of being applied indiscriminately. But no mention is made, by the sacred writers, of any such office being established by the apostles, as that of "priest" in the other sense, *viz.*, *hiereus*;—priest, in short, such as we find mentioned, under that name, in Scripture.

Now this alone would surely be a strong presumption that they regarded the two offices as essentially distinct; for they must have been perfectly familiar with the *name*; and had they intended to institute the same *office*, or one very similar to it, we cannot but suppose they would have employed that name†. The mere circumstance that the Christian religion is very *different* from all others, would, of itself, have been no reason against this; for the difference is infinite between the divinely-instituted religion of the Jews, and the idolatrous superstitions of the heathen; and yet, from similarity of office, the word *hiereus* is applied by the sacred writers to the ministers of both religions.

* The passage which follows I have taken the liberty of extracting, in substance, and nearly in words, from a Discourse delivered before the University of Oxford, on the 5th of Nov. 1821, and published with the second edition of the Bampton Lectures.

* Acts xiv. 13.

† For it should never be forgotten, that Christianity is the offspring of Judaism, and that all the institutions and regulations of the Christian church emanated from men who had been brought up as Jews, and who would not have deviated from what they had been used to, on slight grounds.

The difference of names, then, is in such a case as this a matter of no trifling importance, but would, even of itself, lead us to infer a difference of *things*, and to conclude that the apostles regarded their religion as having no priest at all, (in the sense of Ἱερεὺς,) except Christ Jesus, of whom indeed all the Levitical priests were but types.

§. 4. It should next be considered what was the nature of that office which was exercised by the Jewish and by the Pagan priests; and which, according to the apostle, belonged, after the establishment of Christ's kingdom, to him alone.

The priests of the Israelites were appointed by the Almighty himself, for the express purpose of offering *sacrifices*, in the name and on the behalf of the people; they alone were allowed to make oblations and burn incense before the Lord: it was through them that the people were to approach him, that their service might be acceptable: a very great portion of the Jewish religion consisted in the performance of certain ceremonial rights, most of which could only be duly performed by the priests, or through their mediation and assistance; they were to make *intercession* and *atonement* for offenders; they, in short, were the *mediators* between God and man.

It is true the Israelites were a sacred *nation*, and are called in Scripture a "kingdom of priests;" but it is plain that this is not to be understood as admitting them all indiscriminately to the exercise of the sacred offices just mentioned; since the most tremendous punishments were denounced (of whose infliction examples are recorded) against any who, not being of the seed of Aaron, presumed to take upon them to burn incense and make oblations.

But it was requisite to impress on the minds of the Israelites that they were not to entertain the notion (which appears to have been not uncommon among the heathen) that religion was the exclusive concern of the priests: they, on the contrary, were required to worship God themselves—to conform to his ordinances—to keep themselves pure from all defilement, moral or ceremonial—and to practise all their duties out of reverence to God, their Lawgiver and King; they were, in short, to be priests in piety of heart and holiness of life. And in the same sense Peter calls Christians "a royal priesthood;" and John, in the Apocalypse, speaks of them as "kings and priests;" evidently meaning that they were dedicated to Christ, and were bound to offer up themselves as a living sacrifice devoted to him. For it is most important to observe, that when the title of priest is applied *to Christians*, it is applied to *all* of them.

There may have been another intention also in calling the Israelites a kingdom of priests; *viz.*, to point out that the mysteries of their religion (which among the Pagans were in general kept secret among the priests, or some select number whom these admitted to the knowledge of them) were revealed, as far as they were revealed at all, to the whole of this favoured nation. Many parts indeed of the Mosaic institutions were but imperfectly understood by any, as to their object and signification; but nothing seems to have been imparted to the priests which was withheld from the people. This very striking distinction is remarked by Josephus, who observes, that such religious mysteries as, among the heathen, were concealed by the priests, were imparted to the whole Jewish nation.

That there was, however, a distinct order of priests, properly so called, set apart for a peculiar purpose, is undeniable and undisputed.

Among the Pagans, whose institutions appear to have been, in great measure, corrupt imitations of those of the patriarchal religion, we find, as before, priests, who were principally, if not exclusively, the offerers of sacrifices, in behalf of the state and of individuals—intercessors—supplicating and making atonement for others—mediators between man and the object of his worship.

This peculiarity of office was even carried to the length of an abuse: (I speak now of the abuses introduced into the *institutions* of the Pagans, in contradistinction to the absurdities of their *faith*:) there seems to have been as (has been already hinted) a strong tendency to regard all religion as exclusively the concern of the priests;—that they were to be the sole depositaries of the mysteries of things sacred;—that a high degree of holiness of life and devotion were required of them alone;—that they were to be religious, as it were, instead of the people;—and that men had only to show true respect to the priests, and leave to them the service of the Deity; just as they commit the defence of the state to soldiers, and the cure of their diseases to physicians. Against such notions (as

was before remarked) the Israelites were studiously, and not without reason, cautioned.

The office of priest, then, in that sense of the word which I am now considering, *viz.*, as equivalent to *hiereus*, being such as has been described, it follows that, in in *our* religion, the *only* priest, in that sense, is Jesus Christ himself; to whom consequently, and to whom alone, under the Gospel, the title is applied by the inspired writers. He alone has offered up an atoning *sacrifice* for us, even the sacrifice of his own blood; he "ever liveth to make *intercession* for us;" he is the "one *Mediator* between God and man;" "through him we have access to the Father;" and "no man cometh unto the Father but by him."

§. 5. As for the ministers whom he, and his apostles, and their successors, appointed, they are completely distinct from priests in the former sense, in office, as well as in name. Of this office, one principal part is that it belongs to them (not exclusively indeed, but principally and especially) to preach the Gospel—to maintain order and decency in their religious assemblies, and Christian discipline, generally—to instruct, exhort, admonish, and spiritually govern, Christ's flock. His command was, to "go and teach all nations;"—to "preach the Gospel to every creature:" and these Christian ministers are called in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "those that bear rule over them, and watch for their souls, as they that must give an account." Now it is worthy of remark, that the office I am at present speaking of made no part of the especial duties of a priest, in the other sense, such as those of the Jews, and of the Pagans. Among the former, it was not so much the family of Aaron, as the whole tribe of Levi, that seem to have been set aside for the purpose of *teaching* the Law: and even to these it was so far from being in any degree confined, that persons of any tribe might teach publicly in the synagogues on the Sabbath day; as was done by our Lord himself, who was of the tribe of Judah; and by Paul, of the tribe of Benjamin, without any objection being raised: whereas an intrusion into the priest's office would have been vehemently resented.

And as for the Pagan priests, *their* business was rather to conceal, than to explain, the mysteries of their religion;—to keep the people in darkness, than to enlighten them. Accordingly, the moral improvement of the people, among the ancients, seems to have been considered as the proper care of the legislator, whose laws and systems of public education generally had this object in view. To these, and to the public disputations of philosophers, but by no means to the priests of their religion, they appear to have looked for instruction in their duty.

That the Christian ministry, on the contrary, were appointed, in great measure, if not principally, for the express purpose of giving religious instruction and admonition, is clearly proved both by the practice of the apostles themselves, and by Paul's directions to Timothy and to Titus.

Another, and that a peculiar and exclusive office of the Christian ministers, at least according to the practice of most churches, is the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. But this administration does not at all assimilate the Christian priesthood to the Pagan or the Jewish. The former of these rites is, in the first place, an admission into the visible church; and therefore very suitably received at the hands of those whose especial business is to *instruct* and examine those who are candidates for baptism, as adults, or who have been baptized in their infancy; and in the second place, it is an admission to a participation in the gifts of the Spirit; without which the church itself, and the formal admission into it, would be an empty mockery. The treasury, as it were, of divine grace is then thrown open, to which we may resort when a sufficient maturity of years enables us to understand our wants, and we are inclined to apply for their relief. It is not, let it be observed, through the mediation of an earthly priest that we are admitted to offer our supplications before God's mercy-seat; we are authorized, by virtue of this sacred rite, to appear, as it were, in his presence, ourselves, needing no intercessor with the Father, but his son Jesus Christ, both God and man. "Having therefore," says Paul, "*boldness* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full *assurance* of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

The sacrament of the Lord's supper,

again, is not, as the Romanists impiously pretend, a fresh sacrifice, but manifestly a celebration of the one already made; and the rite seems plainly to have been ordained for the express purpose (among others) of fixing our minds on the great and single oblation of himself, made by the only High Priest, once for all;—that great High Priest who has no earthly successor. And *all* the communicants are alike partakers, spiritually, of the body and blood of Christ, (i. e. of the Spirit of Christ, represented by his flesh and blood, as these again are, by the bread and wine,*) provided *they themselves* are in a sanctified and right frame of mind. It is on the personal holiness of the communicant, not of the minister, that the efficacy of this sacrament depends; *he*, so far from offering any sacrifice himself, refers them to the sacrifice already made by another.

Such being then the respective offices of these two orders of men, (both now commonly called in English "priests." but originally distinguished by the names of Ἱερεὺς and Πρεσβύτερος,) we may assert that the word in question is *ambiguous;* denoting, when thus applied to both, two things, essentially distinct. It is not merely a comprehensive term, embracing two species under one class, but rather an equivocal term, applied, in different senses, to two things of different classes. Thus the word publican, for instance, is ambiguous when applied to a "tax-gatherer" and an "inn-keeper;" though "man," which is a still more comprehensive term, may be applied to both without ambiguity; because, however widely they differ, it denotes them only so far forth as they agree; in short, it is applied to them *in the same sense;* which "publican" is not. No more is "priest," when applied to the "hiereus" and the "presbyteros." At least it must be admitted, that what is most essential to each respectively, is wanting in the other. The essential characteristic of the Jewish priests was, (not their being *ministers* of religion; for that, in a certain sense, all the Levites were; but) their offering *sacrifices*, and making atonement and intercession for the people: whereas of the Christian minister the especial office is religious instruction, regulation of the religious assemblies, and of the religious and moral conduct, of the people generally; (an office corresponding to that of the Jewish elders or presbyters, and of the "rulers of synagogues,") and the administration of rites totally different in their nature from the offering of sacrifices;—totally precluding the idea of *his* making himself the mediator between God and man.

§. 6. The confounding together, then, through the ambiguity of language, two things thus essentially distinct, may well be expected to mislead, not only such as are ignorant of the distinction, but all who do not carefully attend to it, and keep it steadily in view. If we are but careful not to lose sight of the two meanings of he word "priest"—the broad distinction between Ἱερεὺς and Πρεσβύτερος—we shall run no risk of being either seduced or silenced by all the idle clamours that are afloat about priestcraft. Our readiest and shortest answer will be, that Christianity (I mean Christianity as found in Scripture, not as perverted by the Romish church, which claims an authority independent of Scripture,) has no priestcraft, for this simple reason, that it has (in that sense of the word in which our opponents employ it) *no priest on earth.*

And it is worthy of remark how striking a *peculiarity* this is in our religion; there being probably no religion in the world, certainly none that has ever prevailed among the more celebrated nations, which has not priests in the same sense in which the Levitical priests and those of the ancient Greeks and Romans are so called. Now every peculiarity of our religion is worth noticing, with a view to the confirmation of our faith, even though it may not at first sight strike us as a distinguishing *excellence:* for that our religion should differ from all others, in points in which they all agree, is a presumption at least that it is not drawn from the same origin. And the presumption is the stronger, inasmuch as the difference I have been speaking of is not slight or verbal, but real and essential. The priesthood of Pagan nations, and that of our own, are not merely *unlike*, but, in the most essential points, even *opposite*. *They* offer sacrifices for the people; *we* refer them to a sacrifice made by another; *they* profess to be the mediators through whom the Deity is to be addressed; *we* teach them to look to a heavenly Mediator, and in his name boldly to approach God's mercy-seat themselves: *they* study to conceal the mysteries of religion; *we* labour to make them known: *they* have, for the most part, hidden sacred books, which

* See note on the Eucharist appended to Essay viii. Second Series.

none but a chosen few may look into; *we* teach and exhort men to study the word of God themselves: *they* strive to keep the people in darkness, and to stifle inquiry; *we* make it our business to enlighten them; urging them to "search the Scriptures"—to "prove all things—and to hold fast that which is right:" *they* practise the duties of their religion *instead* of the people; *we* instruct and admonish all to practise them for themselves. And it may be added, that *they* in general teach, that a devoted confidence in them and obedience to their commands, will serve as a substitute for a moral life; while *we* declare to them from Scripture, that it is in vain to call Jesus Lord, if they "do not the things which he says."

Now if the Jews be justly condemned, who crucified our Lord between two thieves,—thus studiously "numbering with the transgressors" of the vilest kind, the only Man who never transgressed—it is awful to think what account those will have to render at the last day, who labour to vilify this religion, by confounding it with the grossest systems of human imposture and superstition, in those very points in which the two are not only different, but absolutely *contrasted.*

§. 7. Great occasion however (as I have said) has been afforded for the enemies of our faith to blaspheme, by the corruptions which the Romish church has sanctioned, especially in what regards the Christian priesthood. She has, in fact, in a great degree, transformed the presbyter—the priest of the Gospel dispensation—into the hiereus, or Levitical priest: thus derogating from the honour of the one great High Priest, and altering some of the most characteristic features of his religion, into something more like Judaism or Paganism than Christianity.

The Romish priest professes, like the Jewish, to offer sacrifice (the sacrifice of the mass) to propitiate God towards himself and his congregation: the efficacy of that sacrifice is made to depend on sincerity and rectitude of intention, not in the *communicants* themselves, but in the *priest;* he, assuming the character of a mediator and intercessor, prays, not *with*, but *for*, the people, in a tongue unknown to them, and in an inaudible voice: the whole style and character of the service being evidently far different from what the apostle must have intended, in commanding us to "pray for one another." The Romish priest undertakes to reconcile transgressors with the Almighty, by prescribing penances, to be performed by them, in order to obtain *his* absolution; and, profanely copying our only High Priest, pretends to transfer to them his own merits, or those of the saints. He, like a Pagan, rather than a Jewish priest, keeps hidden from the people the volume of their faith, that they may with ignorant reverence submit to the dominion of error, instead of being "made free by the truth," which he was expressly commissioned to make known; thus hiding the "candle under a bushel," which was designed to "be a light to lighten the nations."

In short, whoever will minutely examine, with this view, the errors of the Romish church, will find that a very large and important portion of them may be comprehended under this one general censure, that they have destroyed the true character of the Christian priesthood; substituting for it, in great measure, what cannot be called a priesthood, except in a different sense of the word. They have, in short, gone far towards changing the office of presbyter into that of hiereus. Against that church, therefore, the charge of priestcraft may but too justly be brought.

A natural consequence of this error, indeed properly speaking, a part of it, is that further approach to Judaism, the error of regarding a Christian place of worship as answering to the *temple*,—"the house of God" in Jerusalem; whereas it really corresponds to a Jewish *synagogue*. And thus the reverence due to the real temple of the Lord now subsisting among us and within us ("ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you") is transferred from the people—the "lively stones" of God's house, to the building in which they assemble.* On the same principle, the table used for the celebration of the Eucharist is often called (consistently, by Romanists, but inconsistently, by Protestants) the "altar."

Part of the same system again was the performance of divine service in an unknown tongue—the concealment of the sacred mysteries of the Christian faith behind the veil of a dead language—and the opposition made to the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular languages.

§. 8. If any one doubts the existence, among Protestants of the present day, of

* See Hind's Three Temples of the One God.

a like principle, he may find but too convincing a proof of it in the opposition still made by some, to the education of the poor. Surely many of those who profess the greatest abhorrence of Romish errors, have never considered that this denial of the Scriptures to the people is one of the worst of them; and that whether the Bible is in Latin or in English, makes little difference to one who cannot read. Nor do such persons consider, that it was (if I may so speak) the great boast of the founder of our faith, that "to the poor the Gospel was preached:" so that if his religion be not really calculated for these, his pretensions must have been unfounded. The very truth of his divine mission is at issue on this question.

And yet if it were asked of any one, Romanist or Protestant, who professes to acknowledge the divine origin of the Christian religion, whether that religion was designed for the great mass of the people, or merely for a few of the higher classes, he would be sure to answer, that it was intended for all mankind. And in proof of this, he might cite numerous passages of the Scriptures which imply it; such as the command of our Lord to preach the Gospel to every creature," and his application, just above noticed, of the prophecy, "to the poor the Gospel is preached." And he would represent it (and justly) as a point of the highest importance, as I have said, towards our belief in the Christian religion, that we should regard it as suited to all mankind as one which all, above the condition of mere savages, are capable of embracing; because otherwise it cannot be a true revelation. For the first founders of it plainly had this design; Jesus Christ himself did certainly intend his religion for high and low, rich and poor; and therefore, if it be not one which the lower ranks of society are *capable* of embracing, he, the founder of it, must have been mistaken in his calculation—must have been ignorant either of the character of his own religion, or of the nature of man; which would of course imply that he could not have been divinely inspired. The systems of Aristotle or Plato, of Newton or Locke, may conceivably be very true, although the mass of mankind cannot comprehend them, because they were never intended for the mass of mankind: but the Christian religion was; and therefore it cannot really be a divine revelation, unless it be such as men in general understand and embrace.

And yet, though such would be the answer which almost all believers would give, in words, if such a question were put, there are, as I have said, not a few who, in *practice*, give a contrary answer.

I mean, that they act as if the Christian religion were *not* designed for the lower orders, but only for a small portion of mankind. For this those do, who, under the pretence that the labouring classes "need not be profound theologians," consider it unnecessary, or even mischievous, to give them such an education as may enable them to study for themselves the Scriptures, and the explanations needful for the understanding of them. And yet they profess to hold, that the Christian religion *was* meant to be embraced by people of all ranks.

Whence comes this contradiction? this inconsisteney of their practical views with their professed belief? It arises, I conceive, from their not considering what the Christian religion is, and what is meant by embracing it. When they say that they believe it to be designed for the mass of the people, and yet that these need not, or should not, be educated, what they mean is this: that it is possible for a man without any education, to be sober, honest, industrious, contented, &c., and that sobriety, honesty, and the rest, are Christian virtues; and that, consequently, a man may be a good practical Christian without any education. What they mean, in short, by a man's being a good Christian, is his doing those things which are enjoined to Christians, and abstaining from those things which are forbidden. To know on what grounds the Christian religion is to be believed, to understand any thing of its doctrines, to adopt or to comprehend any Christian motives and principles of conduct, all this they conceive to be unnecessary, except for the clergy and the higher classes, as long as a man's conduct is but right. Now this is in fact, as I have said, the Romish system; which is so natural to man that, under one shape or another, it is continually springing up under new names. The Romish church, we know, used to forbid, and, as long as it was possible, prevented, the Scripture being translated into the popular languages; and enjoined the people not to attempt to pry into religious questions for themselves, but to believe implicitly and in the lump, all that the holy church believed, and do what-

ever their priests enjoined them, without making any inquiries; and this, they declared, was the way to be good Christians.

Now to waive the question how far any one is *likely* to lead a moral life who knows little or nothing about his religion—let it be supposed that a man is leading such a life; still I contend that it cannot be said to be a Christian life, if it does not spring from Christian principles. The brute-animals conform to the design of their Maker, an act in a manner suitable to the nature with which He has endued them: but it would sound strange to say that they are *religious*. Why not? because they have no knowledge or notion of a God, but fulfil his designs without intending and without knowing it. And no more can a man be said to embrace the Christian religion, and to lead a Christian life, who does indeed fulfil all the Christian commandments, but not from any Christian principle—from any motives peculiar to the Christian religion—but for the sake of credit, or health, or prosperity, in the world, or from fear of human punishment—or from deference to the authority of the priest, or of some other person whom he looks up to, or from any other such motive. Worldly goods will undoubtedly be produced by honest industry, temperance, friendliness, and good conduct in general. And it is conceivable therefore, (I do not say likely,) but it is certainly conceivable, that a man might conduct himself practically as a Christian should do, merely for the sake of these worldly advantages, and not from any Christian principle. But in that case his could no more be called a Christian life, than that of a brute animal, or than the movements of a machine. The patient who has been cured of his disease, by strictly conforming to the directions of a skilful physician, is not, by swallowing the medicines prescribed, a step the nearer to becoming himself a physician.*

Every part of the New Testament bears witness to the truth of what I have been saying. The apostles do not even allow it to be sufficient, that a man should believe in Christianity, without knowing *why* he believes it. "Be always ready," says the apostle Paul, "to give a reason for the hope that is in you." Indeed it is plain, that if any one believes any thing without any reason, but merely because some one has told him to do so, even if that which he believes be the truth, yet it is only by chance that he believes the truth;—he does not believe it *because* it is true; and this is not faith, but blind credulity. Now "without faith it is impossible to please God." And, according to the apostles, the Christian is required not only to believe in his religion and to know what that religion is, but to implant in his mind Christian feelings and motives—"to grow in *grace*," as well as "in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ"—to be actuated by gratitude and love for Christ, who died for his sins—by an earnest desire to prove that love by copying his example—by obeying his commands—by being led by his Spirit; and, at every step he takes, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," as his pattern and his support in this life, and his eternal rewarder in the next.

Such being then the view which Christ himself and his apostles took of the Christian religion, which religion he evidently meant to be "preached to every creature," and considered as one which might be, and should be, embraced by men of all classes, it is plain that, if they were not mistaken in their views—in short, if they really were sent from God—it is possible and needful that all classes should have a sufficiency of education to enable them to understand what their religion is, and why it should be received, and how it is to be acted upon.

It is but a slight modification of the same Romanist principle to propose that the poor should indeed be taught to read, and should have the *four Evangelists* put into their hands, but that all, except learned divines, should be discouraged as much as possible from the perusal of the *Apostolic Epistles*, lest they should "wrest these to their own destruction;" a pretext which was urged with equal reason, and perhaps with more consistency, by the Romanists, for precluding the people from reading "the other Scriptures" also.*

The Christian religion, as represented in Scripture, is one that is to be believed on rational conviction, and studied, and felt, and brought into the practice of life, by each man for himself, in all classes of society. The Christian religion, as perverted by the church of Rome, and as human nature is always tending to pervert it, is in fact *two* religions; one for

* See Arist. Eth. Nic. b. ii. ch. 4. b. vi. ch. 12.

* I have treated fully of this question in Essay II. Second Series.

the initiated few, and one for the mass of the people, who are to follow implicitly the guidance of the others, trusting to their vicarious wisdom, and piety, and learning, believing and practising just as much as these permit and require.

Perhaps the use of the terms "pastor" and "flock," to express the relation between the minister and his congregation, may have led the incautious to form insensibly a notion of some more close analogy than really subsists. He cannot too often or too earnestly warn the people, that they are not properly *his* flock, but Christ's; he is only an assistant and servant of the "chief Shepherd;" and must not only refer at every step to Scripture, but also warn his hearers not to take upon trust his interpretation, but themselves to "search the Scriptures daily, whether those things be so" which he teaches. The language of Scripture is, (I believe invariably,) "feed the *flock of Christ;*" "feed *my* sheep," &c.

But the Romish system makes the people altogether the priest's flock, by exalting him into the mediator between them and God. Hence sprung the doctrine of the necessity of confession to a priest, and of the efficacy of the penance he may enjoin, and the absolution he bestows—hence the celibacy of the clergy, as of an order of men of peculiar sanctity. Hence the doctrine of works of supererogation, and of the supposed transferableness from one man to another of the merit of such extraordinary holiness as is not required of Christians in general.

§. 9. I repeat, that these, and a whole train of similar absurdities, are too gross to have been forced upon the belief of men not predisposed to receive them:—predisposed, I mean, not by mere intellectual weakness, but by a moral perversity combined with it;—by a heart alienated from God, yet fearful of his displeasure, and coveting the satisfaction of a quiet conscience at the least possible expense of personal piety and personal exertion.

In all ages and countries, man, through the disposition he inherits from our first parents, is more desirous of a *quiet* and approving, than of a vigilant and *tender* conscience;—studious to escape the *thought* of spiritual danger, more than the danger itself; and to induce, at any price, some one to assure him confidently that he is safe—to "prophesy unto him smooth things," and to "speak peace," even "when there is no peace."

Inexcusable indeed, in the sight of God, are those who encourage and take advantage of such a delusion; but the people have little right to complain of them. To many of them one might say, "you have had what you sought; you were not seeking in sincerity to know and to please God; if you had been, you would have perceived the vanity of attempting to substitute the piety and good works of a sinful fellow-mortal for your own; you would have perceived the extravagance of imagining that you could purchase happiness or relief in a future state, by hiring a priest to say masses for your soul: what you sought for in reality was the repose of your soul in this life; a security from the disturbances of conscience, and from a sense of personal responsibility: these false comforts are what in reality your heart was set on; and these alone are what you have purchased."

If such then be the natural propensity of the human mind, we must expect that it will always, and every where, be struggling to show itself, not only when encouraged, but when not carefully watched and repressed, by the ministry.

I might appeal to any one who has had, and has made use of, the requisite experience, whether he has not continually met with more or less of this tendency to substitute the religious knowledge, the faith—the piety—the prayers—the holiness and purity, of the minister, for that of the layman.

How many are there that regard the study of the Scriptures, and the endeavour to understand them, as a professional pursuit, very becoming to a clergyman, but of which little or nothing is required of the laity;—that speak of all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity under the title of "theological mysteries," with which the clergy may suitably be occupied, but with which it is needless, if not even presumptuous and profane, for the unlearned to concern themselves;—that regard the practice of family devotions as very proper in the house of a clergyman, but in any other, as uncalled for, or even savouring of pharisaical ostentation. Nay, even licentious or profane discourse, intemperance and debauchery, or devotedness to frivolous amusements, we often hear characterized as "unbecoming a clergyman," in a sort of tone which implies the speaker's feeling to be, that they are unbecoming merely to a *clergyman*, not to a Christian.

§. 10. Many things again there are, which, being considered as in themselves indifferent, are not necessarily unsuitable to a Christian as such, but of which some are regarded by a greater, and some by a smaller number, as professionally unsuited to a minister of religion. Now it might perhaps have been expected, that the views, as to this point, of different persons among the laity, should correspond respectively with the different views they take of their own obligations; I mean, that those who are the less, or the more, scrupulous as to their own conduct, should allow a greater or a less latitude to the clergy in respect of the professional strictness of life and seriousness of demeanour required of *them*. But experience shows that this is very often the reverse of the fact. None are more rigid in exacting of clergymen not only purity of life, but the most unbending seriousness of deportment, and abstinence from almost every kind of amusement, than many of those who, in their own lives, are the most unrestrained in the pursuit of amusement, and who exhibit the greatest degree of frivolity or of worldliness in their pursuits—of levity in their conversation, and of inattention to religious subjects. Does not this imply a lurking tendency to that very error which has been openly sanctioned and established in the Romish church? the error of thinking to serve God by a deputy and representative:—of substituting *respect* for religion and its ministers, for personal religion;—and regarding the learning and faith, the prayer and piety, and the scrupulous sanctity, of the priest, as being in some way or other efficaciously transferred from him to the people. It seems some consolation to such persons as I am alluding to that they have *heard* sound doctrine at least, if they have not laid it to heart; that they have *witnessed* and *respected* a strict and unblemished life, and a serious deportment, though they have not copied it; and that on their death-bed they will be enabled to send for a minister of undoubted learning and piety, and enjoy the benefit of his prayers and his blessing, though the holy water and the extreme unction of the Romanists have been laid aside. They take little care indeed to keep their own lights burning; but when summoned to meet their Lord, they will have one to whom they may apply in their extremity, saying, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

All indeed, who are in any degree under such a delusion as I am describing are not subject to it in the *same* degree; but attentive observation will convince every candid inquirer, that in this, as well as in other points, mankind are naturally and generally Romanists in heart;—predisposed, by the tendencies of their original disposition, to errors substantially the same with those which are embodied in the Romish system.

But are not, it may be urged, ignorance of religion and unchristian conduct much more censurable in the ministers of religion than in others? The answer is, that this is the point for *them* to consider. Of every one the more is required in proportion as the more is given—in proportion as his opportunities may have been greater, and his temptations less, than his neighbour's; but this is a matter for him, not for his neighbour, to be occupied upon. Let each class of men, and each individual man, think chiefly of improving the talent committed to himself; remembering, that even the mote in his own eye is more his concern than the beam that is in his brother's. It is for the clergy to meditate on their own peculiar and deep responsibility: it is for the laity to consider, not how much more is expected of others, but how much of themselves.

But again, should there, it may be said, be no professional difference in habits of life between the clergy and laity?

There should: for, in the first place, as religious *teachers*, they may be expected to be more especially occupied in fitting themselves for that office; in qualifying themselves to *explain*, and to *enforce* on others, the evidences, the doctrines, and the obligations of religion; but they are not to be expected to understand more of things surpassing human reason, than God has made known by revelation, or to be the *depositaries* of certain mysterious speculative doctrines; but "*stewards* of the mysteries of God," rightly dividing or dispensing (ὀρθοτομοῦντες) the word of truth."

And in respect of their general habits of life and deportment, undoubtedly they should consider, that not only of every profession, but of each age, sex, and condition in life, something characteristic is fairly expected in regard to matters in themselves indifferent. The same things are not decorous or indecorous, in a magistrate, and a private person—in a young, and an old man, in those of the higher, and of the lower orders of society, in a man, and in a woman, or in persons of

different professions. And each man's own discretion must determine how he is to conduct himself in respect of things intrinsically indifferent, so as to preserve the decorum of his own peculiar situation, as distinct from another's, without giving needless offence, or in any other way producing ill effects, on either side.

§ 11. For there *are* dangers on *both* sides; and with one brief remark on a danger not unfrequently overlooked, I will dismiss the present subject.

It is I believe sometimes supposed, by some of the best-intentioned among the ministry, that there is little or no danger except on the side of laxity;—that excessive scrupulosity in respect of matters in themselves indifferent can, at the worst, only be unnecessary. Of course it will not be expected that I should enter into particulars, or attempt to draw the line in each case that may occur: but the remark to which I would invite attention is, that as it is confessedly one great part of a clergyman's duty to set a good *example*, so, it is self-evident that his example can have no influence—(except on his brother ministers)—no chance of being imitated by the people, in respect of any thing which he is supposed to do or to abstain from, merely *as* a clergyman. Whatever things they are which are supposed to be *professionally* decorous or indecorous—whatever is supposed to be suitable or unsuitable to a clergyman as such, and not to Christians as Christians—it is plain that no strictness, on the part of the clergy, in these points, can have the least tendency to induce a corresponding strictness in the laity. I am not saying that there *are* no points of this nature;—that there should be *nothing* peculiar belonging to the clergy; but merely that in these points they are setting no *example* to the people;—that *that* in short is not an example, which is supposed peculiar to one profession, and therefore not meant to be imitated in others. I admit that a life of great strictness in such points may give great satisfaction—may be admired—may procure respect for the individual, and so far, may even give weight to what he says on other points; nay, it may be even called by the unthinking *exemplary;* but it is plain that so far as it is regarded as *professional*, it never can *be* exemplary, except to the clergy themselves.

And the more there is of this professional distinction, the greater will be the danger, and the more sedulously must it be guarded against, of the people's falling into the error of regarding other things also as pertaining to the Christian minister alone, which in fact pertain to the Christian: the longer the list is of things forbidden or enjoined to the clergy and not to the laity, the greater the risk of their adding to the list that Christian knowledge, that Christian spirit and temper, and that Christian self-control and sobriety of conduct, which are required of all that partake of the Christian covenant and Christian hopes.*

Not only therefore must the clergy be blameless in the performance of *their* duties, but they must carefully distinguish *which* of them are their duties as *Christians*, and *which* merely as *ministers;* and with that view they must avoid unnecessarily multiplying professional distinctions; lest the most unimpeachable conduct should fail to convey an example, from its being supposed not designed for imitation.

We cannot indeed be too learned in "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," and in the knowledge of "all the counsel of God," or too scrupulous in our conformity to his will: but then only can we be "pure from the blood of all men," if we "set before *them* all the counsel of God,"—make *known* to *them* "the mystery of the Gospel," and their *fellowship* in that mystery"—and lead them to apply practically their religious knowledge, and to be followers of us, even as we are of Christ Jesus."

* "Absurd as the thought is when expressed in words, man would be virtuous, be humane, be charitable, *by proxy*, &c." *Letter to Mr. Peel, on Pauperism*, p. 19.

How far I am indebted to this work for the first suggestion of many of the principles I have endeavoured to develope in the present chapter, is more than I can distinctly pronounce: especially as the author is one who has more or less contributed, directly or indirectly, to the formation of nearly all my opinions on the most important points.

CHAP. III.

PIOUS FRAUDS.

§. 1. It may be said of almost all the Romish errors, that they not only have their common source in man's frail nature, but also are so intimately connected together, that they will generally be found, if not directly to generate, yet mutually to foster and promote, one another. For example, the disposition already noticed, to speculate concerning superhuman mysteries unconnected with practice, though it does not alone produce, yet favours and encourages the error of reserving one portion of faith and piety for a superior initiated class, and making *their* religion a vicarious substitute for that of the people, who are to trust in and implicitly follow the direction of their guide. And this corruption again, though it does not directly engender, yet fosters and increases another; that of maintaining this spiritual tyranny by *deceit*. Those who have once adopted the system of keeping the vulgar in partial darkness, will easily reconcile themselves to the practice of misleading them, where it seems needful, by false lights. From a conviction of the necessity of keeping them in implicit subjection to their authority, the transition is easy to the maintenance of that authority, by what are regarded as salutary delusions.

It is not however to any deliberate scheme of an ambitious hierarchy that this branch of priestcraft owes its origin; nor is it indeed properly *priest*craft. The tendency to resort to deceit for the compassing of *any* end whatever that seems hardly attainable by honest means, and not least, if it be supposed a good end, is inherent, if any fault be inherent, in our corrupt nature. And in each age and country instances occur of this offence, such as perhaps in a different age and country appear so monstrous as to be hardly credible, from the difficulty of estimating aright the peculiar circumstances which in each instance constituted the temptation.

And this is more peculiarly the case, when those who are passing judgment on any instance of fraud, chance to regard that as a *bad* end which the authors of the fraud pursued as a good one;—when they are convinced of the falsity of the conclusion, which was perhaps sincerely held, by those who sought to support it by deceitful means. For example, the fraud related to have been practised by the Jewish rulers, in reference to our Lord's resurrection, seems at first sight almost to surpass the limits of human impudence and wickedness in imposture. "And when they were assembled with the elders, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept."* But let it be remembered, that the deceit here recorded, must certainly be referred to the class of what are called "pious frauds:" those, namely, which any one employs and justifies to himself, as conducing, according to his view, to the defence or promotion of true religion. There is in such conduct a union of sincerity and insincerity—of conscientiousness in respect of the end, and unscrupulous dishonesty as to the means: for without the one of these ingredients there could be no *fraud;* and without the other, it could in no sense be termed a *pious* fraud.

And such, I say, undoubtedly was the fraud we are considering. For the Jewish elders certainly did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, though they could not deny his superhuman powers. There is hardly any evidence which a man may not bring himself to resist, if it come, not before, but after, he has fully made up his mind. But in the present instance the established belief in magic, and the agency of demons in subjection to those skilled in the art, furnished a better evasion than could be devised among *us*, of the force of the evidence offered. And being predetermined by their own view of the ancient propheoies, to reject the claim of Jesus, they pronounced him (as the unbelieving Jews do at this day†) to be a powerful magician, and one who "deceived the people." As maintainers, therefore, of the Mosaic law, in whose

* Matt. xxviii. 12, 13.

† A book is now extant and well known among the Jews, which gives this account of him: and it furnishes a striking confirmation of the statement of the Evangelists; viz., that the unbelieving Jews of his days did admit his miraculous powers. For the book must have been compiled from traditions afloat in the nation; and it is utterly inconceivable that, if those who were cotemporary with our Lord, and on the spot, had denied the fact of the miracles, any tradition should afterwards have sprung up, *admitting* the miracles, and accounting for them by the hypothesis of magic.

divine authority they were believers, they held themselves not only authorized, but bound, to suppress his religion: according to our Lord's own prophecy, "Whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." For the prevention therefore of the mischief they apprehended, "lest all men should believe in him, and the Romans should come, and take away their place and nation," (an event which, it is remarkable, did actually take place in consequence of their rejecting him, and trusting to false Christs,) they scrupled not to resort to falsehood, to weaken the effect of his miracles.

The benefit derivable from such an example as this is apt to be lost to us, from our dwelling exclusively on the badness of the object these men pursued; and not enough considering, abstractedly from that, the profligacy of the means employed. Persuaded as we are that Jesus was the true Messiah, we are apt, in contemplating the perversity of those who closed their eyes against the evidence of this, to blend in our minds *that* sin with the other, which is quite distinct—the *fraud* with which Christianity was opposed;—to mix up and connect in our thoughts, as they were connected in fact, the rejection of the Son of God, and the falsification of the evidence of his resurrection;—and, in short, almost to forget that if Jesus had been indeed a deceiver, that would not have justified the employment of deceit to maintain God's cause against him.

In proportion as feelings of this kind prevail, the benefit of such an example to ourselves is destroyed. Our abhorrence of their sin has no tendency to fortify us against temptation;—against that temptation, I mean, in the very nature of which it is implied that the end proposed is sincerely believed to be good. Whether this belief chance to be correct or not, a just estimate of the heinousness of what is properly denominated pious fraud, would lead us to regard it with equal detestation, whether employed in a good or in a bad cause.

§. 2. The tendency to take this indistinct view of things—to contemplate in confused conjunction a bad end, and wrong means employed to support it, has doubtless contributed to prevent Protestants from deriving the benefit they might, in the way of example and warning, from the errors of the Romanists. In our abhorrence of the frauds they have so often employed in support of their corrupt system, we are prone perhaps to forget, or at least not sufficiently to consider, that it is not the corruptness of the system that makes the frauds detestable; and that the same sin may no less easily beset ourselves, and will be no less offensive to God, however sound may be our own system of faith. With a view to keep this more steadily before the mind, I have limited my remarks to the subject of what are called *pious* frauds, because it is against these alone that we have need to be put on our guard. It would be vain to admonish an unbelieving hypocrite; but a sincere Protestant Christian may need to be reminded, that as he believes his own religion to be true, so do many of the Romanists believe theirs: and that though they are in fact erroneous in this belief, it is not *that erroneousness* that either leads them to resort to pious frauds, or exposes them to just censure for so doing; nor, consequently, can the correctness of his own faith secure him from the danger, or extenuate the guilt, of practising a like deceit.

I have dwelt thus earnestly on a truth which, though perpetually overlooked in practice, is self-evident the moment it is stated, because the mistake opposed to it is closely connected with, or rather is a part of, that which it has been my principal object throughout the present work to counteract;—the mistake, I mean, of referring various errors of Romanism to the Romish church, as their source—of representing that system as the cause of those corruptions which in fact produced it, and which have their origin in our common nature: and hence of regarding what are emphatically called the errors of Romanism, as peculiar to that church, and into which, consequently, Protestants are in no danger of falling. But all of them, as I have already endeavoured in some instances to point out, may be traced up to the evil propensities of human nature: and the one now under consideration, no less than the rest. The tendency to aim at a supposed good end by fraudulent means, is not peculiar to the members of the Romish church;—it is not peculiar to those who are *mistaken* in their belief as to what *is* a good end;—it is not peculiar to any sect, age, or country;—it is not peculiar to any *subject matter*, religious or secular, but is the spontaneous growth of the corrupt soil of man's heart.

Protestants, however, are apt to forget this: and it is often needful to remind

them, and only to remind them, (for detailed proof is unnecessary,) that frauds of this kind are every where, and always have been, prevalent;—that the heathen legislators and philosophers, for instance, encouraged, or connived at, a system of popular mythology which they disbelieved, with a view to the public good—for the sake of maintaining among the vulgar, through fear of the gods, and expectations of Elysium and Tartarus, a conformity to those principles of rectitude whose authority they sincerely acknowledged, though on grounds totally unconnected with religion. Their statesmen deluded and overawed the populace with prodigies and oracles, not much less than the Romish priesthood. Nor has the Greek church, or the other eastern churches, always independent as they have been of the church of Rome, and generally hostile to her, fallen much short of her in this and indeed in most of her other abominations.

The temptation indeed to deceive, either positively or negatively, i. e., either by introducing, or by tolerating error, is one of the strongest that assail our frail nature, in cases where the conscience is soothed by our having in view what we believe to be a good end, and where that end seems hardly attainable but by fraudulent means. For the path of falsehood, though in reality slippery and dangerous, will often be the most obvious, and seemingly the shortest. Accordingly nothing is more common among the indolent and thoughtless, when entrusted with the management of children, than to resort to this compendious way of controlling them; for the employment of deceit with those who are so easily deceived, will often serve a present turn much better than scrupulous veracity; though at the expense of tenfold ultimate inconvenience.*

§. 3. The tendency then to this partial dishonesty—towards the justification of fraudulent means by the supposed goodness of the object—being so deeply rooted in man's nature, found its way of course, along with the other corruptions incident to humanity, into the Romish church. And it was fostered by those other corruptions; especially, as has been already remarked, by that one which was treated of in the preceding chapter; the drawing, namely, of an unduly strong line of separation between the priesthood and the laity; so as to constitute almost two distinct kinds of Christianity for the two classes, whereof the one were by some superior sanctity and knowledge to compensate for the deficiencies of the other, and to be not only their spiritual directors, but in some sort their substitutes in the service of the Deity.

When it was understood that the monastic orders, and the clergy in general, were to be regarded as persons initiated into certain sacred mysteries, withheld from the vulgar—as professing a certain distinct and superior description of Christianity—and as guides whom the great mass of Christians were to trust implicitly, it naturally followed, that the knowledge of Scripture was considered, first, as unnecessary, and next, as unfit, for the generality: and it was equally natural to proceed from the suppression of knowledge to the toleration first, and then to the encouragement and propagation of superstitious errors among the multitude. There is (as I formerly observed) a craving in ignorant minds after the delusions of superstition: and this it was thought reasonable to indulge, in the case of those whom it was supposed impossible or improper to enlighten. Incapable as they were reckoned, and as they *consequently became*, of believing in their religion on rational and solid evidence, or of being kept in the paths of Christian duty by the highest and purest Christian principles, it seemed necessary to let their faith and their practice strike root, as it were, in the artificial soil of idle legends about miracles wrought by holy relics, and at the intercession of saints—in the virtues of holy water, extreme unction, and the like.

How far, in each particular instance, any one, whether of the Romish or of any other persuasion, who propagates and connives at any error, may be himself deceived, or may be guilty of pious *fraud*, —and how far his fraud, if it be such, may be properly a *pious* fraud, i. e., designed to promote what he sincerely believes to be a good end, or, on the other hand, may be carried on from interested or ambitious views—all this can of course be thoroughly known to none but the Searcher of hearts. It is highly probable, however, that most of these persons have *begun* in wilful deceit, and advanced more and more towards superstitious *belief*. Indeed it is matter of common remark, that those who have long repeated a falsehood, often bring themselves at length to credit it. The very curse sent on those who do not love the truth is that of "a

* Mrs. Hoare's Hints on Early Education.

strong delusion that they should believe a lie." And thus, in the present instance, when any one is eagerly bent on the pursuit of a certain end, he will commonly succeed in persuading himself in time, first, that it is a pious and good end—then, that it is justifiable to promote it by tolerating or inculcating what is false—and lastly, that that very falsehood is truth. Many a one, it is to be feared, gives himself credit for being conscientious, who is so indeed in one sense of the word, but in this sense only, not that he is, properly speaking, led by his conscience, but that he himself leads his conscience;—that he has persevered in what is wrong, till he has at length convinced himself that it is right.

§. 4. That intermediate state, however, between complete hypocrisy and complete self-delusion—that state which gives rise to what are properly called pious frauds—is probably much more common than either of the extremes. Those, for instance, who opposed the reformation, were probably most of them neither worldly-minded hypocrites, altogether indifferent about true religion, nor, on the other hand, sincere believers in the justice of all the claims of the Romish see which they supported, and in the truth of all the Romish doctrines which they maintained; but men who were content to submit to *some* injustice, and to connive at some error, rather than risk, in the attempt to reform abuses, the overthrow of all religion. They preferred an edifice, which, though not faultless, they considered highly serviceable, to the apprehended alternative of a heap of ruins. And accordingly they made up their minds to profess and maintain the whole of what they only partially believed and approved, and to defend by falsehood those portions of the fortification which they perceived were left open by truth.

We of this day are perhaps not disposed to do justice to many of the actors in those times. *We* know by experience, that the reformation did not lead to the universal destruction of religion; and we know that most of the confusion and other evils which did result, and of which the effects are not yet done away, are attributable to the obstinacy with which the others persisted in maintaining every abuse, and the discredit they brought on religion in general, by the employment of falsehood and subterfuge in her defence. We are apt to suppose, therefore, that the apprehensions which the event did not realize, must have been either utterly extravagant and childish, or else altogether feigned, by men who in reality had an interest in the maintenance of abuses, and introduced their fears for religion as a mere pretext. For in studying history, those portions of it especially which are to us the most interesting, which are precisely those in which the *results* are before our eyes and familiar to us from childhood, this very circumstance is apt to make us unfair judges of the actors, and thus to prevent us from profiting as we might by their examples. We are apt, I mean, to forget, how probable many things might appear, which we know did not take place; and to regard as perfectly chimerical, expectations which we know were not realized, but which, had we lived in those times, we should doubtless ourselves have entertained; and to imagine that there was no *danger* of those evils which were in fact escaped. We are apt also to make too little allowance for prejudices and associations of ideas, which no longer exist precisely in the same form, among ourselves, but which are perhaps not more at variance with right reason than others with which ourselves are infected.

From the earliest down to the latest periods of history, these causes impede the full and clear, and consequently profitable, view of the transactions related. In respect of the very earliest of all human transactions, it is matter of common remark how prone many are to regard with mingled wonder, contempt, and indignation, the transgression of our first parents; as if they were not a fair sample of the human race;—as if any of us would not, if he had been placed in precisely the same circumstances, have acted as they did. The Corinthians, probably, had perused with the same barren wonder the history of the backslidings of the Israelites; and needed that Paul should remind them, that these things were written for their example and admonition. And all, in almost every portion of history they read, have need of a corresponding warning, to endeavour to fancy themselves the persons they read of, that they may recognize in the accounts of past times the portraiture of their own. It is by a strong effort of a vivid *imagination* (a faculty whose importance *in the study of history*, is seldom thought of) that we can so far transport ourselves in idea to the period, for instance, of the reformation, or to any period anterior to it, as to forget for the

moment all our actual knowledge of the results—to put ourselves completely in the place of the persons living in those times, and to enter fully into all their feelings.

In proportion as we succeed in this effort, we shall feel more and more strongly how awfully alarming must have been the first struggles of opposition to the existing system—how total a subversion to all religion, and dissolution of all the ties of social order, the first innovations must have appeared to threaten; and how little most men must have been able to foresee or conjecture at what point the tendency to change, if permitted to proceed, could be expected to stop. And we shall then, I think, cease to wonder, that the frailty of our common nature should have led conscientious men (conscientious, I mean, as far as regards the goodness, in their opinion, of the *end* proposed) to use without scruple almost any means, whether of force or fraud, to maintain the existing system, and to avert what appeared to them such frightful dangers.

§. 5. What we should learn for our own use from such a view is, not that the dishonest artifices of Romanism should stand excused in our eyes, but that we should estimate aright their temptations, in order the better to understand our own—that we should consider human nature as not having been then, in so excessive a degree as we are apt to fancy, worse than it is now;—and that we should condemn their frauds, not as employed to support a bad system, and to avert imaginary evils, since to them, perhaps, the system appeared as good as our own does to us, and the evils as real as any that we apprehend appear in our eyes—but from the general expediency of fraud—from its intrinsic turpitude, and from its especial unfitness to be employed in a sacred cause. Considerations, such as these, will set us upon a more painful, but more profitable, task, than that of judging our ancestors and our erring brethren—the task of examining our own conduct, with a watchful suspicion of the corruption of our own nature, and a lively consciousness of our liability to like temptations with those to which others have yielded. The erroneousness of their views, and the soundness of our own, as to the *end* proposed, does not lessen to us the danger, or the evil, of promoting that end by *means* inconsistent with perfect integrity.

To any one who should be disposed not only to *approve* of such a vigilant and severe self-examination as has been recommended, but also earnestly and systematically to put it in practice, it may be worth while to suggest the remark, that what may be suitably called pious frauds, fall naturally into the two classes of *positive* and *negative;* the one, the introduction or propagation of what is false; the other, the mere toleration of it—the connivance at any kind of mistake or delusion already existing in men's minds. Again, in another point of view, frauds may be regarded, either as having relation, on the one hand, to fallacious arguments—to false *reasons* for right conclusions—or, on the other hand, to false *doctrines* and erroneous practices, when such are taught or connived at. I have suggested both of these two divisions, as having a reference to practice; because *in* practice it is found that the temptation is stronger (because less alarming to the conscience) to the use of false reasons and sophistical argument in the cause of truth, than to the inculcation or toleration of erroneous doctrine; and again, that there is, for the same reason, a stronger temptation to *negative* than to *positive* fraud; the conscience being easily soothed by the reflection, "this or that is a false notion indeed, but I did not introduce it; and it would unsettle men's minds too much, were I to attempt to undeceive them."

To particularize the several points in which we of the present day are especially open to temptations of the description I have alluded to, would be a task of much difficulty and delicacy. For if a few cases were selected and dwelt on, (and more than a very few it would be impossible to discuss within any reasonable limits,) some might suppose that it was to these particular cases the whole argument had been directed; and might join issue, as it were, on the question, whether these were such as to bear out that argument: and if something brought forward as an instance of an error, should chance to be such, as by some was sincerely believed—by others had never been heard of—and by others again was regarded as perfectly insignificant—the result might be, that the argument and remarks intended to be *illustrated* by such instances, (if supposed to *rest* on those instances,) might be regarded by some as frivolous, or as unsound. Such at least is the mistake which is not unfrequently made in many subjects; an instance brought forward in illustration of any

general remarks or arguments, being not unfrequently regarded as the basis on which the whole depends. And yet, if a physician, for instance, were to be found mistaken in assigning some particular disorder to this or that patient, it would be thought strange to infer from this that no such disorder ever existed.

§. 6. Such, however, being the difficulties in the present subject, it will be better perhaps to abstain from any statement of matters of fact, and to touch briefly, for illustration's sake, on a few *conceivable* cases; which, whether they ever actually occurred or not, will be equally intelligible, and will equally answer the purpose of explanation.

I. For example, it is well known, that there are sects and other parties of Christians, of whose system it forms a part to believe in immediate, sensible inspiration—that the preachers are directly and perceptibly moved to speak by the Holy Spirit, and utter what he suggests. Now suppose any one, brought up in these principles, and originally perhaps a sincere believer in his own inspiration, becoming afterwards so far sobered, as to perceive, or strongly suspect, their delusiveness, and so to modify, at least, his views of the subject, as in fact to nullify all the *peculiarity* of the doctrine, which yet many of his hearers, he knows, hold in its full extent; must he not be strongly tempted to keep up what will probably seem to him so salutary a delusion? Such a case as this I cannot think to be even of rare occurrence. For a man of sound judgment, and of a reflective turn, must, one would think, have it forced on his attention, that he speaks better after long *practice*, than when a novice—better on a subject he has been *used* to preach on, than on a comparatively new one—and better with *premeditation*, than on a sudden; and all this, as is plain both from the nature of the case, and from Scripture, is inconsistent with inspiration. Practice and study cannot improve the immediate suggestions of the Holy Ghost; and the apostles were on that ground expressly forbidden to "take thought beforehand what they should say, or to premeditate; because it should be *given them* in the hour what they should say." Again, he will perhaps see cause to alter his views of some passages of Scripture he may have referred to, or in other points to modify some of the opinions he may have expressed; and this again is inconsistent with the idea of inspiration, at least on *both* occasions.

Yet with these views of his own preaching as not really and properly inspired and infallible, he is convinced that he is inculcating the great and important truths of Christianity—that he is consequently, in a certain sense, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from whom all good things must proceed—and that his preaching is of great benefit to his hearers; who yet would cease to attend to it, were he distinctly to declare to them his own real sentiments. In such a case, he must be very strongly tempted to commit the pious fraud of conniving at a belief which he does not himself sincerely hold; consoling perhaps his conscience with the reflection, that when he professes to be moved by the Spirit, he says what he *is* convinced is true, though *not true in the sense* in which most of his hearers understand it;—not true in the sense which constitutes that very peculiarity of doctrine wherein originated the separation of his sect from other Christians.

II. Again, let us imagine, for example, such an instance as this; that an uneducated person describes to us his satisfaction at having met with a stratum of marine shells on the top of a hill, which he concludes to have been deposited there by the Mosaic deluge, and which afford him a consolatory proof of the truth of the Old Testament history; suppose too he congratulates himself on having satisfied, by this argument, the minds of some sceptics among his own class: what would be our duty, and what would be our conduct, in such a case? to run the apparent risk of not only mortifying his feelings, but shaking his faith, by informing him, (supposing the case such,) that it is fully ascertained that this deposit could not have taken place by the action of such a deluge as Moses describes? or to leave him in full reliance on an argument, which, though unsound, leads him to a true conclusion? This, which is a case conceivably occurring in a Protestant country, seems to me an exact parallel to a multitude of those in which the Romanists practise the negative pious fraud of leaving men under what they suppose a useful delusion.

III. Again, suppose the case of one who should be warmly attached to the religious community of which we are members, in opposition to sectaries, and a regular frequenter of our public worship,

in consequence of the mention he finds in Scripture of the *church*, together with the circumstance, that the building in which we assemble for divine service is called a "church." No one, who has been much conversant with the uneducated part of society, will doubt the possible existence, at least, of such confusion of thought, though he may not have actually met with it. Now this again is an instance of a just conclusion and right practice founded on a futile reason. Is it not conceivable, that some who would be ashamed to employ such an argument themselves, might yet be tempted to leave it uncontradicted, from a doubt of being able to substitute a sound one, which should be, to that individual, equally satisfactory?

IV. Again, let us imagine a case of some one desirous to receive, and induce others to receive, the rite of confirmation, from supposing it alluded to, and enjoined, in the passage of Scripture which describes an apostle as going through a certain region "confirming the churches" (ἐπιστηρίζων); should we venture to attempt removing his conviction from this false basis, and replacing it on a sound one?

V. Suppose, again, that some one was conscientiously desirous of receiving this rite, whom the minister could not bring to comprehend the nature of it, or to understand any thing of the baptismal covenant which is renewed before the Christian congregation, and recalled by it, might there not, in such a case, be a seeming danger; that if under such circumstances he refused to sign a recommendation to the bishop, there might grow up a neglect of the ordinance of confirmation? while, on the other hand, he would know that his signature would be understood to testify the existence of such fitness on the part of the candidate as in fact was wanting; and that consequently he would be virtually setting his hand to a falsehood; and would, moreover, be encouraging that superstitious notion of some mystical virtue in a rite of which the recipient did not understand the meaning. Now such a case as this, I think, will hardly be considered as inconceivable, or even improbable.

VI. Suppose, again, an individual of the same class to have a deep reverence for the Lord's day, without even knowing that it *is* the *Lord's* day, but from supposing Sunday to be the seventh day of the week, and to be kept holy not with any reference to our Lord's resurrection, but solely in memory of the close of the creation: there would be, on the one hand, the apparent danger of unsettling his mind, and diminishing his just reverence, by letting him know that it is the first day of the week, and is commemorative of the resurrection; and, on the other hand, there would be the negative pious fraud of leaving his mistake untouched. "Will ye," says Job, "speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him?"

VII. If, again, we should meet with a case of Christians having a deep reverence for all the rites and circumstances of Christian burial, founded on a persuasion that the souls of those whose bodies are interred in consecrated ground, after the performance of the funeral service, are in a more safe state than they would otherwise have been,* might not a danger be apprehended, of impairing their respect for the ministers of religion and the services of the church, by inculcating the groundlessness of that persuasion? And might not therefore a minister be tempted, in such a case, to leave undisturbed an error which he could not charge himself with having directly introduced?

VIII. Once more; imagine the case of a man long hardened in irreligious carelessness or gross vices, conscience-stricken on his death-bed, professing sincere repentance, and earnestly wishing for, and seeming to implore, a positive assurance from the minister of his acceptance with God, and his eternal happiness in the next world;—a wish in which the relatives and friends around him should strongly join: and suppose the minister to be one who could not satisfy his own mind that he had any authority in Scripture for speaking positively in such a case; would he not be exposed to a temptation of feigning a confidence he did not feel, for the sake of smoothing the death-bed of one for whom nothing else could be done, and administering comfort to the afflicted survivors?

And if a person so situated were anxious to receive the Eucharist, though he were (suppose) from ignorance respecting religion, and long continuance in careless or depraved habits, combined with the distractions of bodily pain, and the feebleness of mind resulting from disease, utterly incapable of being made to understand the nature of Christian repentance, or the doc-

* See Chap. I.

trine of Christian redemption, or the right use of that sacrament which he craved for as a kind of magical charm; (with the same kind of superstitious confidence which the Papists place in their extreme unction;) would not the minister be tempted to shut his eyes to the unfitness of such a candidate—to the consequent nullity of the ordinance, as far as that recipient is concerned—and to the profanation of so celebrating it? And if, moreover, we suppose some fanatical teacher to be at hand ready to make confident promises of salvation if *we* speak doubtfully, and to administer the sacred ordinance if *we* withhold it—and that he would in that case win many converts, while we should incur odium, as wanting in charity; we must admit that, in such a case as here supposed, the temptation would be very strong, to any but a devoted lover of truth, to connive at error, as the less of the evils before him. And the temptation would be much the stronger both in this and in the other supposed cases, if we imagine them presented to a person who (as might easily be the case) had no distinct perception of the ultimate *dangers* of deceit—of the crowd of errors likely to spring from one—the necessity of supporting hereafter one falsehood by another, to infinity—and the liability to bring truth into discredit by blending it with the untrue; dangers which are recognized in the popular wisdom of appropriate proverbs. These ill consequences may very easily be overlooked in each particular instance: for though it is a just maxim that falsehood is inexpedient in the long run, it is a maxim which it requires no small experience and reach of thought fully and practically to comprehend, and readily to apply: the only safe guide for the great mass of mankind is the abhorrence of falsehood for its own sake, without looking to its consequences.

Numberless other like instances might be imagined, of at least conceivable occurrence in a Protestant country; but those which have been mentioned will be sufficient, if they are admitted to be not, all of them, total impossibilities, to illustrate my meaning;—to show that our separation from the church of Rome does not place us (nor can we ever be placed in this life) in a situation which exempts us from all danger of falling into corruptions—among the rest, the justification of pious frauds—substantially similar to those with which that church is so justly reproached.

As for the cases introduced for the sake of illustration, I must once more protest that they do not profess to be actual facts but merely conceivable suppositions; and it is not at all my wish that any one should, by testifying displeasure, as against a personal charge, fix on himself the censure brought against a hypothetical case. Indeed I would most gladly be convinced that these and all similar suppositions are not only not agreeable to fact, but are even impossible, and the dangers I apprehend wholly imaginary. If this be so,

> 'Why then, my taxing, like a wild-goose, flies
> Unclaimed of any man.

and my warnings will be at least harmless, though unnecessary: "abundans cautela non nocet."

§. 7. I will conclude this chapter with an earnest recommendation of the study (with a view to our own warning and instruction) of the various abuses prevailing in the Romish church—such a study, I mean, as shall go, not only to ascertain their actual character, but also to trace their gradual progress from their first appearance, till they became at length *embodied* in the system, and established as parts of true religion. In many, if not in most instances, they began (as I have formerly observed) with the people; and were at first, many of them, only connived at by the clergy; who dreaded to oppose, or to reform, or to acknowledge, errors, lest they should shake the whole system of faith with which they were connected. And let it not be lost sight of, that the fraud by which they sought to support the system—the "wall daubed with untempered mortar," with which they thought to buttress up the edifice—has always tended to its decay. Not only did it give rise to a hostile separation among Christian churches, but in countries which have continued under the papal sway, the abhorrence and contempt excited by the detection of a fraudulent system has led the far greater part of the educated classes into secret but total apostasy from Christ. With the indiscriminate rashness which is universally so common, they have confusedly blended together in their minds, Christianity and its corruptions; and having in so many instances detected fraud with absolute certainty, they think it not worth while to inquire further; but take for granted, that all the church teaches, is one tissue of imposture and superstition throughout.

Let not Protestants, then, lose the benefit of this lesson; "neither let us tempt

God, as some of them also tempted;" for "all these things happened unto them for examples, and are written" (if we will but so read them) "for our admonition. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

CHAP. IV.

UNDUE RELIANCE ON HUMAN AUTHORITY.

§. 1. THE infallibility of the (so called) Catholic church, and the substitution of the decrees of popes or of pretended general councils, for the Scriptures, as the Christian's rule of faith and practice, is commonly regarded as the foundation of the whole Romish system. And it is so, in this sense, that if it be once admitted, all the rest must follow: if the power of "binding and loosing" belong to the church of Rome in the extent claimed by her, we have only to ascertain what are her decisions, and to comply with them implicitly.

But I am convinced that this is not the foundation, *historically* considered, of the Romish system;—that the Romish hierarchy did not, in point of fact, first establish their supremacy on a perverted interpretation of certain texts, and then employ the power thus acquired to introduce abuses; but resorted, as occasions led them, to such passages of Scripture as might be wrested to justify the prevailing or growing abuses, and to buttress up the edifice already in a great measure reared.

They appeal, as is well known, to our Lord's expression respecting Peter's being made the foundation of his church; an expression which could never by possibility have suggested so extravagant, and indeed unmeaning, an interpretation as that of a *succession* of men being each a *foundation*;* and they also appeal to the declaration,† "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," as conferring on the church of Rome the supreme power she claims. Of this and the other corresponding passages in our Lord's discourses, the most probable explanation is that which refers to the language common among the Jewish doctors; who employed the expressions "to bind," and "to loose," (as may be seen abundantly in their works respecting traditional regulations now extant‡) in the sense of enacting and abrogating;—establishing any rule or ordinance, so as to make it obligatory or binding—or, on the other, abolishing, or forbearing to enact some rule, and leaving men exempt—released—loosed—from the observance of it. Our Lord's declaration, therefore, will amount to this;—that the governors in each branch of the church which he founded—of the kingdom appointed to his disciples—with whom, and consequently with their successors, he promised to be always, even unto the end of the world—that these governors should have power to make regulations for the good government of that society—to admit or refuse admission into it—and to establish such rules as they might think suitable for the edification of its members, and their decorous worship of God: and that such regulations of Christ's servants on earth should be ratified and sanctioned by the authority of their unseen and spiritual Master—should be bound in heaven by him.

It seems no less plain, that to the governors of every society must be entrusted the duty of checking such disorderly and scandalous conduct in its members, as goes to interfere with the purposes of its institution, by reprimand or other penalties, and ultimately, in extreme cases, by expulsion: and they must be empowered to remit such penalties, or to readmit an expelled member, on his testifying contrition, and making satisfactory promises of good behaviour. And this is admitted by most Protestants to be the force of that declaration, "whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained:" not as if fallible men had power to judge of the *sincerity* of any one's contrition;—or even if they had, could presume to claim the divine privilege of forgiving sins as *against God!*—but that they have power to inflict or remit the penalties of church censure, and to exclude, retain, or readmit, as far as *outward privileges* are concerned, any member of their own branch of the visible church.

As for the regulations respecting the

* Hinds' History of the Rise of Christianity, vol. i. p. 9.

† Matt. xvi. 19. ‡ See Wotton on the Misna.

conduct of members of that society, which they have power to enact or abrogate, it is obvious that, as far as these extend only to things in themselves indifferent, (such as festival days, outward ceremonies, and the like) which may and should vary in different ages and countries, but yet require to be in each instance regulated by *some* acknowledged authority—as far, I say, as this exercise of power is confined to matters not in themselves essential, it may be (and must be, supposing inspiration withdrawn) entrusted to uninspired men. But on the other hand, the promulgating of such articles of faith and rules of conduct as are intrinsically necessary, and make part of the terms of salvation—that this office—the binding and loosing in respect of things essential—can be left in the hands of none but inspired men, all must allow; and *we* should add, in the hands of men who (like the apostles) give *proof* of their inspiration, and produce the credentials of their divine commission by working sensible miracles.

§. 2. Whatever slight differences, however, there may be among Protestants as to the precise sense of these passages, and of all that our Lord has said on the subject, they all agree in this; that it will by no means bear the interpretation put on it by the Romanists; who are commonly supposed, as has been above remarked, to derive from their mistaken view of our Lord's expressions in this place, the monstrous doctrines of the universal supremacy of the church of Rome, and her infallibility as to matters of faith. I have said that these doctrines are *supposed* to be thus derived, because there is good reason to think that such is not really the case; and that in this point, as in most of those connected with the peculiarities of Romanism, the mistake is usually committed of confounding cause and effect. When there is any question about any of the doctrines or practices which characterize that church, it is natural, and it is common, to inquire on what rational arguments or on what scriptural authority these are made to rest; the reasons adduced are examined, and, if found insufficient, the point is considered as settled: and so it is, as far as regards those particular doctrines or practices, when judged of by an intelligent and unbiassed inquirer. That which is indefensible, *ought* certainly to be abandoned. But it is a mistake, and a very common, and practically not unimportant one, to conclude that the *origin* of each tenet or practice is to be found in those arguments or texts which are urged in support of it;—that they furnish the cause, on the removal of which the effects will cease of course—and that when once those reasonings are exploded, and those texts rightly explained, all danger is at end of falling into similar errors. The fact is, that in a great number of instances, and by no means exclusively in questions connected with religion, the erroneous belief or practice has arisen first, and the theory has been derived afterwards for its support. In whatever opinions or conduct men are led by any human propensities, they seek to defend and justify these by the best arguments they can devise; and then, assigning, as they often do, in perfect sincerity, these arguments as the cause of their adopting such notions, they misdirect the course of our inquiry. And thus the chance (however small it may be at any rate) of rectifying their errors, is diminished. For if these be in reality traceable to some deep-seated principle of our nature, as soon as ever one false foundation on which they have been placed is removed, another will be substituted: as soon as one theory is proved untenable, a new one will be devised in its place. And in the mean time, we ourselves are liable to be lulled into a false security against errors, whose real origin is to be sought in the universal propensities of human nature.

Not only Romanism, but almost every system of superstition, in order to be rightly understood, should be (if I may so speak) read backwards. To take an instance, in illustration of what has been said, from the mythological system of the ancients; if we inquire why the rites of sepulture were regarded by them as of such vast importance, we are told that, according to their system of religious belief, the souls of those whose bodies were unburied, were doomed to wander disconsolate on the banks of the river Styx. Such a tenet, supposing it previously established, was undoubtedly well calculated to produce or increase the feeling in question: but is it not much the more probable supposition, that the natural anxiety about our mortal remains, which has been felt in every age and country, and which those who partake of it are at a loss to explain and justify, drove them to imagine and adopt the theory which gave a rational appearance to feelings and practices already existing?

Again, if the Romanists are urged to defend and explain their practice of praying

or the souls departed, they refer us to the doctrines of their church respecting purgatory. But it is not really the doctrine of purgatory which led to prayers for the dead; on the contrary, it is doubtless the practice of praying for the dead that gave rise to that doctrine; a doctrine which manifestly savours of having been invented to serve a purpose. Accordingly it never, I believe, found its way into the Greek church, though prayers for the dead (difficult as it is to justify such a practice on other grounds) has long prevailed in that church, no less than in the Romish.

If, again, we call on the Romanists to justify their invocation of saints, which seems to confer on these the divine attribute of omnipresence, they tell us that the Almighty miraculously reveals to the glorified saints in heaven the prayers addressed to them, and then listens to their intercession in behalf of the supplicants. But the real state of the case doubtless is, that the practice which began gradually in popular superstition, and was fostered and sanctioned by the mingled weakness and corruption of the priesthood, was afterwards supported by a theory too unfounded and too extravagantly absurd to have ever obtained a general reception, had it not come in aid of a practice already established, and which could be defended on no better grounds.

And the same principle will apply to the greater part of the Romish errors; the cause assigned for each of them will in general be found to be in reality its effect;—the arguments by which it is supported—to have gained currency from men's partiality for the conclusion. It is thus that we must explain, what is at first sight so great a paradox, the vast difference of effect apparently produced in minds of no contemptible powers, by the same arguments;—the frequent inefficacy of the most cogent reasonings, and the hearty satisfaction with which the most futile are often listened to and adopted. Nothing is, in general, easier than to convince one who is prepared and desirous to be convinced; or to gain any one's full approbation of arguments tending to a conclusion he has already adopted; or to refute triumphantly in his eyes, any objections brought against what he is unwilling to doubt. An argument which shall have made one convert, or even settled one really doubting mind, though it is not of course necessarily a sound argument, will have accomplished more than one which receives the unhesitating assent and loud applause of thousands who had already embraced, or were predisposed to embrace, the conclusion.

I am aware that there is in some minds an opposite tendency, to excessive doubt in cases where their wishes are strong; a morbid distrust of evidence which they are especially anxious to find conclusive. Different temperaments (sometimes varying with the state of health of each individual) lead towards these contrary miscalculations. Each of us probably has a natural leaning to one or other (often to both, alternately) of these infirmities—the over-estimate or under-estimate of the reasons in favour of a conclusion we wish to find true. The difficulty is, not to fly from one extreme to the other, but to avoid both, and to give an unbiassed verdict according to the evidence; preserving the indifference of the *judgment* even in cases where the *will* cannot, and indeed should not be indifferent.

Obvious, however, as these principles must appear, it is not at all uncommon to lose sight of them; it is not uncommon to hear wonder expressed at the supposed weakness of understanding of those who assent to arguments utterly invalid, but to which they have in fact never applied their minds. And it is much more common to hear some course of argument confidently proclaimed as triumphant and decisive in establishing or refuting some doctrine, merely on the ground of its being approved by those predisposed to assent to it. Whether, in fact, it be such or not, it is impossible *we* can fully estimate its weight till we have seen it tried in an even balance, or against a preponderating scale;—till we have seen how it is received by the indifferent, or the adverse. For, through the operation of the principle I have been speaking of, arguments have commanded the unhesitating assent of all men, for centuries together, without possessing, in reality, any weight at all.

§. 3. It is, on many accounts, of great practical importance to trace, as far as we are able, each error to its real source. If, for instance, we supposed the doctrine of transubstantiation to be really founded, as the Romanists pretend, and as, no doubt, many of them sincerely believe, on the words "this is my body," we might set this down as an instance in which the language of Scripture rashly interpreted has led to error. Doubtless there *are* such instances; but I can never believe that this is one of them; viz., that men really were *led* by the words in question

to believe in transubstantiation; for besides the intrinsic improbability of such an error having so arisen, we have the additional proof, that the passage was before the eyes of the whole Christian world for ten centuries before the doctrine was thought of. And again, if we suppose the doctrine to have, in fact, arisen from the misinterpretation of the text, we shall expect to remove the error by showing reasons whereby the passage should be understood differently; a very reasonable expectation, where the doctrine has *sprung from the misinterpretation*; but quite otherwise, where, as in this case, the *misinterpretation has sprung from the doctrine*. When there was a leaning in men's minds towards the reception of the tenet, they of course looked for the best confirmation of it that Scripture would afford.

There is no instance, however, that better exemplifies the operation of this principle, than the one immediately before us—the Romish doctrines of the universal supremacy and infallibility of their church. If we inquire how the Romanists came so strangely to mistake the passages of Scripture to which they appeal, we shall be utterly bewildered in conjecture, unless we read backwards the lesson imprinted on *their* minds, and seek for the true cause in the natural predisposition to look out for, and implicitly trust, an infallible guide, and to find a refuge from doubts and dissensions, in the unquestioned and unlimited authority of the church. This indeed *had* been gradually established, and vested in the Romish see, before it was distinctly claimed. Men did not submit to the authority, because they were convinced it was of divine origin and infallible; but, on the contrary, they were convinced of this, because they were disposed so to submit. The tendency to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men," and to acquiesce in such teaching, is not the effect, but the cause, of their being taken for the commandments of God.

Unwilling as men may be to submit their *actions* to an uncontrolled despotism, that indolence of mind which the Greek historian remarks as making them "averse to take trouble in the investigation of truth, and willing rather to acquiesce in what is ready-decided for them," has, in all ages, and on all subjects, disposed multitudes to save themselves this trouble, and escape at the same time the uneasiness of doubting, by an implicit submission to some revered authority. The disposition indeed to submit and assent implicitly is (like all our other natural propensities) nothing intrinsically and essentially bad, when rightly directed, and duly controlled; but, like all the rest, is liable to misdirection and excess. Whatever is satisfactorily proved to come from God is *entitled* to our submissive assent; and whatever there is of what He has revealed to us, that surpasses human comprehension, has a *claim* to be received on his authority alone, without vain attempts to explain or to prove it "a priori." That the implicit deference justly due to Divine authority, should have been often unduly extended to human, is what we might, from the infirmity of our nature, have even antecedently conjectured; and no one can suppose that this misdirected and excessive veneration originated in the church of Rome, or is even confined to the case of religion, who recollects that the decisive appeal of the Pythagoreans to the "ipse dixit" of their master was even proverbial among the ancients: and that at a later period, the authority of Aristotle on philosophical questions was for many ages regarded as no less decisive. To question his decisions on these matters was long considered as indicating no less presumptuous rashness, than to dispute those of the church of Rome as to matters of faith.

§. 4. As for the local extent of the Roman pontiff's jurisdiction, the claim of universal supremacy for *that particular see* is of course an error of the Romanists as Romanists; for though the same encroaching and ambitious disposition may exist in others as in the Romish hierarchy, it must of course, wherever it exists, lead each to extend the dominion and exalt the power, of *his own* church, state, empire, or school, over others. But the tendency to claim or to pay undue deference to the authority of uninspired men, is an error of the Romanists, not as Romanists, but as human beings. The degree of respect generally paid and justly due to the authority* of the wise—the virtuous—the learned—the majority—which amounts to a *presumption*, more or less strong, of what they have maintained—a presumption which demands a careful examination of the reasons on both sides, before we decide against them—this respect was gradually heightened into a blind acquiescence, which forbade men even to seek for reasons at all. The morbid dread of uncer-

* An important ambiguity in the word authority will be presently noticed.

tainty, perplexity, and dissension, led them to preclude all doubts as to the sense of Scripture, by a decisive authority; an authority which they pretend to rest on a text whose sense is in itself doubtful;* and thus to save, as it were, the ship from being tossed by winds and waves, by casting anchor on an object which was itself floating. But they succeeded in delivering themselves from actual doubt, though not from reasons for doubt; and were lulled into that apathetic tranquillity, which is the natural result of compulsory cessation of discussion. "Seeing then that these things *cannot be spoken against*, ye ought to be quiet," is an expression which may be used to characterize this indolent uninquiring acquiescence. They were to receive whatever the holy Catholic church decreed, or might decree, to be received; even though ignorant of what many of the doctrines were, to which they thus assented.

"Is it conceivable," they thought, "that the great body of the church, including all its governors, for whose preservation in the right way so many thousands of pious Christians have been always daily offering up their prayers, and with whom Christ promised to be, always, even unto the end—is it conceivable that all these should have been for ages together in gross and dangerous error on important points? No, surely," they said to themselves and to each other, "this is impossible; it could never have been permitted." Now if this is *not* possible, the church must be infallible.

If we consider, in this point of view, the growth of the doctrine, we shall no longer think it so strange as at first sight it appears, that such a claim should have arisen. Nor (which is more important for our purpose) shall we think it incredible, that a similar course of reasoning should be likely to take place in the minds of Protestants, and should lead to a like result:—that the supposition, of any error in religious matters besetting wise, good, pious, learned, humble, and diligent men, should appear so *strange*, that at length the *strangeness* should be regarded as amounting to *impossibility*; and when once this point is reached, the claim to infallibility is virtually set up.

It must be admitted, moreover, that the claim of infallibility in the church, when it is distinctly avowed, is at least more consistent—perhaps I may say more honest—than the sort of appeal which is sometimes made Protestants to the authority of the "universal church," and which may be characterized by the homely though expressive proverbial metaphor, of "playing fast and loose." A person is loudly censured perhaps for taking a different view of some doctrine from that which, it is assumed, prevailed generally in the church (i. e. the great mass of Christians) for many ages; the writers, termed "the Fathers," are appealed to; and it is represented as inconceivable, that the great body of the Christian world should have long been in error on such and such a point. And, no doubt, there is a *presumption** in favour of what has been long admitted by the majority; stronger arguments are called for against it, than if it were something novel, or the opinion only of a few. But when this presumption is adduced as nearly decisive, and it is then urged, on the other side, as it consistently may be, that the great majority, both in the eastern and western churches, are, and have been for many centuries, and were, *at the very time referred to*, worshippers of relics, and of the Virgin, &c., the same Protestant advocate will reply, that these doctrines are *unscriptural*—that human divines are fallible, and that we ought to "obey God rather than man." Now if we regard the "Fathers" as men subject to human infirmity, and teaching truth mixed with error, we ought to appeal to them as such: if we appeal to them, or to any set of men, with an air of decisive triumph, we should be prepared to admit their infallibility throughout. It surely is not fair to make the church's authority of the highest or the lowest value, according as it happens to support, or to oppose, our own conclusions.

§. 5. Indeed, monstrous as the Romish doctrine of the infallibility of the church at first sight appears, and widely different as the claim is usually regarded from any that have ever been advocated by Protestants, there have not been wanting persons who (in consequence perhaps of the prevalence of the practice just noticed) have represented the Romish church as differing little in this point from our own, and indeed every other. "It is true," (they say,) "the church of England disclaims the right of requiring assent to any article of faith which may not be proved by

* See Blanco White's "Evidence against Catholicism."

* Elements of Rhetoric, part i. chap. iii. §. 2.

Scripture: but then if she claims the right of deciding without appeal what doctrines *are* scriptural, and requires of all her members the admission, not only of the authority of Scripture, but of her interpretation of it, and an admission of all the doctrines founded on that interpretation, the same end is gained: since even the church of Rome *might* have professed to appeal to Scripture in behalf all her doctrines, retaining the power of deciding definitely what books should be received as Scripture, and what is the true sense of each passage. "The difference then," they urge, (I am quoting the arguments of an author of no mean ability,) "between the two churches, amounts only to this; that the one *cannot* err, and the other never *does;* the one is infallible, and the other always in the right." For though it is declared that *other* churches *have* erred, and not denied that our own *may*, it is never admitted that ours (as constituted at the Reformation) *has* fallen into any error.

This charge of advancing a virtual claim to infallibility, though specious at the first glance, melts away before a close examination; for, in fact, the claim of our church is no other than even every *individual*, without any arrogance, advances, and cannot but advance, in his own behalf. Whoever professes to hold any doctrine, implies by that very expression his conviction of its truth. For an individual (and a church no less) to acknowledge the erroneousness of his present tenets, would be a contradiction in terms. And the erroneousness of many of her *former* tenets, during our subjection to the papal sway, our church amply acknowledged by the very act of reforming.

But every church must have certain terms of communion, the rejection of which implies exclusion from that communion; since the very idea of a religious society is incompatible with a fundamental discrepancy of religious persuasion. And since such discrepancies may, and do, exist among those who agree in admitting the supreme authority of Scripture, it is plain that this admission cannot be of itself a sufficient bond of union. Our church, therefore, (as every religious society *must* do, either avowedly or virtually,) fixed on certain doctrines as necessary to be admitted by those who should be members of it; not denouncing as heretics* the members of other churches who might hold different doctrines; but of course not admitting her own to be erroneous; which would be saying in the same breath that they are *not* her own. An individual indeed will often have *not made up his mind* as to this or that question; and will often express doubts as to some opinion which he is rather inclined to adopt: but for a church to make a declaration of doubt would be absurd. In whatever points our reformers felt themselves undecided, and in whatever, though themselves convinced, they thought it unnecessary to require general assent—on such points they would of course say nothing. Whatever they set forth, they could not but set forth, as, in their judgment, both true, and essential.

It is possible, indeed, for a church to multiply unnecessarily her articles of faith, and thus narrow too much the terms of her communion: but if in any case this fault were committed, and even if we suppose many of the doctrines so laid down to be fundamentally erroneous, still this fault would be of a totally different kind from that of advancing a claim to infallibility.*

In short, to *profess* certain doctrines,

* It is well worth remarking, that our church has denounced the Romanists as *erroneous* indeed, but not as *heretical*. If one brought up in the bosom of our church were to preach, for instance, the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass, he would be properly pronounced as heretical; but we claim no spiritual authority over the members of *other* churches. The Romanists do; and accordingly denominate us, with perfect consistency, heretics; as being properly members, though rebellious members, of their church. See Blanco White's Evidence against Catholicism, p. 118., and Hinds' History, vol. ii. p. 41—45.

* Much of the confusion of thought which has arisen on this subject is to be traced to the ambiguity of the word "authority;" which is sometimes used, in the primary sense, (corresponding with *auctoritas*,) to signify the weight assigned to the example or opinion of those who, in any point, are likely to be competent judges, and which raises a presumption in favour of what they have done or maintained; as when we appeal to the "authority" of some historian or philosopher: but sometimes again, and that not unfrequently, it is used (in the sense of *potestas*) to signify *power*, to which we are absolutely bound to submit; as when we speak of the authority of a magistrate. The language of our article keeps clear of this ambiguity, in the statement, that "the church has *power* to ordain rites and ceremonies," (not at variance with God's Word,) and has *authority* in controversies of faith." But still, the use of the word authority in the sense of *power* is so common, that it has, I have no doubt, aided in producing the impression, that a claim is advanced by the church of being an infallible interpreter of Scripture.

and (which is implied by so doing) to declare that those doctrines are *true*, is, for every church, allowable, because inevitable; to *err* in any of those doctrines, or in the mode of setting them forth, as long as there is a readiness to correct any thing that shall be proved at variance with Scripture or with reason, is nothing unpardonable, nor, in its results, incurable: while to deny the liability to error, and to claim, without warrant, the infallibility which implies inspiration, is in itself presumptuous impiety, and leads to interminable corruption.

For the difference is no mere theoretical nicety, but of most extensive practical importance. The claim to exemption from error *shuts the door against reform*. The smallest change in any article of *faith* would break the talisman of infallibility, and the magic edifice of papal dominion would crumble into ruins. In matters of *discipline*, indeed, the Romish church might introduce reforms, without compromising her claim; since *there* the question is one not of truth, but of expediency: which may vary in each different age and country. But her regulations respecting discipline have been so intertwined with doctrinal points, that she has generally dreaded to alter any thing, lest her infallibility should be called in question. For instance, it has never been contended that the adoration of images and relics is *essential* to Christianity; there would therefore be no inconsistency on the part of the Romish church in remedying that abuse: but it has been thought probable (and not without reason) that to do so might raise suspicions as to the wisdom of originally sanctioning the practice, as to the soundness of the arguments and decisions by which it was maintained against Protestants—and as to the truth of the miraculous legends connected with it; and the upholders of the Romish system have accordingly always dreaded (as was remarkably exemplified not long since in respect of some efforts towards such an amelioration, made in Germany) to touch a single stone of their infirm fabric, lest another, and another should be displaced. For those who are conscious, or who at all suspect, (whether with or without good reason,) that great part of the system they are maintaining is thoroughly unsound, are naturally led to regard the beginning of reformation (even as Solomon says of the beginning of strife) as "like the letting out of water;" when once commenced they know not to what it may proceed, or how it can be stopped. And thus it is that the claim to infallibility burdens the church of Rome with a load of long-accumulated errors and abuses, to which many probably of her adherents are by no means blind, but of which they know not how to relieve her.

To this evil must be added, that the claim of an infallibility independent of Scripture, naturally tends towards the result which in fact took place, the prohibition of translations, and the discouragement of the study of the Scriptures, as needless, and unsafe, for the mass of the Christian laity. And even after the removal or relaxation of this restriction, the people, even with the Bible in their hands, are evidently far less likely to perceive the erroneousness of any doctrines of their church, if that church does not profess to rest those doctrines on Scripture alone, but on her own independent and paramount authority. Thousands must have perceived many Romish tenets to be unwarranted by *Scripture*, who have yet never thought of regarding that as ground for calling them in question. On the other hand, "even corrupt churches, provided they did not suppress the Scriptures, or disallow them as the only rule of faith, may still afford to many of their members the means of correcting their errors, and ascertaining the essential truths of Christianity."*

§. 6. But are Protestants then, as long as they do but acknowledge these principles, exempt from all danger of any such error as that for which the Romish church has now been censured? By no means. Such might indeed have been the case had the claim to infallibility for the decisions of the church, and the comparative disregard of Scripture, been the *cause*, instead of being, as in truth it was, the *effect*, of the tendency to pay undue deference to human authority. The real cause of that tendency is to be sought in the principles of our common nature;—in the disposition to carry almost to idolatry the veneration due to the wise, and good, and great;—in the dislike of doubt and of troublesome investigation—the dread of perplexity and disagreement—and the desire of having difficult questions finally settled, and brought into the form of dogmas ready prepared for acceptance in a mass. While this disposition† continues to form

* Hawkins on Tradition, p. 42.

† Which cannot perhaps be so well described in our language, as by the words of the Greek historian, ἐπὶ τὰ ἄτομα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

a part of our nature, we can never, but by continual self-distrust, be safe from its effects. And the danger of virtually substituting human authority for divine is the greater, from the necessity which exists of making use of human expositions of Scripture; not only for the purpose, above alluded to, of providing a symbol, test, or creed, (such as our thirty-nine articles,) in order to ascertain a sufficient agreement in members of the same religious community, but also for the purposes of public worship, and of catechetical instruction. For the sacred writers have not only transmitted only one short form of prayer,* and no complete form for the administration of the Christian ordinances, but have not even left us any systematic course of instruction in the Christian doctrines. These they have left to be collected from histories and epistles, evidently addressed to *Christians*—to persons who had already been regularly instructed (catechized as the word is in the original) in the principles of the faith: thus† leaving, as it should seem, to the *church* the office of systematically *teaching*, and to the *Scriptures* that of *proving* the Christian doctrines.

And it is a circumstance not a little remarkable, that they should, all of them, have thus abstained from committing to writing (what they must have been in the habit of employing orally) a catechism or course of elementary instruction in Christianity, consisting of a regular series of unquestionable canons of doctrine—articles of faith duly explained and developed—in short, a compendium of the Christian religion; which we may be sure (had such ever existed) would have been carefully transmitted to posterity. This, I say, must appear to every one, on a little reflection, something remarkable; but it strikes me as literally *miraculous*. I mean, that the procedure appears to me dictated by a wisdom more than human; and that the apostles and their immediate followers must have been *supernaturally withheld* from taking a course which would *naturally* appear to them the most expedient. Considering how very great must have been the total number of all the elders and catechists appointed, in various places, by the apostles, and by those whom they commissioned, it seems hardly credible, that no one of these should have thought of doing what must have seemed so obvious, as to write, under the superintendence and correction of the apostles, some such manual for the use of his hearers: as was in fact done repeatedly *in subsequent ages*, (i. e. after, as we hold, the age of *inspiration* was passed,) in all the churches where any activity existed. Thus much, at least, appears to me indubitable: that impostors would have taken sedulous care (as Mahomet did) to set forth a complete course of instructions in their faith; and that enthusiasts would never have failed, *some* of them at least, to fall into the same plan; so that an omission which is, on all human principles, unaccountable, amounts to a moral demonstration of the divine origin of our religion. And this argument, we should observe, is not drawn from the supposed *wisdom* of such an appointment: it holds good equally, however little we may perceive the expediency of the course actually pursued; for that which cannot have come from *man*, must have come from *God*. If the apostles were neither enthusiasts nor impostors, they must have been inspired; whether we can understand, or not, the reasons of the procedure which the Holy Spirit dictated.

In this case, however, attentive consideration may explain to us these reasons. God's wisdom doubtless designed to guard us against a danger, which I think no human wisdom would have foreseen—the danger of indolently assenting to, and committing to memory, a "form of sound words;" which would in a short time have become no more than a form of words;—received with passive reverence, and scrupulously retained in the mind—leaving no room for doubt—furnishing no call for vigilant investigation—affording no stimulus to the attention, and making no vivid impression on the heart. It is only when the understanding is kept on the stretch by the diligent search—the watchful observation—the careful deduction—which the Christian Scriptures call forth, by their oblique, incidental, and irregular mode of conveying the knowledge of Christian doctrines—it is then only, that the feelings, and the moral portion of our nature, are kept so awake as to receive the requisite impression: and it is thus accordingly that Divine wisdom has provided for our wants, "*Curis* acuens mortalia corda."

It should be observed also, that a single systematic course of instruction, carrying with it divine authority, would have su-

* Hinds' History of the Rise of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 114, 115.

† See Hawkins' Dissertation on Tradition.

perseded the framing of any *others*—nay, would have made even the alteration of a single word of what would, on this supposition, have been *Scripture*,* appear an impious presumption; and yet could not possibly have been well-adapted for all the varieties of station, sex, age, intellectual power, education, taste, and habits of thought. So that there would have been an almost inevitable danger, that such an authoritative list of credenda would have been regarded by a large proportion of Christians with a blind and unthinking reverence, which would have excited no influence on the character; they would have had "a form of godliness; but denying the power thereof," the form itself would have remained with them only as the corpse of departed religion.

§. 7. Such then being the care with which God's providence has guarded against leading us into this temptation, it behoves us to be careful that we lead not ourselves into temptation, nor yield to those which the natural propensities of the human heart present. For, through the operation of those principles which I have so earnestly, and perhaps too copiously, dwelt on, we are always under more or less temptation to exalt some human exposition of the faith to a practical equality with the Scriptures, by devoting to that our chief attention, and making to it our habitual appeal.

And why, it may be said, should we scruple to do this? giving to Scripture the precedence indeed in point of dignity, as the foundation on which the other is built, but regarding the superstructure as no less firm than the foundation on which it is fairly built? "I am fully convinced," a man may say, "that such and such an exposition conveys the genuine doctrines of the Scriptures: in which case it must be no less true than they; and may therefore, by those who receive it, be no less confidently appealed to. Supposing us fully to believe its truth, it answers to us the purpose of Scripture: since we can *but* fully believe *that*. For in mathematics, for instance, we are not more certain of the axioms and elementary propositions, than we are of those other propositions which are proved from them: nor is there any need to go back at every step to those first theorems which are the foundation of the whole."

The principle which I have here stated, as favourably as I am able, is one which, I believe, is often not distinctly stated, even inwardly in thought, by multitudes who feel and act conformably to it.

One obvious answer which might be given to such reasoning is, that to assign to the deductions of uninspired men the same perfect certainty as belongs to mathematical demonstrations, and to repose the same entire confidence in their expositions of Scripture, as in Scripture itself, is manifestly to confer on those men the attribute of infallibility. Believe, indeed, we must, in the truth of our own opinions: nor need it be such a wavering and hesitating belief, as to leave us incessantly tormented by uneasy doubts: but if we censure the Romish church for declaring herself not liable to error, we must, for very shame, confess our own liability to it, not in mere words, but in practice; by being ever ready to listen to argument—ever open to conviction;—by continually appealing and referring at every step "to the law and to the testimony,"—by continually tracing up the stream of religious knowledge to the pure fountain-head—the living waters of the Scriptures.

There is no need, however, to dwell exclusively on the argument drawn from the possibility of our being mistaken; a danger which of course each one hopes, in each particular case, to have escaped. There is one decisive argument, perfectly simple, and accessible to every understanding, and especially acceptable to a pious mind, against employing any human statement of doctrines in place of Scripture as the standard to be habitually appealed to: *it is not the will of God* that this should be done. For if it *had* been his design, that there should *be* any such regular system of doctrine for habitual reference, and from which there should be, in ordinary practice, no appeal, he would surely have enjoined, or at least permitted, (and the permission would have been sufficient to insure the same result,) the framing of some such confession of faith or catechism, by his inspired servants themselves; since such a system would fully have answered the purpose in question, with the great additional advantage, that it must have commanded the assent of all who acknowledge the Christian Scriptures.

No church, therefore, is empowered to do that, which God for wise reasons evidently designed should not be done. He has left to the church the office of *pre-*

* Hinds' History of the Rise of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 236.

*serving** the Scriptures, and introducing them to the knowledge of her members, as the sole standard of faith—as not merely the first step and foundation of proof, like the elementary propositions of mathematics, but as the *only* source of proof; and he has left her also the office of *teaching* the Christian doctrines *from* the Scriptures. A church is authorized to set forth for this purpose, 1, Catechisms—homilies—in short, whatever may be needful for systematic elementary *teaching:* it is authorized again, 2, to draw up creeds as a test or *symbol* to preserve uniformity of faith in her members: and it is also, 3, authorized to frame offices for public worship and administration of the sacraments. But all these human compositions must be kept to their own proper uses. However wisely framed they may be—however confident, and justly confident, we may feel, of their truth and scriptural character—we must never put them in the place of Scripture, by making them the standard of habitual appeal. Works of Christian instruction should be employed for *instruction;* works of devotion, for *devotion;*—symbolical works, such as creeds and articles, for their proper purpose of furnishing a *test* of any person's fitness to be acknowledged a member, or a minister, of our church. But never, if we would in deed and in spirit avoid the errors of Romanism,—never should we appeal to creeds, liturgies, or catechisms, for the *proof* of any doctrine, or the refutation of any error. Never must we admit as decisive such a syllogism as this: "the doctrines of our church are Scriptural; this is a doctrine of our church; therefore, &c.:" I mean, this must never be admitted, without immediately proceeding to the proof of the first premiss. And whenever we refer, in proof or disproof of any doctrine, to the Articles or Liturgy, for instance, we not only should not appeal to them *alone*, but we should also carefully point out that we refer to them not *as* the *authorized* formularies of a *church*, but simply as the *writings of able and pious men*, which would be deserving of attention, supposing them to be merely private sermons, &c. To refer to them as *backed by the church's sanction*, adds to them no legitimate force in respect of the abstract truth of any position. Such an appeal may indeed, in practice, be decisive, (and justly so,) as far as regards members of our church: but it is, in truth, only an "argumentum ad hominem." If any charge is to be brought *personally* against an individual, as unfit to be a member or minister of the church, the appeal is naturally, and rightly, made to her formularies composed for this very purpose: but when the question is not about a *person*, but a *doctrine*—when the abstract truth of any tenet is in question, "to the law and to the testimony!" It savours of the spirit of Romanism to refer for the proof or disproof of doctrines, solely, or chiefly, to any, the most justly venerated, human authority—to any thing but the inspired word of God. For if any one proves any thing from our Articles or Liturgy, for instance, either he could have proved it from Scripture, or he could not: if he could *not*, he is impeaching either the scriptural character of the church's doctrines, or his own knowledge of the scriptural basis on which they rest: if he *could* have proved it from Scripture, *that* is the course he should have taken: not only because he would thus have proved his point both to those who receive our Articles, and also to those who dissent from them; but also, because it is thus, and thus only, we can preserve to Scripture its due dignity and proper office, and avoid the dangerous and encroaching precedent of substituting human authority for divine.

For it is important to remember, that human formularies, when once the habit is established of making a definitive appeal to them for the proof of any disputed point, have a tendency not only to rival, but to supersede, Scripture. They are usually drawn up in a more compact and regular form, such as to facilitate reference; and they are purposely and carefully framed, so as to exclude certain particular interpretations, which those of a different persuasion have introduced.*

* Hinds' History of the Rise of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 118.

* It is on this ground, I believe, that the masters of several of our charity schools are enjoined to confine themselves entirely to the printed questions drawn up for their use, and to give the children no explanations of their own. The consequence is, that neither masters nor pupils are trained to exercise their minds in developing the sense of Scripture, but merely to exercise the memory in reciting words by rote. It is urged, that the master might fall into errors; and that though the framers of the printed questions and answers do not distinctly claim infallibility, their deliberate decisions are at least *less* liable to error than the views which might be taken by a number of comparatively unlearned men, and are less liable to be misunder-

The convenience thence resulting ought to put us the more on our guard against this encroaching character of human compositions. More troublesome indeed may be the diligent search of the Scriptures than a compendious appeal to established formularies; but God has appointed that this labour shall be the Christian's lot, and shall bring with it amply its own reward. The care, and diligence, and patient thought, and watchful observation required in drawing for ourselves the Christian truths from the pure spring-head, will be repaid by our having, through divine grace, those truths ultimately fixed in the heart as well as in the understanding;—we shall not only "read," but "mark, learn, and inwardly digest them," so that the heavenly nourishment will enter into our whole frame, and make us not merely sound theologians, but, what is much more, sincere Christians and good men, truly "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

§. 8. It must not, however, be supposed, that those are exempt from the spirit of the error I am speaking of, who are the furthest removed from paying undue deference to the authorized *formularies of a church*. Many such persons on the contrary are particularly addicted "jurare in verba magistri"—to adopt blindly, and maintain in defiance of argument, whatever they are taught by some favourite preacher, author, or party; whom they thus invest, virtually and practically, with infallibility. There is no benefit in an emancipation from the shackles of Rome to men who set up a pope of their own making, or merely substitute an unerring party, for an unerring church; nor is any thing gained by abstaining from the use of the *term* infallibility, by those who believe in the *thing*.

Those among the clergy who are particularly zealous and sedulous, and particularly successful, in awakening sinners—in enlightening the ignorant—in administering consolation to the desponding, ought most especially to be on their guard, not only not to encourage but watchfully to repress in their hearers this error. "I depend entirely on Mr. Such-a-one; he is my stay and my hope; I feel that I should be lost without him; I am sure every thing he says is right, and that I am quite safe under his guidance:"—this is the sort of language often heard, and this the kind of feeling evinced, in the case of many a one who has been recalled from irreligion, or rescued from despair, through the means of some spiritual guide: a deep-felt, and perhaps commendable, gratitude and veneration, degenerate into a kind of idolatry; and they at length come to exalt him into their mediator, intercessor, and divine oracle. This throws a most flattering temptation in his way; which he must be the more vigilant in opposing. He must not only be ever ready to adopt the Apostle Paul's cautions, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we ourselves also are men of like passions with you:" "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul," &c. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?"—but more than this, he must also warn his hearers, that whereas Paul, having been instructed by divine revelation, was an infallible guide, he himself, having no such inspiration, claims accordingly no infallibility; and he must therefore exhort

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stood than Scripture itself. The same reasoning would, if fairly followed up, lead to the substitution of homilies drawn up by authority, for all other preaching; and, ultimately, to the confinement of the Scriptures themselves to a set of authorized interpreters. How easily one may be on the high road to Romanism without suspecting it! No doubt the Romanists are right in maintaining that Scripture is liable to be wrested by "the unlearned and unstable, to their own destruction;" and that it is possible to draw up forms so precise and systematic, as to be less liable to misinterpretation, and expressly guarded against particular errors which have been founded on particular misinterpretations of Scripture: and all this ended in their "taking away the key of knowledge, neither entering in themselves, nor suffering others to enter in." But even had they (which is inconceivable, considering what human nature is) embalmed no doctrinal errors in this system, they would still, as has been already remarked, have substituted a cold, lifeless, formal orthodoxy of profession, for active, vital, heartfelt religion. Our church, accordingly, knowing that the attempt to exclude the possibility of error, leads to the suppression of practically operating scriptural truth, braved the risk of such errors as might from time to time arise, by suffering the people to study the Scriptures, and the ministers to expound them, according to the best of their judgment; not confining to the homilies any except such pastors as might be judged incompetent to preach; and enjoining the bishops to give all diligence in selecting learned and discreet persons for the ministry.

And it would surely be the most consistent with these principles to select carefully the best qualified masters—to be diligent in giving each of them individually the best instructions, and to superintend watchfully their instruction of their scholars, than to preclude them (as is in fact done, on the plan just alluded to) from giving them any instruction at all.

often, and earnestly, the flock (not *his*, but Christ's) committed to his care, instead of pinning their faith to his bare word, to exercise their own minds—to weigh well the reasons he lays before them—and to study for themselves, as carefully as their circumstances will permit, the Scriptures which he is endeavouring to expound to them.

Still stronger to some minds is the temptation to become, each man a pope to himself, by indulging the habit of making his decisions on some points like "the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not," and of enrolling them as it were in a certain code, which is thenceforward not to be open to discussion. Such persons make up their minds perhaps on few points, and with cautious deliberation; but having once adopted an opinion, will listen afterwards to no arguments against it. "I have long adopted" (says a respectable and amiable writer) "an expedient which I have found of singular service. I have a shelf in my study for tried authors; and one in my mind for tried principles and characters. When an author has stood a thorough examination, and will bear to be taken as a guide, I put him on a shelf. When I have fully made up my mind on a principle, I put it on the shelf. A hundred subtle objections may be brought against this principle; I may meet with some of them perhaps; but my principle is on the shelf. Generally I may be able to recall the reasons which weighed with me to put it there; but *if not I am not to be sent out to sea again.* Time was when I saw through and detected all the subtleties that could be brought against it. *I have past evidence of having been fully convinced; and there on the shelf it shall lie.* When I have turned over a character on all sides, and seen it through and through in all situations, I put it on the shelf." The proceeding here described I believe to be adopted by not a few, though there are not probably many who would so frankly avow it. Yet such persons perhaps censure the Romanists for claiming infallibility for their church; a claim not implying a pretension to *universal knowledge*, but to an exemption from the *possibility of mistake* as to the points we do pronounce upon; which points accordingly are no more to be discussed, nor any objections against them to have a hearing. Whoever therefore in this way decides on any point, does, so far, virtually, claim infallibility. Indeed if he did not—if he still admitted that he might possibly be mistaken on the point on which nevertheless he would bear no discussion, this, it is plain, would aggravate the fault.

"But," they say, "it is extravagant scepticism to be certain of nothing; it is an absurd and a wretched thing to have no faith in any thing, but to be for ever wavering and hesitating." I need hardly say that is not what I recommend. The lover of truth need not be always in *actual doubt* on every point; but he must be always *open to conviction*—always ready to hear and to meet fairly, any seriously-urged objections. It is one thing to be without faith, and another thing to have the faith of the apostolical Christian, who is "always ready to give to every one that asketh him, a *reason* of his hope." If there be any thing virtuous or manly in any faith, it must be in that which defies impugners—which courts investigation; not in that which rests on our resolution to shut our ears. If our confidence, for instance, in a friend's integrity is accompanied with a *determination* to hear no objections to his conduct, it surely is not so creditable to him, as if it rested on a defiance of accusations, and a readiness to hear all that could be said, though with a full *expectation* that all censure would be refuted. For we may very reasonably, on many occasions, feel, after a careful examination of some question, a confident expectation that no arguments *will* be adduced that will change our opinions; but this is very different from a resolution that none ever *shall*.

Yet nothing is more common than to hear a person say, in the course of some discussion, "Nothing shall ever convince me"..... "Then hold your peace!" would be a fair reply, even before he had finished his sentence; "if you are not open to conviction, you are not qualified for discussion. The more confident you are, *on just grounds*, of being in the right, the more fearlessly ready should you be, to hear all that can be urged on the other side." I am aware that this is, in many cases, no more than a form of speech adopted from imitation: but considering how prone we are by nature to the fault in question, I cannot but think it important that even our language should be carefully guarded, so as never to express, what we should never allow ourselves to feel, that firm confidence in the authority of man (whether the decision be another's or our own) in matters wherein he is liable to err, which is due only to the unerring God.

CHAP. V.

PERSECUTION.

§. 1. THERE are several expressions of our Lord's which are calculated, and probably were designed, to guard against the notion, that a rejection of his religion is an offence which will be lightly regarded by the Most High;—that the gracious and merciful—the tender and condescending—character of the Gospel which proclaimed "peace and good-will towards men," is to be considered as implying that men are left to accept the offer or not, according to their own tastes and fancies, and have no heavy judgments to dread in case of their not embracing it. On the contrary, "whosoever," said he, "shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them; verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city."

It was perhaps the more needful to guard against such a mistake as I have alluded to, on account of his having shortly before rebuked his disciples for proposing to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village which had refused to receive him; saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save." That this prohibition and this declaration of his might possibly have been so interpreted by his disciples as to lead to the mistake in question, we may infer from the tone in which, even as it is, some Christian writers have spoken of the passage, as if designed to contrast the milder and gentler character of the Gospel, with the severity of the Mosaic law. Whereas our Lord, in the words just cited, warns his hearers, and us, through them, that abundant in mercy as the Gospel offers of salvation are, that mercy is reserved for such as shall accept them; and that as the more glorious rewards, so also the more fearful judgments of a future life, are held out in place of the *temporal* sanctions of the old dispensation. It is as if he had said, "Think not that because I came not to destroy the lives of the ungodly by temporal judgments, as Elias did, therefore the sin of these men is less, or the judgments reserved for them, if they persist in it, lighter; on the contrary, as greater miracles have been wrought among the men of this generation, and not temporal but eternal blessings offered them, so, a proportionate punishment in the next world, though they may escape in this, awaits the impenitent: I forbade you to call down fire from heaven on those who have rejected me; though Sodom would have repented if the mighty works had been done in it which have been done in these cities, and Sodom *was* destroyed by fire from heaven: verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom *in the day of judgment*, than for them."

The natural inference from the two passages I have alluded to, compared with each other, and with several more in the New Testament connected with them, would plainly seem to be, that though the Lord will not, under the new any more than under the old dispensation, permit his call to be disobeyed with impunity, the rewards and punishments which form the sanction of the Gospel are not (like those under the law) temporal prosperity and affliction, but the far more important goods and evils of a future life; and that consequently the revelation of Christ cannot, consistently with its character, be either propagated or maintained by the sword or the fires of persecution, or by any *compulsory* means; but requires us to be "gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth."

The desire, however, of saving men from the dreadful doom in the next world, denounced on those "who do not obey the truth," has often been a reason, and oftener perhaps a plea, for seeking to enforce a right faith, and to put down religious error, by all possible means. Too anxious, we cannot be, for the salvation of men's souls—for the diffusion and for the purity of the Christian religion—so long as we seek to compass these objects by the gentle force of persuasive argument and winning example: but when these methods fail, or even when it is apprehended that they *may* fail, the endeavour to prevent, by restraint, deviations from the established faith, and to force the stubborn and unpersuadable into that which appears to be both for their own good, and for that of the community, is perfectly natural and conformable to the character of man.

The Romish church, which has so long and so loudly been stigmatized as a persecuting church, is indeed deeply stained with this guilt, but cannot with any reason be reckoned the originating cause of it. The vast and black catalogue of her offences on this score may be accounted for by the circumstance, that a large portion of *mankind* were for many ages members of that church; and that in this, as well as in numerous other points formerly noticed, the evil propensities of man's nature were, instead of being checked on each occasion, connived at, sanctified, and successively embodied in that corrupt system. The pretended successor of Peter does indeed proclaim his own degeneracy, by his palpable disobedience to the command, to "put up his sword into its sheath;" but this, as well as the other Romish errors, has its root in the evil heart of the unrenewed man. Like the rest, it neither began with Romanism, nor can reasonably be expected to end with it.

In respect of the point now before us, this should seem to be more especially evident: for none complain more loudly of persecution than the Romanists themselves; who adore, to this day, the relics of the martyrs to Pagan persecution. And it is but too well known, that the reformers, when they had detected and renounced the other Romish errors, had not, either in principle or in practice, divested themselves of this.* Even in respect of the persecutions directed against themselves, they seem to have joined issue rather on the question whether *they* were heretics, than whether heretics ought to be consigned to the secular arm. Nor can this remnant of the spirit of Romanism be so called, in the sense of making the peculiar system of that church, properly, the *cause* of it; because we find the same principle manifested in its full force among the Mahometans, who cannot in any way be regarded as deriving it from Romanism.

It is derivable rather from the character of "the natural man;"—from the natural feelings of resentment against opponents —of love of control—and of a desire to promote apparent good, and repress whatever seems fraught with mischief, by any means that present themselves as effectual. The bitter contests between the sects of the Nominalists and the Realists, in the age preceding the reformation, present a memorable and instructive proof, that the operation of these feelings is not confined to the case of religion.

§. 2. But natural as these feelings may be, and strongly as they may tend to produce persecution, it may be thought that in the present age and country at least, it is useless to contemplate a danger now completely done away; since persecution neither exists, nor is likely to arise among ourselves.

It is however important—not perhaps less important now than formerly—to lay down correct *principles* on this point, and to keep clear of a theoretical error, though it may not lead now to the same *kind* of practical evils with those which formerly sprang from it. For it usually happens that a false principle will lead to two different evil results. To use a language which will be familiar to most of my readers, a false premiss, according as it is combined with this, or with that true one, will lead to two different false conclusions. Thus, if the principle be admitted that any *important* religious error ought to be forcibly suppressed, this may lead either to persecution on the one side, or to latitudinarian *indifference* on the other. Some may be led to justify the suppression of heresies by the civil sword; and others, whose feelings revolt at such a procedure, and who see persecution reprobated and discountenanced by those around them, may be led by the same principle to regard religious errors as of little or no importance, and all religious persuasions as equally acceptable in the sight of God. To abstain, in short, in practice from putting down heresies by secular force, if we at the same time maintain the *right* to do so, in the case of *pernicious* error, is in fact to sanction those heresies as harmless and insignificant.

Moreover, it is also important, with a view to future contingencies, to be in possession of just principles on such a subject. When persecution is not actually raging —when men's minds are not actually inflamed by the combination of religion animosity with excitements of a political character—then is the very time to provide ourselves with such firmed-fixed and right principles, as may avail in time of need, and to destroy the roots of those theoretical errors which may lie torpid, yet ready to vegetate as soon as the season is favourable to them. For when party spirit and all angry passions are raging, the voice of calm reason is not

* Jeremy Taylor advocated, almost as a paradoxical novelty, the doctrine of toleration; and Locke found it necessary long after to make a formal and elaborate defence of it.

likely to be listened to. When the storm is in its fury, it may be too late to drop the anchor.

And especially persons of the mildest disposition, and most forbearing benevolence, who are fully, and perhaps justly, conscious that they themselves would never, under any circumstances, be in danger of acting harshly—more especially, I say, should such persons be warned of the importance of tolerant *principles*, and cautioned to be on their guard against inculcating or favouring such doctrines as may, by being consistently followed up, lead others into persecution. For such a person is of course not likely to distrust himself on this point; from feeling confident that cruel severity is not his own besetting sin; and therefore may be in the more danger of promulgating principles, which others will act upon in a manner that would be revolting to himself. He may have been preparing a poisonous potion, which others will administer. The sword which he has unconsciously forged and sharpened may be wielded with unsparing vigour by sterner hands.

And it should be remembered, that however comparatively mild the character of the present age may be, if contrasted with those that are past, we think it worth while to pray that we, God's "servants, may be hurt by no persecutions;" let us never therefore forget to add mentally a petition for the far more important blessing, that we may be preserved from hurting others by persecution.

To prove that persecution is unchristian would be superfluous; since the proposition, so stated, would be at once admitted by all. No one calls himself, or probably thinks himself, a persecutor. The errors we are liable to on this point, if we *are* liable to any, must consist in our reckoning ourselves secure from this fault as long as we condemn the *name* of it, and reprobate the Romanists for being guilty of it, while at the same time we have a false or indistinct notion of what it is that constitutes the spirit of persecution.

I shall therefore chiefly confine myself to a brief notice of the mistakes as to this point which appear to be the most prevalent.

§. 3. I. The tenet of the Romanists, that salvation is absolutely impossible out of the pale of their own church, has been not unfrequently considered as the necessary basis of all their persecution. But this view appears to me not only incorrect, but mischievous in its results. For though such a persuasion may be harsh and bigotted, and may tend to foster a persecuting principle, the two are by no means either identical or necessarily connected. It is at least conceivable that a man may believe a conformity to his own faith to be absolutely indispensable to salvation, and yet may hold, as part of that faith, the unlawfulness of employing coercion in its cause. On the other hand, a man may believe the *possibility* of the salvation of those of a different persuasion from his own, yet may think them much less *likely* to attain it; he may think their case not absolutely hopeless, but highly dangerous; and he may also think himself authorized, and therefore bound, to preserve or to reclaim men from error, by coercive means, when no others will suffice. He may consider governments as bound to exercise, in all respects, a *parental* care over their subjects:* now children are withheld, and if

* Grotius, speaking of the establishment of the reformed religion by the States of Holland, says, "Recepta publice disciplina quæ Genevæ, et in Palitinatu Germaniæ, passimque alibi, docebatur: hoc tamen interest, quod ejusdem religionis *alii*, diversas *minus tolerant*: quippe, non in hoc tantum ordinatas a Deo civitates ac magistratus dictantes ut a corporibus et possessionibus injuriæ abessent, sed ut quo more. Ipse jussisset, eo, in commune coleretur; cujus officii negligentes, multos, pœnam aliorum impietati debitam, in se accercisse. Contra, istæ nationes," &c. The Dutch States regarded the maintaining of a false religion as a *sin* only, not a *crime*; (according to the distinction so ably drawn by Bp. Warburton;) and consequently as not coming within the province of the civil magistrate: while others, misled probably, as men so often and so easily are, by the circumstance that in very many cases the *same* act will be *both* a sin and a crime, confounded the two together; and regarding it the duty of the magistrate, as entrusted with the care of his subjects' *good*, generally, to enforce every thing conducive to what seemed to him their good, concluded that the toleration of religious error would be as unjustifiable as the toleration of theft. Yet all this does not imply their conviction of the absolute *impossibility* of salvation to one infected with religious error.

Some of my readers may perhaps imagine, that these notions, though prevalent two centuries and a half ago, have been long since obsolete among Protestants. But the following passages, breathing the same spirit, are extracted from a work which received the sanction of a large and influential body of Protestants within the present century. "Man is a compounded being, not more impelled to seek his temporal advantage, than bound to pursue his eternal interests. Must not the state look to him in both conditions; and as far as possible assist its individual members in the attainment of both? Is not the sovereign to rule

need be, forcibly withheld, by their parents, not only from *inevitable* destruction, but from every thing *dangerous*, or in any respect hurtful. The persuasion, therefore, of the absolute necessity of a right faith, however uncharitable it may be, does not necessarily lead to persecution; nor does the absence of that persuasion preclude persecution. And the notion is, as I have said, not only erroneous, but practically mischievous; because it naturally tends to make men regard with suspicion, as leading to intolerance, every one who sets a high value on a right faith, regarding religious error as an important evil; and to suppose that liberality and Christian charity consist in a carelessness about truth, and indifference as to all religious persuasions.

II. Another mistake as to the real character of persecution is that of regarding it as consisting in the employment of violent means *against the truth*;—as implying that the persecution must be on the wrong side. Those who take this view of the subject (as the Romanists seem always to have done) do not, in fact, censure *persecution* as such, but rather *religious error*. They can no more be said to object to persecution than a man could be called *an enemy to laws* because he condemns what he thinks *inexpedient* laws, while he advocates such as he considers wiser. If the persecutors of whom they complain are doing only what *would* be right, supposing the doctrines they enforce were true, it is not properly the *violence* employed that is complained of, but the *false doctrines* supported by it. And it may be added, that, on this principle, the censure of persecution must be no less *practically vain*, than it is in itself incorrect; since no one will believe, or at least acknowledge, his own persuasion to be wrong, and the cause to which he is opposed to be that of truth. All dissuasives from persecution must pass by men "as the idle wind which they regard not," if the word be used in such a sense, that no one will, or conceivably *can*, apply these dissuasives to his own case.

III. Again, persecution is sometimes characterized as consisting in the *excessive severity*—the cruelty—of the punishments inflicted, and of the coercive means employed. But in cases where *any* secular punishment may allowably be inflicted, it can hardly be said that any can be excessive which is not as great an evil as that which it is designed to remedy, when no lighter penalty will suffice. Now the loss of men's immortal souls was justly regarded by the Romanists as a greater evil than the most cruel death of a heretic: and they were not perhaps mistaken in thinking, that such severity as effectually puts a stop to the offence is, in the end, even the more humane. On the other

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for the greatest good of the whole? And can he leave out any part of that which constitutes their greatest good? Is he not again bound by the duty which he owes to God, so to govern his people as to enable them best to obey the will of the great common Sovereign of all? Must he not then secure for his subjects the best aids of religion?" (On this principle I cannot conceive how the sovereign can be justified in affording toleration to any, that he thinks religious errors, or in abstaining from suppressing them by the sword, if milder means fail; even as he would theft, or murder.) "In truth, every separation of divine and human things is a rejection of Providence." (The precept of "render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and unto God the things that be God's," seems rather at variance with this.) "I should not have dwelt so long upon so plain a proposition as that which affirms it to be the duty of the sovereign to provide a *true* religion for his people," (this must imply, conformably with the foregoing principles, the prohibition of all *false* ones,) "but that, strange as it may appear, it is a maxim which hangs but loosely on the minds of many in the present day."

Whether the writer really meant to adopt the conclusion which inevitably follows from his principles, or whether he was merely designing to advocate what is commonly understood by "an established religion," I do not presume, nor is it important, to determine. Certainly the fallacy of proving too much, is one of those which are the most apt to slip in unperceived. It is remarkable, however, that he proceeds to censure, not merely the enemies of a religious establishment, but also some of "those who admit the lawfulness and necessity of an establishment;" including, particularly, Warburton; whom he describes as "feeling no concern for the truth of the religion which he calls to his aid," and as representing that there is "no difference between false and true religion in their influence on society!" This is the inference drawn from Warburton's just and undeniable remark, that in discussing questions respecting the establishment of a religion by the civil magistrate, we must *waive the question* as to the *truth* of each, because each will of course regard *his own* as the true one, and there is no appeal to any authority on earth to decide between the different sovereigns. Whether Warburton's views are correct or not (which it is not my present object to inquire,) so gross a misrepresentation of him is neither fair nor wise.

But the writer from whom I have made these extracts might, consistently, (and this is the point which is important to my present view,) hold the *possibility of salvation* of one whose religious persuasion differed from his own: how he could, consistently, admit of *toleration*, I cannot conceive. And what I am now occupied in pointing out is the non-connexion of these two things, which are so often confounded.

hand, where we have no right to inflict secular penalties at all, all alike, whether light or heavy, must be regarded as equally of the *nature* of persecution and cruelty, however unequal in amount. It is not the degree of suffering, but the just or wrongful infliction, that characterizes each punishment. Persecution is not wrong because it is cruel; but it is cruel because it is wrong.

IV. Nor, again, is it correct to characterize persecution as consisting in the infliction of punishment for the gratification of *revenge* or *malice:* according to which view, two individuals might deserve, the one praise, and the other censure, while adopting the very same measures, the one from a benevolent wish to deter offenders, the other, from the impulse of angry passion, and from a blood-thirsty disposition. And it is certainly true that such an act as the persecution of a robber, e. g., may spring from a sinful desire of revenge: but as in that case we do not condemn the act as in itself unjustifiable, though we censure the agent; so, those who hold the principle just mentioned, do not, in fact, disapprove of persecution at all, but only of revengeful *motives* for it. And any censure they may profess to bestow on persecution must be as ineffectual as it is in truth incorrect: for few will even think, and no one will admit, that he is actuated by revengeful motives. In the bloodiest periods of the inquisition, the professed object was always the preservation of men's souls by the prevention of heretical infection. Nor are such professions necessarily hypocritical. A man of the most humane and benevolent character may be led by a mistaken sense of duty, arising from error of judgment, to sanction the most dreadful severities, which he regards as the only effectual check to a greater evil, such as he thinks himself bound to repress at all events. What candid (or even uncandid) student of history can believe Cranmer cruel and revengeful? Yet he sanctioned the cutting off of heretics by the secular arm, from a sincere, though erroneous, sense of duty.

V. Sometimes, again, the mistake is committed of characterizing persecution as consisting in punishing men for their religious *opinions;* while punishment for *propagating* their errors is justified.

But this is in fact to explain away the very existence of persecution; since no man *can* be punished for opinions which he keeps secret within his own bosom. All persecution, if there be any such thing in existence, or even in imagination, *must* be either for *publishing* opinions supposed to be erroneous, or for refusing to *renounce* them, and to subscribe to the creed imposed. Will it be said then, that we are authorized to prohibit and to prevent, by penalties, the *preaching* of any doctrines we may deem erroneous, though it would involve the guilt of persecution to compel any one to abjure those doctrines, and to assent to ours? Surely this is drawing a distinction where there is no essential difference. If it is our right and our duty to prevent by forcible means the spread of certain doctrines, and to maintain what we believe to be true religion, we must be authorized and bound to employ what will often appear the only effectual means towards our object, by compelling men to renounce those erroneous doctrines, and to profess that religion; or else, at least, to quit the country. For we should remember, that it never can, in any case, be left to our *choice*, whether we will employ coercive means or not. All punishment—all denunciation of punishment—in short, all compulsion and restraint—must be either a *duty* or a *sin*. The civil magistrate may say, "I have *power* to release thee, and *power* to condemn thee;" but he cannot have a *right* to do whichever he will.

And in the present instance, it is impossible to draw a line to any effectual purpose between forbidding a man to propagate his religion, and compelling him to abjure it, on the ground that the one does, and the other does not, offer violence to his conscience; which was perhaps the distinction set up by the Jewish elders, when they were content merely to "charge the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus." Peter and John replied, that they could not but "declare what they had seen and heard;" and it is not surely impossible, or even unlikely, that others also may think themselves bound in conscience to teach, at least, their families and their friends, what they conceive to be essential truths.

VI. Lastly, it is important to observe, that though persecution *itself* does necessarily imply the actual *infliction* of some penalty, we must by no means infer, that where nothing of the kind takes place, the *spirit* and *principle* of persecution is absent.

On the contrary, wherever this principle is the most vigorously and effectually acted on, there will be the least actual persecution, because there will be the

least occasion for it. For it should be remembered, that no one *wishes* to persecute. Penal laws against heretics, as those against robbers, or incendiaries, are not devised for the purpose of crowding the jails, and multiplying the number of criminals sentenced, but are designed to *prevent* the offences against which they are directed; and the laws are considered as then most effectual, when the terror of the penalties they denounce so operates in deterring offenders, that there is seldom any need to inflict the penalties themselves.

We never hear therefore of persecution in those countries where no resistance is made to religious coercion. The fetters gall those only who struggle against them. Accordingly, where the tyranny of the Inquisition reigns triumphant, there are no punishments for religious offences. No tree is withered by the frost of the polar regions, or by the scorching winds of the Arabian deserts; because none can exist in those regions. And no Protestant is now brought to the stake in Spain, because, there, persecution has done its work.

Hence the fallacious argument, for I cannot but regard it as such, which is often employed against persecution, on the ground that it does not answer its purpose of suppressing dissent. It is evident that *actual* persecution, when it does accomplish its object, must soon cease. The fire will go out of itself, when it has fairly consumed its fuel. The more effectually the Inquisition operates, the less it will have to do. There are accordingly few Roman Catholic countries in which some attempts at reformation have not been suppressed by a vigorous, early, and steady resort to secular force; or in which such attempts are not *prevented* by the *apprehension* of it.

We must not therefore judge of the existence, or of the extent, of a persecuting spirit, in any case, by the amount of *sufferings* actually *undergone;* (else we shall suppose it to exist least where in reality it is in the greatest force;) but by the penalties *denounced*—in short, the degree of *coercion* that exists in religious matters. And in our own conduct, the rock of which we must steer clear, if we would preserve the true course of Christian meekness, is, not the actual practice of religious persecution, but the sanction of secular compulsion and restriction—not the actual *infliction*, but the *enactment* of secular penalties. For the *infliction* (in any case) of the punishment denounced, is an accidental circumstance; and it is never the object of the legislator's will, but depends in part on the persons suffering; and if the law is just, the penalty by which it is sanctioned *ought* to be inflicted on any transgressor of that law. And on the other hand, consequently, if the case be such that the infliction of the punishment *would* be persecution, the law ought not to be sanctioned by the denouncement of that punishment. A compulsory enactment necessarily implies the resort to forcible means, in case of resistance or disobedience; in any case therefore where the one would be wrong, the other cannot possibly be right.*

§. 4. The ultimate penalty accordingly, in this world, with which the Author of our religion thought fit to sanction it, was (with the exception of a few cases of miraculous interference) the exclusion of the offender from the religious community which he had scandalized†: "if he refuse to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and as a publican:" if he would not listen when repeatedly admonished, he was to be removed from the society. And it is worthy of being remarked, that the Romish church itself claims no right to punish those who do *not* belong to that Society: a "*heathen*

* Accordingly, I have always been at a loss to understand how Christians, of those sects which interpret literally the injunction to turn the cheek to the smiter, and which regard all employment of force as unlawful, can reconcile to their principles the practice (about which they have, I believe, no scruple) of *going to law* for the recovery of their rights.

If one of these has a sum awarded to him, whether in the shape of damages, or otherwise, he must be aware that the defendant would, in most instances, refuse to pay it, but that he is *compelled;* i. e., knows that if he refused payment, his goods would be forcibly seized by the officers of justice, and that an attempt to resist or evade such seizure would be punished by imprisonment or otherwise.

Do they then satisfy their conscience by the plea that no force is *actually* used; the *apprehension* of it being sufficient? or do they plead, that at any rate the force would not be exercised by *themselves*, but by the officers, who are of a different persuasion? The former of these principles might be used to justify a man's sending an incendiary-letter, provided the *threat* proved successful; the latter plea might be urged in behalf of one who should hire an unscrupulous assassin to despatch his enemy.

† For an able developement of this principle, see Hinds' History of the Rise of Christianity, vol. i. p. 327—336.

man" does not come under her jurisdiction. In order therefore to retain the right of coercion over all who have been baptized, even by such as she accounts heretics, the Romanists affect to regard them as truly members, though rebellious subjects, of the Catholic church. In literal and direct opposition to our Lord's words, though censuring them for "refusing to hear the church," they yet will *not* regard them in the light of "heathen men."*

The language of the Apostle Paul corresponds with his Master's: "a man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." But no personal violence—no secular penalty whatever, is denounced against heretics and schismatics—"heathen men and publicans." The whole of the New Testament breathes a spirit of earnestness indeed in the cause of truth, and zeal against religious error; but of such a zeal as was to manifest itself only in vehement and persevering persuasion.

This, which the Romanists cannot deny, they are driven to explain away, by saying, that the apostles and other early Christians were *unable* to compel men to a conformity to the true faith; they abstained from the use of secular force, because (I cite the words of Augustine, a favourite authority with the Romanists) "that prophecy was not yet fulfilled, be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be learned, ye that are judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear." The rulers of the earth, he adds, were at that time opposed to the Gospel; and *therefore* it was that the secular arm was not called in against the church's enemies.

But the Romanists might be asked in reply, if indeed such an argument be worth a reply, *why* the apostles had not this power. Surely their Master could have bestowed it;—he unto whom "all power was given, in heaven and in earth:"—He who declared that the Father was ready to send him "more than twelve legions of angels;" whose force, as it would have destroyed all idea of resistance, would at once have established his religion, without any need of a resort to *actual* persecution. Or, if for any hidden reasons, the time was not yet come for conferring on his disciples that coercive power which was to be afterwards justifiably employed in his cause, we might expect that he would have given notice to them of the change of system which was to take place. But had he designed any such change, his declaration to Pilate would have been little else than an equivocation worthy of the school of the very Jesuits. Had he declared that "his kingdom was not of this world," meaning, that though such was the case, *then*, he meant it to be supported by secular force hereafter, and consequently to *become* a kingdom of this world;—and that his servants were not allowed to fight in his cause; with the mental reservation, that they were hereafter to do so:—He would have fully justified the suspicion which probably was entertained by many of the heathen magistrates, that the Christians and their Master did, notwithstanding their professions, secretly meditate the establishment of a kingdom supported by secular force; and that though they disavowed this principle, and abstained from all violent methods, this was only a mask assumed during the weakness of their infant power, which they would (according to the principle which Augustine avows) throw aside as soon as they should have obtained sufficient strength.

But the very idea is blasphemous, of attributing such a subterfuge to him who "came into the world that he might bear witness of the truth." The immediate occasion indeed of our Lord's *making this declaration* to Pilate, was his desire to do away the expectation so strongly prevailing both among Jews and Gentiles, of a temporal Messiah about to establish a triumphant kingdom: but no occasion would have led him to make the declaration, had it not been *true*: and it would *not* have been true, had he meant no more than that his kingdom was spiritual, in the sense of its having dominion over the souls of men, and holding out the glories and the judgments of the other world; for this was what the infidel Jews expected, and expect to this day; they look for a kingdom both of this world and also of the next;—for a Messiah who shall bestow on his followers not only worldly power and splendour, but also the spiritual blessings of a future state, besides. They did indeed expect the Messiah to reign over them for ever in bodily person: but the main part of their expectation would have been fulfilled, had he merely *founded* a temporal kingdom, and delegated (as the Lord did of old, to the kings) his power, to his anointed, in whom his spi

* Blanco White's Evidence against Catholicism, p. 118.

rit should dwell. Jesus accordingly not only *claimed spiritual* dominion, but *renounced* temporal: he declared not merely that his kingdom is of the *next* world, but that it is *not* of *this* world.

All the declarations, however—all the direct and indirect teaching—of Scripture, is unavailing to the uncandid inquirer, who seeks in these books, not a guide for his conduct, but a justification of it; and who is bent on making the word of God, where it does not suit his views, "of none effect, by the tradition" of a supposed infallible church, or by the subtleties of strained interpretations.* But to a candid mind the instructions afforded by the evangelists and apostles appear to me not only sufficient to settle all questions relating to the subject of persecution, but also (to the generality of mankind) better adapted for that purpose than any arguments which human reason could supply.

§. 5. For I am convinced, after much observation and reflection on the subject, that in all discussions, whether with professed Romanists, or with others, in spirit, Romanists, who advocate such principles as lead to persecution, the arguments drawn from Scripture are to be preferred for popular use, as best calculated to satisfy those who are of a Christian spirit and open to conviction, but of moderate intellectual powers. Other arguments have often been unanswerably urged† against persecution, drawn from its ultimate inexpediency—from its liability to be employed against the truth, as well as for it. It has been condemned again with equally good reason—from its tendency to produce hypocrisy and covert atheism, and, by creating a general suspicion of insincerity, to weaken the evidence in favour of a religion so supported. For the argument from authority—the confirmation any one's faith receives from the belief of others, is destroyed, when a *compulsory* profession leaves it doubtful in each case whether those others are sincere believers or not. And the prohibition, under secular penalties, of any arguments against a religion, does away with another and more important branch of evidence, *the defiance of contradiction*; through the medium of which most of the other evidences of Christianity present themselves to the minds of the generality; who could not possibly examine, in detail, for themselves, any great part (no one could, the whole) of the proofs of each of the historical facts on which our religion rests; but whose confidence rests, and justly rests, on the conviction, that if there were any flaw in the evidence, it would be detected and proclaimed.* Force accordingly, together with fraud, the two great engines for the support of the papal dominions have almost annihilated sincere belief in Christianity among the educated classes, throughout a great portion of Europe.

Such arguments, I say, as these, are sound indeed, and, to an enlarged and philosophical mind—one capable of taking a comprehensive view of human affairs and of human nature—they are perfectly convincing. And they afford to such a mind, a pleasing confirmation of the super-human wisdom manifested in the

* "Quicquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur," is an ancient medical aphorism, capable of a wide application.

† Bishop Taylor and Locke have almost exhausted the arguments on this subject.

* "Christians must generally, it would seem, believe in Christ, because their spiritual rulers do, and reject the infidel's views, because these people are pronounced accursed. Nay, the supposition of the clergy themselves having the qualification, and the opportunity to go through the process of proof, is only a supposition. They often want either or both, and it is impossible that it should not be so. The labour of a life is scarcely sufficient to examine for one's self one branch alone of such evidence. For the greater part, few men, however learned, have satisfied themselves by going through the proof. They have admitted the main assertions, because proved by others.

"And is this conviction then reasonable? Is it more than the adoption of truth on the authority of another? It is. The principle on which all these assertions are received, is not that they have been made by this or that credible individual or body of persons, who have gone through the proof—this may have its weight with the critical and learned—but the main principle adopted by all, intelligible by all, and reasonable in itself, is, that these assertions are set forth, bearing on their face a *challenge of refutation*. The assertions are like witnesses placed in a box to be confronted. Scepticism, infidelity, and scoffing, form the very groundwork of our faith. As long as these are known to exist and to assail it, so long are we sure that any untenable assertion may and will be refuted. The benefit accruing to Christianity in this respect from the occasional success of those who have found flaws in the several parts of evidence is invaluable. We believe what is not disproved, most reasonably, because we know that there are those abroad who are doing their utmost to disprove it. We believe the witness, not because we know him and esteem him, but because he is confronted, cross-examined, suspected, and assailed by arts fair and unfair. It is not his authority, but the reasonableness of the case. It becomes conviction well grounded, and not assent to man's words." *London Review*, No. II. p. 361, 362

Gospel scheme. For men of that age and condition of life, and of the *Jewish* nation more especially, would never have been led by mere human sagacity to reject and prohibit all temporal coercion, and seek to propagate and maintain their religion by no force but that of gentle persuasion. And even in the present day, I cannot but think that such arguments as I have adverted to are not likely to be comprehended in their full force, by men of narrow or uncultivated understanding. And therefore it is, I conceive, that our great Master has graciously provided, in his holy word, a support for the weak, and a guide for the dim-sighted, among his faithful followers;—that he has been pleased to reveal what is, not indeed undiscoverable by human reason, but yet not so discoverable as to be capable of being made clear to the mass of mankind;—that he has prohibited, both by the precepts and the example of himself and his apostles, that persecuting spirit whose inexpediency and whose intrinsic turpitude, some, even of the humble and sincere among his followers, might have failed to discover for themselves. As for the prejudiced and the wilful, they are not likely to learn the truth either from Scripture or from reason:* but the plainest Christian, who has indeed "the Spirit of Christ," and not that of the Papal Antichrist, may learn the will of his Master both by his teaching and from his pattern; and may be made "wise unto salvation," by becoming a follower of him who was "meek and lowly in spirit,"—who "did no violence, neither was guile found in his mouth," and who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save."

§. 6. How blind even an intelligent man may be to the abstract arguments against persecution, is strikingly illustrated by a slip which the acute and powerful Bishop Warburton has made, in treating of toleration. He would have all men allowed liberty to worship God in their own way; but Atheists, he says, should be banished from every civil government, because they are "incapable of giving security for their behaviour in community; and their principles directly overthrow the very foundation on which it is built."† This great man overlooked the seemingly obvious circumstance, that, by a kind of perverse inconsistency, his remedy would operate precisely in those cases where his reason for it did not hold good, and would be almost sure to fail in the very cases it was designed to meet. Such Atheists as were, conformably to his supposition, utterly unprincipled and unscrupulous, would of course, were the system he recommends established, make no difficulty of denying their infidelity, and professing any thing whatever that might be proposed to them; those again, if there be any such, who were too honest to save themselves from punishment by falsehood, would be the very persons to suffer the penalty. So that those to whom his description applies, as being such that the community could have "no security" for their good behaviour, would remain in the community; and the sentence of exile designed for them, would fall on those, exclusively, to whom the description did not apply.

A like error results, practically, in some instances, from our laws relative to oaths. I have seen a case recorded, of a tradesman suing a customer for a debt, which the other denied; he produced his books, and was about to make oath in the usual form, of the correctness of the entry; when the other party objected that he was an Atheist, and therefore was not entitled to take an oath: on being questioned, he admitted this; and the case was dismissed. The magistrates could not have acted otherwise, as the law stands; but surely the law should be altered when it operates, as in this instance, to defeat its own object.* The very purpose of an oath is to obtain some security of a man's speaking the truth: now in this case, if the tradesman had been so unscrupulous as to make a false charge, it is not likely he would have hesitated to support it by a false profession of his belief in religion. The best ground that could have been afforded for trusting to his veracity, was his refusing to utter a falsehood for the sake of establishing his claim; and it was for this very reason, in fact, that his claim was disallowed.

§. 7. The feeling which tends to foster the spirit of persecution, and to blind us to the reasons opposed to it—that feeling of *hostility* which naturally arises in our breasts against such as reject our faith, or our own views of it—in short, against infidels and heretics—is chiefly remarkable from the circumstance of its being

* "Remedia non agunt in cadaver."
† Alliance between Church and State, b. iii.

* See an able pamphlet entitled "Remarks on Oaths, &c." published by Hatchard, 1826.

usually so much stronger, than our indignation against those who, professing our religion, disgrace it by an unchristian life, or even by an avowed disregard of religion. It should seem at the first glance, as if the very reverse of this were the more reasonably to be expected. For, as far as the *cause itself* is concerned, he surely injures it more who brings discredit on it, than he who openly opposes it. The professing Christian implies, by a sinful life, either that his religion is compatible with immorality, or else that he professes it for form's sake only, and secretly disbelieves it; by which means he casts a doubt on the sincerity of the professions of others, and thus weakens the evidence their example would have afforded. And as far as the *individual* is concerned, the irreligious, or profligate, or worldly-minded Christian, is surely more chargeable with *impiety* than the unbeliever. An Atheist might, conceivably at least, have loved and obeyed his Saviour, if he could have been convinced of his divine mission: at any rate, he is not living in habitual defiance of a God whom he acknowledges. If two men receive each a letter from his father, and one of them, on very insufficient grounds, rejects it as a forgery, he is not surely *more* undutiful than the other, who, recognizing it as a genuine letter from his father, puts it away carefully, and utterly disregards all the injunctions it contains.

The Apostle Paul accordingly enjoins his converts to withdraw themselves, not from all intercourse with unbelievers, but from any man of their own society, that "walketh disorderly;"—"if any one that is *called a brother*" bring a scandal on the church by living in known sin, "with such a one not even to eat:" (i. e. at the agapæ, or love-feasts:) and to "cut off" (excommunicate) those who "offend" (i. e. scandalize) the society.

How comes it, then, that men's feelings for the most part take an opposite direction? I. One obvious cause, as far as we of the present day are concerned, is, that avowed infidelity is comparatively *rare*. We are so much accustomed, unhappily, to the case of Christians leading an unchristian life, while the open rejection of the faith is an exception to the general rule, that in respect of the one, our feelings are blunted by familiarity, while the comparative unfrequency of the other fault makes it the more shocking.

It is evident, that with the early Christians the case must have been reversed. Since men did not then profess Christianity as a matter of course, and had in general to encounter some hardships and inconveniences on account of their profession, an utter disregard of their religion or a life utterly at variance with it, must have been much less common among the primitive Christians than among ourselves: while, on the other hand, they were living in the midst of unbelievers, and were themselves the exception to the general rule.

It is also evident, that the reason given does not apply, at least with equal force, to the case of persons holding a different form of Christianity. These are much more frequently met with than avowed anti-christians; and they are the objects accordingly, in general, of feelings less hostile than the others; yet still, in many instances, of greater hostility than is usually felt towards those who lead an unchristian life.

II. Another cause, which has the same tendency with the foregoing, is that every one who rejects the whole, or any part, of our faith, diminishes, so far, the confirmation which all men are disposed to derive, more or less, on every point, from authority—from feeling that others think with them. I suspect there are few whose acquiescence, even in the conclusions of Euclid, is entirely unmixed with this feeling. In matters which admit of less intrinsic certainty, it is of course a larger ingredient in that compound of evidence on which belief rests.* And in proportion as each man is the worse qualified for reasoning, or the more averse to the trouble of it, he will be the more disposed to content himself with this description of evidence, and to acquiesce in what is generally received, without submitting to the toil of seeking for other reasons.

Now any one who rejects our tenets goes so far towards shaking this confidence, and disturbing this indolent tranquillity; he drives us to take the trouble of thinking—of supporting our conclusions by argument—of contemplating and answering objections—and of making our opinions assume the attitude rather of frontier towns, carefully fortified and watchfully garrisoned, than of secure and peaceful inland districts. And hence we are naturally led to feel some indignation

* In truth, as has been already observed, (in note, §. 5. p. 68.) the existence of infidelity supplies one important branch of evidence.

against the causer of this disturbance. On the contrary, one who adheres to the belief of our religion, while it condemns his own life, is, in fact, bearing strong testimony in our favour, by admitting what, it should seem, he must wish to disbelieve.

III. Add to this, that one who is opposed to our faith, however courteous his outward demeanour may be, and however liberal his real disposition, cannot, we feel, but inwardly look down upon us, as weak and credulous, or prejudiced and bigotted to error, or in some way opposed to right reason; and these sentiments we feel as personally *affronting* to us. On the other hand, he who, adhering to an orthodox Christian faith, lives a life at variance with it, seems to acknowledge his own inferiority to those whose conduct is such as, by his own showing, his *ought* to be. The one in short seems to scorn, and the other to honour us, not by their external demeanour, but by the very character of their respective opinions.

IV. Lastly, it will often really happen, and often again be supposed, and sometimes perhaps pretended, that a man's rejection of Christianity is, in fact, a *step beyond* his disobedience to it;—that he has *proceeded* from leading an irreligious life to the adoption of irreligious principles; and set himself against the Gospel, because he found the Gospel against him. In this case it may be urged, with truth, that he is deserving of heavier censure than the Christian who leads an ill life, because he includes *both* characters. Whatever we may suspect, however, I know not that we are authorized to impute these motives to any one without actual proof.

This last is, of course, the reason which, of all that have been mentioned, would be in general the most readily avowed, (and often in perfect sincerity,) to account for the greater indignation felt against infidels and heretics, than against irreligious or vicious Christians. I am convinced, however, that the other causes enumerated, operate not less powerfully towards the same result. And if such be indeed the natural feelings of the human heart, it behoves us to be ever on our guard against their excess, and against being led by them into those practical faults, to whose frequency history bears such ample testimony.

§. 8. That much of that kind of feeling does exist, which I have been endeavouring to account for, observation will, I think, sufficiently prove. And indeed it will often be found that the very persons whose requisitions in respect of orthodoxy are the most rigid—who go to the greatest extreme in narrowing the pale of it—who make the least allowance for minute differences of opinion—and are the most bitter against all who do not agree with them; are the very same who go the greatest lengths of indulgence in respect of moral requisitions—show the greatest extreme of tenderness towards those whose conduct is a scandal to Christianity—and seem as if they would have utterly disapproved the system of discipline, in respect of moral delinquents, which prevailed in the primitive churches. I have seen accordingly severe censure bestowed on a sermon of a pious and able writer, in which he ventures to utter a wish, (far short, by the way, of that contained in our church's commination-service,) that those who are Christians only in name and profession—"who have no clear knowledge of what a Christian ought to be—would either take one side or the other; that they would either be the servants of Christ in earnest, or renounce him openly, and say that they have nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth, or his salvation. Happy indeed," he adds, "would it be for the church of Christ, if all its false friends would declare themselves its enemies." The temerity of this wish, we have been told, would be such as to make us shudder, if it came from the lips of an enthusiast. No doubt more of the effect produced on some minds, depends on the question, *who* it is that says any thing, than on *what* it is that is said: for the framers of our services have been so temerarious as to express an earnest wish, that the "godly discipline of the primitive church" might be restored, under which those who had scandalized their brethren were put to open penance, or, as every one knows, in the event of their refusing to make submission, or of their not reforming their lives, were excluded from the society, till they should so submit and give satisfactory assurance of their repentance.

We have been told, however, that in the event of even a voluntary secession on the part of "the false friends of Christ," there would be a vast portion of society permanently out off from the ordinances and institutions of Christianity: (that is, I presume, as permanently as the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, who might

choose to make their own unbelief "permanent;" or as the incestuous Corinthian, who was to be "permanently" cut off as long as he should persist in his sin and impenitence:) that they would cease to frequent the assemblies of the faithful—would never hear the word of doctrine or exhortation—would have shut themselves out from the appointed means of grace, and would be publicly and solemnly pledged to unbelief: that their hearts would be sealed against the voice of the church, and they would be fixed to their life's end among the desperate adversaries of their Redeemer. The existing condition of things, it is admitted, is discouraging enough; but it is a state, it is contended, of millennial bliss, compared with what would follow, if heaven were to listen to the wishes of this preacher: i. e., compared with the actual state of things in the times of the primitive churches. It is urged, that now the unfaithful and double-minded Christian is perpetually and closely confronted with the principle he professes: the offices and ministrations of religion are loudly and incessantly appealing to the vows he has made, &c.

All this may be very true; nor am I undertaking to prove, that the primitive churches were not injudiciously strict in their discipline; or that our reformers were not unwise for wishing its restoration; or that it was not a disadvantage to those churches, that such as were strangers to Christian faith and practice, were not members of them as a matter of course, but remained avowed unbelievers till they were disposed deliberately and in earnest to embrace Christianity. The early Christians probably thought, that the ungodly or vicious were not the less, but the *more* likely to be reclaimed, by the loud warning as to their dangerous state, which would be forced on their minds by their exclusion from the visible church: that when not merely told from the pulpit, that the sacraments and other means of grace are of no benefit to such as lead an unchristian life, but impressed with this truth by the actual refusal of these ordinances, they would be the less liable to that common superstition of regarding these means of grace as a charm, and of flattering themselves that, if not in a safe state, they are at least in a *safer* state, by virtue of their going to church, and of being confessedly *Christians*, though they do not (as one may often hear people say) profess to be "saints."

In all this however they may perhaps have been mistaken; and I am far from denying that there is much show of reason in what may be urged on both sides. But what is to my present purpose to remark is, that those who are thus anxious to retain within the pale of the church such professing Christians as lead a careless or immoral life, are not found, as some perhaps might have antecedently expected, to feel any thing like a proportionate tenderness towards differences of opinion. On the contrary, they are usually the foremost in exaggerating into fatal heresy the smallest shade of variation from their own views of orthodoxy; and the loudest in urging all those, openly and at once, to separate from the church, whose notions do not appear minutely to coincide with their own. If such arguments as those just alluded to were urged on behalf of those they denounce as heterodox—if any thing approaching to the same forbearance as they recommend in the case of immoral Christians, were proposed to be extended to such as have not quite made up their minds as to this or that doctrine, or have taken such a view of any points as appear incorrect in the eyes of others who lay claim to pre-eminent orthodoxy—were such a plea, I say, to be urged, almost in the very same words, I cannot but think we should hear a loud clamour against latitudinarian laxity and dangerous liberalism.

I am not of course contending that there may not be either a defect, or an excess of strictness, in the requisitions either of an orthodox faith, or of a blameless life: it requires a discreet judgment, to decide in each particular case, under either class, the precise amount of the departure from the right road. But the circumstance to which I wish to call attention is, that since those who are the most lax on the one side, are the most rigid on the other, this confirms what has been above said of the tendency in our nature towards a more hostile feeling against such as oppose or disavow our religion, than against those who disobey and scandalize it.

And as this tendency is altogether *natural*, so it is, as might have been expected, eminently *Romish*. Never was there a more prevailing laxity of Christian morals, even among the very governors of the church of Rome, and never was such corruption more lightly thought of by her zealots, than at the very periods when she was occupied in suppressing heresy with the most unrelenting rigour. Louis the

Fourteenth, who, during nearly his whole [illegible], was setting his subjects the example of living in open adultery, was applauded to the skies by a Christian preacher, for his piety in having burned, gibbeted, racked, or driven into exile, hundreds of thousands of his Protestant subjects.*

If we would be really safe from the danger of committing faults of a like character with those which we regard with abhorrence in others, we must seek that safety in self-distrust—in a vigilant suspicion of the human heart.

§. 9. For it is to human nature we must trace both this and many other of those evils which each man is usually disposed to attribute to the particular system he is opposed to. As the Protestant is often inclined to look no further than to *Romanism* for the origin of the persecution, so is the infidel to regard *Christianity* as the chief cause of it. But both are mistaken. I am convinced that Atheists, should they ever become the predominant party, would persecute religion. For nearly the same causes, or others corresponding to them, would exist, which have been just mentioned as generating especial hostility towards those who differ in faith from ourselves. The Atheists would feel themselves to be regarded by the Christians, not indeed as weak and credulous, but as perverse and profane: their confidence again in their own persuasion would be as likely to be shaken by the Christian, as the Christian's by them: all the human passions, in short, and all the views of political expediency, which have ever tempted the Christian to persecute, would have a corresponding operation with them. Not that I conceive most of them to have, themselves, any suspicion of this, or to be insincere in their professed abhorrence of persecution. As no one wishes to persecute, so they probably do not anticipate (under the above mentioned supposition) such a state of things as would seem to call for coercive measures. They imagine, probably, that when they had deprived Christian ministers of endowments, had publicly proclaimed the falsity of the Christian faith, and had taken measures for promoting education and circulating books calculated to enlighten the people, the whole system of religious belief would gradually but speedily die away, and be regarded in the same light with tales of fairies. Such doubtless was the notion of some, whom I have known to express regret that Buonaparte did not employ the power he possessed in conferring so great a benefit on society as he might have done, "by abolishing Christianity." They were thinking, probably, of no more active measures than the withholding of the support and countenance of the government.

In such expectations, every one who believes in Christianity must feel confident that they would be deceived. At first indeed appearances probably would be such as to promise favourably to their views. For most of those who profess Christianity, merely for fashion's sake, or in compliance with the laws of their country, would soon fall away, and would be followed by many of such as wanted firmness to support ridicule, or the disfavour of those in power. But after a time, the progress of irreligion would be found to have come to a stand. When the plants "on the stony ground" had been all scorched up, those "on the good soil" would be found still flourishing. Sincere Christians would remain firm; and some probably would be roused to exert themselves even with increased zeal; and some apostates would be reclaimed. Complaints would then be raised, that Christian preachers decried, as profane and mischievous, the works put forth by authority; and that they represented the rulers as aliens from God, and men whose example should be shunned. Those indeed who had imbibed the true spirit of the Gospel, would not fail to inculcate, after the example of the apostles, the duty of submission even to unchristian magistrates; but it is not unlikely that some would even take a contrary course, and would thus help to bring the imputation of sedition on Christian preaching universally. The rabble, again, would be likely occasionally to assail, with tumultuous insult and outrage, the Christians; who would in consequence be represented by their enemies as *occasioning* these tumults; especially if, as is likely, some among them did not submit patiently to such usage, or even partly provoked it by indiscretion. And however free the generality of the Christians might be from any just suspicion of a design to resort to lawless violence in the cause of their religion, still it would be evident, that a revival and renewed diffusion of Christianity, such as they

* "Epanchons nos cœurs sur la piété de Louis; poussons jusqu'au ciel nos acclamations . . . . . Vous avez exterminé les hérétiques; c'est le digne ouvrage de votre règne: c'en est le propre caractère."—*Bossuet.*

were furthering, must, after it should reach a certain point, endanger the continuance of power in the hands then wielding it; and that such a change of rulers would put a stop to the plans which had been commenced for the amelioration of society. Representing, then, and regarding Christianity as the great obstacle to improvement, as the fruitful source of civil dissensions, and as involving disaffection to the then existing government, they would see a necessity for actively interfering, with a view (not indeed, like religious persecutors, to the salvation of souls, but) to the secular welfare of their subjects, and the security and prosperity of the civil community. They would feel themselves accordingly (to say nothing of any angry passions that might intrude) bound in duty to prohibit the books, the preaching, and the assemblies of Christians. The Christians would then, in violation of the law, circulate Bibles clandestinely, and hold their assemblies in cellars and on sequestered heaths. Coercion would of course become necessary to repress these (as they would then be) illegal acts. And next .... but I need not proceed any further; for I find I have been giving almost an exact description of the state of things when the Christian churches were spreading in the midst of Heathenism. And yet I have only been following up the conjectures, which no one (believing in Christianity) could fail to form, who was but tolerably acquainted with human nature. For "such transactions," says the great historian of Greece, "take place, and always will take place, (though varied in form, and in degree of violence, by circumstances,) as long as *human nature* remains the same."* Never can we be secured from the recurrence of the like, but by the implantation of some principle which is able to purify, to renovate, to convert that nature; in short, to "CREATE THE NEW MAN."† Christianity, often as its name has been blazoned on the banners of the persecutor—Christianity, truly understood, as represented in the writings of its founders, and honestly applied, furnishes a preventive, the only *permanently* effectual preventive, of the spirit of perseeution. For, as with fraudulent, so it is also with coercive measures, employed in matters pertaining to religion: we must not expect that the generality will be so far-sighted, as always to perceive their ultimate inexpediency in each particular case that may occur; they will be tempted to regard the peculiar circumstances of this or that emergency as constituting an exception to the general rule, and calling for a departure from the general principle. Whereas the plainest Christian, when he has once ascertained, as he easily may, if he *honestly* consult the Scriptures, what the will of God is, in this point, will walk boldly forward in the path of his duty, though he may not see at every turn whither it is leading him; and, with full faith in the divine wisdom, will be ready in pious confidence, to leave events in the hands of Providence.

§. 10. I will conclude this chapter with a brief notice of some mistakes as to the real character of persecution, on the opposite side to those formerly mentioned. For as some may be in danger of unconsciously countenancing persecution, by *narrowing* too much their notion of what it consists in, so others, on the contrary, by forming too *wide* a notion of it, may incur the opposite danger of comprehending under the head of persecution what does not properly deserve the title.

I. There is not *necessarily* any thing of the character of persecution in doing violence to a man's *conscience*. Though at the first glance this may be a startling paradox, it is evident on a moment's reflection, that to admit, at once, and universally, the plea of conscience, would lead to the subversion of the whole fabric of society. To say nothing of the *false* pleas which would doubtless be set up, when it was once understood that all were to be admitted, there would be no limit to the possible aberrations of even the sincerely conscientious. Some sectarians have a conscientious scruple against paying tithes, on the ground that they disapprove of a hired ministry. Not that according to the strict use of language the pastors of our church are *hired* at all; nor the tithes *paid* by the farmer, since they only pass through his hands, allowance having been made for them in his rent; and he no more hires the minister than he does his landlord.* But still, as is

* See Motto. † Eph. iv. 24.

* I have known a striking instance of the confusion of thought resulting from inaccuracy of language on this point. A farmer declared to a friend of mine, that he would not attend the ministry of *paid* preachers, but would listen to them only if they should go forth like the seventy disciples "without scrip or purse," &c. He did not recollect that in that case he *would* have to

well known, the collection of tithes has been complained of as persecution. On much better grounds might the same persons scruple to pay *taxes;* (which they know are employed, among other purposes, for the keeping up of a *military* establishment;) since these really *are* paid, out of what was before (which the tenth sheaf never was) the payer's own property.

Some enthusiasts again, in the present day, have made it a religious duty to desert their wives and families, when these would not adopt their peculiar tenets.* Others, such as the ancient German Anabaptists, under the pretence that Christian men's goods are common, might incite their followers to a general plunder of those who had property, that the spoil might be thrown into a common stock. And some wild Millenarians, like the fifth-monarchy-men, might feel themselves bound in conscience to overthrow all governments, as the necessary preparation for the temporal reign of Christ on earth. In short, there is no saying at what point the plea of conscience, if once admitted without further question, would stop. The only possible principle on which we must draw the line is, that the civil magistrate, to whom is committed the care of the temporal welfare of the community, should interfere in those cases (and in those only) in which the *persons or property* of the citizens are directly and confessedly concerned.† I say "directly," and "confessedly," because *remotely*, and *by inference*, every religious system may be made out to affect in some way the peace and well-being of the community. There is, I believe, no religion existing, respecting which I have not seen an elaborate proof that it leads to mischievous consequences in practice, and that its professors are either likely to be, or, consistently with their principles, ought to be, the worse citizens; and again, I have seen the direct contrary inferred respecting every one of them. So that without the limitation above suggested, there would be an opening left for the forcible suppression, or for the forcible establishment, by the civil magistrate, of any religion whatever.

"But is the civil magistrate," it may be said, "to determine what are the cases that call for his interference? And if so, how can any principle be laid down that shall not leave him an opening to call in, whenever he is so disposed, the aid of the civil sword?" Certainly this is not possible. Coercive power *must* be entrusted to *somebody;* nor can those to whom it is entrusted be withheld from abusing it, if they are inclined to do, by any rule that can be laid down. It is notorious, that the Scriptures furnish none such; nor is it possible, from the nature of things, that they should. He who has the power, and the will, to do wrong, will never be at a loss for a plea to justify himself, even though he should be driven to maintain (like the wolf in the fable) that a stream flows upwards. But my object was, not to lay down a rule that should preclude (which is impossible) one who is seeking an evasion, from finding any; but to point out the principle which should govern the *conscience* of an upright magistrate: viz., to protect, by coercive measures if necessary, the peace, the lives, and the property of his subjects, and to abstain from all coercion in matters purely religious. But many persons are apt to conclude, that whatever is left to a man's *discretion*, is left to his *arbitrary caprice;* and that he who is responsible only to God, has no responsibility at all.

II. Although, however, such is, on Christian principles, the limitation of the civil magistrate's authority, there is no reason why the individual holding such an office should not also be a member, or an officer, of a Christian church, provided he is careful not to blend together the characters of a political and a religious community. Coercive means cannot suitably be employed for the propagation or the maintenance of Christianity; but there is nothing that necessarily goes to secularize the kingdom which is "not of this world," or that necessarily implies the spirit of intolerance, in the possession, or in the exercise, of coercive power for other purposes, even by a Christian pastor. Only there is the more call for care and discreet judgment in cases where the same individual has to exercise distinct functions, and especially if he is thus made to stand in two or more different relations to the same men. Such, for instance, is the case where the rector of a parish is also a justice of the peace. Even if he were so not by an accidental appointment, but by virtue of some fixed general regu-

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maintain the preachers, who are *now* supported by endowments. The disciples were directed, wherever they went, to "eat and drink such things as were set before them; for the labourer is worthy of his *hire*."

* Fact.

† "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and unto God the things that be God's."

ation, still he would be exercising, in respect of the same individuals, two distinct offices, regulated by different principles, and concerned with distinct kinds of subject-matter. In the same manner, if a military officer should chance to be also a magistrate, this would not imply his blending together the principles of martial law and of common and statute-law. So also some kings or other chief magistrates hold also ecclesiastical supremacy; some bishops have a share in the secular legislature: others have principalities annexed to their sees; and the bishop of Rome in particular has long been a considerable temporal sovereign.

With respect to that church, it is worth remarking, that the persecution and the other enormities with which it has been justly charged, have led many of those who have renounced it, to blend together confusedly in their thoughts every thing that in any way pertains to it. Whereas, in truth, many parts of the Romish system, even such as are in themselves utterly indefensible, have no necessary connexion with each other, or with Rome. Her usurped supremacy, for instance, and her false doctrines, are two distinct faults; the latter of which is so far from being necessarily connected with the church of Rome, that she scarcely differs at all in doctrine from the Greek church.

And with respect to the point now before us, let it be supposed, (and the supposition, however unlikely to be realized, is perfectly conceivable,) that the pope had, in respect of his *diocess*, proceeded on Christian principles, and in respect of his *principality*, had protected the civil rights of his subjects, leaving every one to exercise his own religion without molestation, as long as the temporal peace and security of the community remained undisturbed:—if, I say, he had always acted thus, as two distinct persons, it cannot be maintained, that this state of things would have introduced any thing approaching to a persecuting spirit—any thing savouring of that secular coercion which amounts to intolerance, and is at variance with the character of Christ's kingdom.

The question then respecting such a union, of civil office with spiritual or ecclesiastical office, in the same individual, becomes one of mere expediency; and one which of course will vary in its complexion, according to the circumstances of each country or period. What we are at present concerned with is, merely to determine what does or does not involve the principle of persecution; i. e., the employment or the denouncement of coercion in matters of religion.

III. There is nothing, *necessarily*, of the spirit of persecution in a man's requiring his servants, or his tenants, or the tradesmen he deals with, or all that associate with him, to be pious characters, or to be of his own religious persuasion or practice, even down to the minutest particulars.* This is so evident, that it would not have needed being mentioned, but that we are so liable to have our thoughts insensibly led astray by language.† We hear, for instance, of a man's being *compelled* to adopt this or that form of religion, as a condition of being in such-a-one's service, or of obtaining a renewal of a lease; and we are thence liable to forget, what is plain as soon as we reflect on it, that this is not *absolute* compulsion, since it interferes with no man's *natural*, or *previously existing rights*;‡ and that to prohibit such a procedure *would* be an interference with the right of the other "to do what he will with his own." Such a mode of conduct, as I have been alluding to, might indeed be carried to such a length, as justly to incur the censure of indiscretion—of bigotry—of illiberality; it might be such as even to indicate in the individual a disposition§ which would lead him to persecute if he had the power; but still it would not in itself involve the principle of persecution.

The same reasoning will apply to the case of the exclusion from certain endowments of one not belonging to the church for whose benefit they are designed. A man is said to be *compelled* to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, if he would hold a church living, or a fellowship: he is compelled to be a Presbyterian, if he

* I mean, of course, supposing him not to disappoint any *expectations* that may reasonably have been formed; for reasonable expectation is a ground of *equitable right*.

† Elements of Logic, chap. iii. §. 5.

‡ I cannot but think, however, that there is ground of complaint when a man cannot obtain his rights, whether those to which all men are entitled by nature, or those of the citizens of his particular community, without either taking some oath, or going through some other religious ceremony, against which he has a conscientious scruple. A special indulgence has been granted to the Quakers in respect of oaths and the marriage service; but if this was reasonable in principle, I cannot see why the principle should not have been recognized and acted upon uniformly.

§ See above, §. 3. subsect. I, of this chapter.

would hold the office of minister at a Presbyterian chapel, &c. So also in order to obtain a degree, he *must* have kept certain academical terms, and must undergo an examination in certain prescribed branches of learning; nay, in order to hold a scholarship on some particular foundations, he *must* be a native of a certain district; and if he would retain his situation, he must remain unmarried. It is evident, on a moment's reflection, that though we use in such cases the *words* 'must,' "obliged," "forced," &c., all this has nothing to do with absolute coercion.*

On the same principle it may be maintained, that there is nothing, necessarily, of the character of intolerance, in precluding those who are not members of a particular church from having any share in legislating for that church, in respect of matters of a purely spiritual or ecclesiastical character: indeed to admit them to such a share, is a manifest anomaly and inconsistency, though one which may sometimes be in practice unavoidable or insignificant. That none but Quakers, for instance, or Methodists, have a voice in the general assemblies of Quakers, or of Methodists, respectively, is so far from being at all to be complained of as savouring of an intolerant spirit, that, on the contrary, as long as they confine themselves to matters exclusively religious, they would justly regard the interference of those not belonging to their sect as a violation of the principle of toleration. And the *anomaly* is in itself just as *real*, whether in practice it lead to the most *important* or the most *trifling* results;—whether, for instance, a majority of the assembly which governs a particular church, be of a different persuasion, or whether *one single* Roman Catholic or dissenter have a voice in the election of a member of that assembly.†

But then, it may be said, if it so happen (as is the case among us in practice, though not by original appointment, according to the theory of the constitution, and early usage*) that the assembly, which alone exercises the right of legislating for the church, in all matters, is also the supreme legislating body in secular concerns; does it not savour of intolerance to exclude, by a test-law, from such an assembly, or from voting for those who are to sit in it, men otherwise qualified? Granted that they have nothing to do with the internal regulations of a church to which they do not belong; the same cannot be said of the taxes imposed, and the laws enacted, by that same assembly. In despotic countries, indeed, the people have nothing to do with the taxes, but to pay them, or with the laws, but to submit to them: but in a free country, it cannot be maintained, that to preclude from all share in legislating, or in appointing legislators, in secular matters, one who is not disqualified, in respect of *that particular branch* of business, does not deprive him of any of his rights, or that it is not as great an anomaly as to *admit* him to interfere in church matters in respect of which he *is* disqualified.

Such are, in the abstract, the conflicting difficulties in the case. It is as if a man should put in an equitable claim to a house, some parts of which are confessedly none of his; or to a piece of land, on which there are buildings erected, to which he has no right. The problem, to keep clear of both of these opposite anomalies, has not, I think, yet been solved†; nor has it, I think, hitherto

* See Appendix to Elements of Logic; article "Necessary."

† Some are apt to express themselves as if the anomaly consisted merely in members of the *church of Rome* legislating for a Protestant church. Suppose that some particular description of Protestants, or, if you will, that all Protestants, are more pure in their faith—less dangerous in their principles—less hostile to our church—than the Romanists; still the question remains the same, what has any man to do with the regulations of a church he does not belong to?

But some persons are even accustomed to speak of "the Protestant religion," and even of "the Protestant church," without reflecting whether there are any such things, or whether they are employing words without any distinct meaning. Dr. Hawkins, I am happy to find, has forestalled me in part of this remark. "The term 'Protestant,' when it denotes a member of one of the western churches who is free from Romish error, is merely a term of convenience. It may be employed perhaps with little regard to history or etymology; but it answers its intended purpose, and it does no harm. Not so, such a phrase as 'the Protestant religion.' The very expression, whenever it is not evidently synonymous with 'the religion of the Protestant church of England,' implies inattention to the fact, that there is no one religion common to Protestants as contradistinguished from the Romanists; and it tends to throw a veil over another important fact, that the creeds of certain Protestant sects are far more remote than that of the church of Rome from the truth of the Gospel." *Sermon preached at Maldon*, p. 6.

* See Field's work on Church Government.

† It ought to be mentioned, in justice to Mr Wilmot Horton, that he is one of the few persons

been generally contemplated with sufficient clearness and steadiness to allow of a fair trial, whether it can be solved or not: though about thirty years ago steps began to be taken with a view to the practical adjustment of the difficulties. My object in touching upon the question at present is no more than, (confining myself to the proper topics of this work,) to point out in what relation that question stands to the subject of the present chapter.*

IV. Lastly, there is nothing, necessarily, of intolerance, in protecting, by coercive means, if needful, the professors of any religion, against violence or plunder, disturbance to their religious meetings, insult, libel, or any other such molestation, from those of an adverse party. Such protection is so far from being at variance with the principles above laid down, that it is an application of them. It is not persecution, but the prevention of persecution. For *lawless and irregular* outrage is not, for that reason, the less of the character of persecution; and the unauthorized cruelties of the people were, we may be sure, among the severest trials the early Christians had to undergo. And yet there are some persons who are ready to denounce as persecuting, every system which does not leave them at liberty to persecute others.

It must not be forgotten, however, that when the religion, in behalf of which the civil magistrate has been driven to interfere, happens to be *his own*, he will be strongly tempted not to stop short at measures of mere immediate self-defence, but to take what will seem the effectual step, of putting down altogether the hostile party.

To guard against overstepping the proper line of procedure in this matter, and also to decide on what occasions the appeal to the interference of the civil power is not only justifiable, but expedient also, are points which must, in each particular instance, be left to the head and the heart of each individual. General principles may be sketched out; but there can be none that will teach their own application, or supersede the exercise of practical good sense, cautious deliberation, and Christian candour.

It may be worth while, however, to observe, in conclusion, how important it is always to keep in mind, that the Cross which our Master and his apostles bore so meekly, our proud nature strongly impels us to refuse, whenever we can, by any means whatsoever, avoid it. We are tempted to admire at a distance, while we revolt at the thought of copying, their patience under calumny and derision, and every kind of provocation. And, what is more, this pride of the human heart is apt to disguise itself to our conscience under the appearance of piety; we are in danger, I mean, of regarding as zeal for God's honour, what is, perhaps, in truth, rather zeal for our own honour. He who does but reject our faith implies, as I have observed above, something affronting to ourselves; much more, if he slander and insult us for maintaining it: and it is from this cause that we are prone to feel greater indignation at such conduct, than at the equal affront offered to God by those who acknowledge his claim, while in their lives they habitually disregard it, to their love, gratitude, veneration, and obedience. But yet, as every one who insults us on account of our religion, does by so doing insult that religion itself, we are likely to flatter ourselves that this last is the sole ground of our indignation; when in fact, perhaps, our personal feelings have a great share in it.

But we must not expect, till the church

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who have seen and fairly met the difficulty. I cannot but think indeed, that according to his scheme, (see "Protestant Securities,") other difficulties would have arisen, in the practical adjustment of the questions as to each measure, whether it concerned the church *only*, or affected also the *property and civil rights* of the community. Still, he seems to have fixed on the right *principle*; which might, I should think, by some contrivance or other, have been adapted to practice. At least the main objection usually alleged against his proposal, that it would constitute in fact *two* legislative assemblies for two distinct branches of legislation, has always appeared to me its chief recommendation. The distribution of the several offices among the several ministers of state, viz., chancellor of the exchequer, secretary for the home department—for foreign affairs, &c., is open to the same objection.

* I have alluded merely to the grant to Roman Catholics of the *elective franchise*, and to the suspension of the *operation* of the test-law for excluding dissenters, because in these consisted the *anomaly*, which alone it is for my present purpose to treat of. As for the greater or less *political* danger of any of the measures subsequently proposed or adopted, it would be foreign to the purpose of the present work to enter on the discussion of these, or any other, political questions. Whether it were a safer course to leave the test-law dormant, or formally to repeal it—to confine the Roman Catholic electors to the choice of a Protestant representative, or to leave them at liberty to elect one of their own persuasion—these, and all such questions of political expediency, I pass by, as not properly connected with the matter in hand.

militant is exchanged for the church triumphant, that Christ's devoted followers will have no cross to bear, or that they will encounter no opposition or molestation from his enemies. At least, till the world, even what is called the Christian world, shall have become much more imbued with the spirit of Christianity than it ever has been yet, our Lord's warnings to his disciples must be regarded as in some degree applicable to us: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you . . . because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The Christian who is steady and unshrinking, and active in his master's cause, though it is his duty not wantonly to provoke obloquy and opposition by any indiscreet or violent conduct, yet must not expect always to escape such mortifications; and he should be prepared so to meet them, as to show how far beyond "the praise of men" he prizes the approbation of him "who seeth in secret."

Still, cases may undoubtedly occur, in which it will be our right and our duty to use means for protecting ourselves or others, against lawless aggression. No rule, as I have said, can be laid down, which will supersede the exercise of a sound and unbiassed judgment, for deciding in each particular instance whether it is allowable and advisable to call in the aid of the secular arm for the protection of the professors of religion. The right medium, says the great master of ancient moralists, must be fixed in each particular instance by each man's discretion: but he proceeds to give the best general caution that can be supplied; viz., to lean always towards the safer side; ever avoiding the more sedulously the worse extreme, and regarding that as the worse to which we are by *nature the more prone*.* On this principle we should always, in respect of any matters connected with our religion, be more willing to have it asked, *why we do not*, than why we *do* resort to the aid of the civil power.

And even when we have fully determined what procedure is *in itself* right, we must be still watchful over our own heart, subjecting our *motives* to the severest scrutiny, and taking care that we do not inwardly applaud and sanctify in our own eyes, as a virtuous jealousy for God's glory, what may be in reality chiefly a regard for our own credit, and a tenderness for our own ease and comfort.

CHAP. VI.

TRUST IN NAMES AND PRIVILEGES.

§. 1. MANKIND have a natural tendency to pride themselves on the advantages they enjoy—on the privileges they possess—on the titles they bear as badges of those privileges—and especially on their being members of any society or class endowed with such privileges. And they are disposed not only to feel a pride and satisfaction in possessing such advantages, but also carelessly to put their trust in these, independently of the use made of them, as necessarily implying some superior benefit to the possessor.

How strongly this tendency operated among the Jews of old, we have ample proof in the Bible. Even under the old dispensation we may gather from the writings of the prophets, that in spite of their numberless backslidings, they still flattered themselves that, as the Lord's chosen and peculiar people, and as having among them the only temple of the true God, he would not execute on them the judgments he had denounced. And when their captivity and the destruction of their temple had undeceived them in this point, they still clung to the hope of the promised Messiah to arise from among them, and who should restore "all things." In this hope, indeed, they were not erroneous; but their error was, in trusting that they should surely be partakers of the promised benefits, by virtue of their privilege as Abraham's children, of the stock of his chosen descendant Judah, whatever might be their own conduct; and that no such change of dispensation could take place as should put even the least deserving Jew below, or even on a level with, the best of the unclean and despised race of the Gentiles.

Accordingly, John the Baptist takes occasion to warn them on this head at the opening of his ministry; "Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good

* Arist. Eth. b. ii. ch. 9.

fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." The Apostle Paul in like manner is compelled incessantly to warn the Jewish believers, that "there is no difference" between the Jewish and the Greek Christian, inasmuch as "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;"—that there is "neither Jew nor Greek—neither barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free;" and that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision profiteth any thing, but a new creature;" and that the believing Gentiles are adopted as equally God's children, and heirs of his promises, no less than the natural descendants of Abraham.

Nor is he merely warning Christians that God is "no respecter of persons," (as it had been first revealed to Peter,) and that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him"—not only are the *workers of righteousness* cautioned against supposing that the Jews by nature, or the adherents to the ceremonial law, were to obtain a higher share of divine favour; but, what may seem more strange, the apostle finds it necessary to guard them against the error of trusting in the circumstance of being *under* the law, independently of the *observance* of it; as if a certain degree, at least, of divine favour was secured by the mere circumstance of having received by revelation the divine commands, even though they were not careful to obey them. The greater part of the early portion of the Epistle to the Romans is taken up in combating this strange delusion: he assures them, that "not the *hearers* of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified:" "behold," says he, "thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God;" and yet these same persons he speaks of as dishonouring God, by breaking the law in which they made their boast, so notoriously, that the name of God was "blasphemed among the Gentiles through them."

§. 2. A like error seems to have prevailed no less among the early Christians generally, in respect of the pride and vain-confidence with which *they* regarded their privileges as Christians. The apostle warns them in the same epistle, that as the natural branch (i. e. the Israelites after the flesh) had been broken off, and they grafted in, so a like severity was to be expected by them also, as God had exercised towards the disobedient among his favoured people of old, if, instead of making the best use of his mercies, they were high-minded—puffed up, i. e., with boastful confidence in their peculiar privileges, and neglectful of the peculiar responsibility these imposed. "If God," he admonishes them, "spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." And in the same tone he warns the Corinthians not to rely in security on their being God's elect people, from the example of the Israelites, who were also, all of them, "God's elect,"* yet of whom one whole generation were cut off, by various judgments, in the wilderness, for their disobedience: the history of these things, he says, was "written for our admonition; wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And the Apostle Jude again seems to apprehend the same danger for those he is addressing, and cautions them by the same example, "how the Lord *after having saved the people* out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not."

And as, in the first ages of Christianity, Christians were likely to feel this proud confidence in *that* title, as distinguished from unbelieving Jews and Pagans, so, the same feeling was likely afterwards to show itself, in another form, among those who were characterized as *orthodox* and *catholic* Christians, in contradistinction from heretics, whose tenets had been condemned by the general voice of the Christian churches. How strongly this feeling prevailed, and still prevails, in the members of the Romish church, every one is well aware: but the circumstance to which I wish to direct attention is, in conformity with the views already taken in the present work, that such a feeling is not peculiar to Romanists as such, but originates in our common nature, and consequently is one from which no one who partakes of that nature can be exempt, without perpetual watchfulness. The Mahometans, as is well known, partake largely of this spirit; and even those of them who are habitual transgressors of their law, still flatter themselves that some superior degree of divine favour is reserved for them as "true believers," beyond what can be expected by the best of those who are strangers to the Koran: while the

* Essay III. Second Series.

author of *our* faith, on the contrary, teaches us that he will reject as utter strangers to him those who are ready to make their boast in his *name*, and to plead that they have even "done many mighty works in that *name*:" and the knowledge of his Gospel he represents as bringing aggravated condemnation to such as do not live a Christian life; since "the servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

§. 3. In order to profit as we may do by the example of the Romanists, and even of the Mahometans, we must waive, for the time, all questions concerning the unsoundness of their tenets, and confine our view to the danger which is common to men of all persuasions, whether essentially correct, or contaminated with more or less of error. If Mahomet had been a true prophet, as Moses was, this would not have secured his followers from the fault into which the disciples of Moses did in fact fall; viz., that of expecting to be saved by their privileges, rather than by the use made of them. And if the Romanists were following in their system of doctrine and discipline, not the dictates of weak or wicked men, but those of a truly infallible apostle, this would not alone secure them from the very error which the apostles themselves found perpetually springing up among their converts, even in their own lifetime; the tendency to substitute the *means* of grace for the *fruits* of grace;—the proud confidence of belonging to a certain holy community, church, sect, or party which must secure an especial share of divine favour to every member of it.

If, on the contrary, we dwell on the *groundlessness* of the claim of the Romish church to be the only true and Catholic church, and on the doctrinal errors into which that church has fallen, we shall of course be likely to flatter ourselves, as Protestants are apt to do, that our abhorrence of that church exempts us from all danger of vainly trusting in a name, and in our connexion with a highly endowed society.

It is true that the Romish church has erred in many essential points; but nothing probably has more contributed to lead her into those errors than reliance on names and privileges. Spiritual advantages which are *real*, and titles which are *not* misapplied, may be made subjects of presumptuous boast, and may thus lead to indolent security with respect to personal exertion; this is usually the first error men fall into: the second naturally springs out of this carelessness; the name, that is, survives the thing signified;—the advantages are actually lost, either wholly or in part, through a confident reliance on their intrinsic efficacy, without an endeavour to improve them;—the land which was fertile, becomes a desert, through a confident trust that it will ensure wealth to the possessor, while he neglects to till it.

A familiar illustration of the tendency I have been speaking of is afforded by the parallel case of academical institutions. To be a member of a learned body is regarded as an honour; it affords to the individual facilities for the acquirement of learning; and, to others, some degree of presumption that he has used his advantages. How many accordingly pride themselves on being members of such a society, and on the title which denotes this, while they think little of acquiring the learning and using the advantages, which alone give to the name, and to the society, their value.

All this has been strikingly illustrated in the progressive history of the church of Rome. She was built by apostles on Jesus Christ, the only true foundation; she was left by them with sound doctrines and pure Christian worship; her members were cautioned by them not to be "high-minded, but fear;" not to rely on the divine favour as a reason for relaxing personal exertions, but as an encouragement to make them; or to exult in their deliverance from heathen superstition, and their adoption in place of the disobedient, to be the people—the chosen people—of God, but to take warning from the example of his mercy combined with severity.

But they were seduced from humble vigilance into a proud and careless reliance on the greatness of their privileges, till they even lost the talent which they had neglected to employ. What was their condition at the close of the apostles' ministry? They had renounced idolatry;—they worshipped the true God;—they had the sacred Scriptures, the words of eternal life, in their hands, for private study, and in their ears, at their religious meetings;—they had the means of grace among them, the ordinances appointed by Christ, which are strictly called the sacraments, and public joint worship, itself of a sacramental character;—they had learned to despise and abhor the superstitious offerings, purifi-

cations, and other ceremonies of the heathen, and had been taught to trust in the atonement of Christ alone, and to seek for acceptance before God, by being "led by his Spirit." All these were real and inestimable privileges, and gave them just reason for rejoicing (but for rejoicing in trembling gratitude, and not with careless pride) in the deliverance that had been wrought for them—in their happy condition as contrasted with that of their Pagan neighbours.

But their exultation in these advantages led them first to neglect, and in the end to lose them; their vain confidence in names, led them first to forget, and afterwards to forfeit, the things which the names denoted. Their minds were fixed on what was past—on what had been done for them, and withdrawn from a vigilant attention to the future—from diligence on their part to "make their calling and election sure." Confident in the titles of Christian—of Orthodox—of Catholic—of the Church of God—and careless of living "as *becometh* saints," they trusted that no deadly error could creep into so holy a community, and adopted, one by one, the very errors (under new names) of the Paganism which had been renounced; thanking God, like the Pharisee, that they were "not as other men are," they became gradually like their heathen ancestors, with the aggravation of having sinned against light, and abused their peculiar advantages; and their confidence all the while increasing along with their carelessness and corruption, when their "gold was become dross," they boasted more than ever of their wealth, and in the midst of their grossest errors insisted on complete infallibility. And to what did all this at length bring them? How far did they ultimately depart from their primitive purity? "How did the faithful city become a harlot?" They ended in overlaying Christianity, one by one, with the very errors and superstitions (in substance) from which the first Christians exulted in being delivered.

Idolatry of the grossest kind was gradually restored: the worshippers of the one true God manifested in Christ Jesus, paid, practically, their chief adoration to deified mortals: the Scriptures were secluded from the people under the veil of an unknown tongue,* and their interpretation fettered, and their authority superseded, even with the learned, by a mass of traditions which made the word of God of none effect; their sacraments became superstitious charms; their public worship a kind of magic incantation muttered in a dead language; and Christian holiness of life was commuted for holy water—for fantastic penances, pilgrimages, amulets, pecuniary donations, and a whole train of superstitious observances, worthy of Paganism in its worst forms. "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" They trusted in privileges and names, till the privileges were lost, and the names became an empty sound. But still they are as proud of them as ever. They distinguish themselves by the title of Catholics,* members of the true church—adherents to the ancient faith: nay, even *Christians* is a title by which on the continent they distinguish themselves from those heretics,† as they term them, who chiefly differ from themselves in trusting in Christ as the one Mediator, instead of a host of pretended saints. Such monstrous corruptions could never have been introduced into any church by the arts of a worldly and ambitious hierarchy, had not the individual members of it been lulled into false security, by boastfully contemplating their Christian privileges, instead of dwelling on the additional responsibility these privileges create; by priding themselves on names, without bestowing a watchful attention on the things those names denote.

§. 4. The warning of the apostle, in his Epistle to this very church, they neglected, and imitated the very example by which he warned them—that of the presumptuous and disobedient Jews of old. The admonitions, I say, of Paul to the church of Rome were lost on the succeeding generations of that church: shall they be also lost on us? Or shall we say that *Protestants* have no need of them, because we do not trust in the title of Catholic, or in being members of an infallible church;—because we have protested against the usurpations of that church, and have renounced her corruptions? The apostle might reply to us, if he lived in these days, "Be not high-minded, but fear: those whom I then addressed were in the very same situation

* A language, be it remembered, which *gradually became* obsolete: for no church ever *introduced* the use of an unknown tongue, in its prayers, or recital of Scripture.

* See note [A] in the Appendix, p. 86.

† Those in the neighbourhood of the Vandois, in particular, distinguish themselves from the members of that pure and ancient church, by the distinguishing appellation of Christians.

as you: they were the *reformed*—the Protestants of their day; they had been delivered from Jewish and Pagan infidelity, as you have been from Romish corruptions of Christianity; they prided themselves on that deliverance, as you are liable to do, on yours: they felt confident that they were in no danger of *precisely* the same errors as those of the infidel Jews and heathen idolaters, and they incorporated into Christianity substantially the same errors, under different names; they have fallen from their first faith; and are left with the candle of God's word darkened, and their minds bewildered by the false light of a delusive superstition: if God spared not this branch, take heed lest he also spare not thee: behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

The examples which are adduced from the cases of those in different ages and countries from our own, are apt to lose their instructive force, from the very circumstance which ought to make them the more instructive; viz., that there will always be some, if not essential, yet circumstantial, difference between the temptations which arise, and the errors which prevail, among different sets of men. Hence, we are apt to lose sight of the substantial agreement between two cases, and to derive no profit from the recorded faults of others, because those to which we are liable, are not the same in name, and in all the accompanying circumstances. Yet this very difference proves that they were not *copied*, the one from the other, but originate in a common and deep-seated source; it would enable us to draw the more instruction from such examples, if we would but remember that man's nature is always, and every where, substantially the same; because we view with a more impartial eye such errors as do not precisely resemble what prevail among ourselves. For these reasons, the backslidings of the Israelites in the wilderness, for instance, are so earnestly set forth by the apostle, for the instruction of the Corinthians, as being an example likely to be overlooked by them, and especially profitable to be contemplated by them; disposed, as they probably were, to rest in their high privileges as God's people, even as the Israelites did of old, and to think, like them, their deliverance complete, and their attainment of the promised inheritance secure, without watchfulness against the trials that awaited them.

It is with this view, accordingly, that I have attempted, in the present work, to point out what instructive lessons may be drawn from the errors of our brethren of the Romish church. For when once it is clearly perceived, that her corruptions are such as human nature is prone to—that they are rather the cause, than the effect, of the system of the church—and that consequently, those out of her pale are not therefore safe from similar corruptions—we are then the more likely to guard watchfully against those faults, whose deformity we have seen fully displayed by another.

§. 5. In pursuing this view, I took occasion to illustrate the general principle, by touching briefly on some of the particular points in which faults, essentially the same with those of the Romanists, have beset, and will ever beset, the rest of mankind also, in proportion as their vigilance against them is remitted: but to enumerate and dwell on all these points, would not only have led to too long a discussion, but would hardly have been needful. For when once the general principle is embraced, it is easy, and it is also best, for every one to follow up for himself the several applications of it, and to pursue the train of thought thus suggested. Nor should this be done once for all, in a single discussion, but, practically, throughout the whole of his Christian life: since if it be fully understood that the system of Romanism, so far as it disagrees with true Christianity, is in fact a transcript of man's frail nature, every one must perceive the necessity of contemplating, as in a mirror, this portraiture of his own infirmities, and of not merely abjuring, once for all, the errors he censures in another, but guarding against them with incessant vigilance. The more secure any one feels against his liability to errors, to which in fact he *is* liable, the greater must be his real danger of falling into them.

In pointing out, accordingly, several particular classes of faults to which Protestants are liable, and which are substantially the same as they condemn in the Romanists, I have repeatedly dwelt on that aggravation of the danger, the false security we are likely to feel, in our renunciation of the papal dominion, against the errors of Romanism. I cannot therefore more properly conclude this treatise, that by observing, that this very *false security* is itself one of the most fatal of

those errors;—that we are in fact imitating the Romanists, if we securely exult in our separation from them:—if we trust in the name of Protestant, as they do in that of Catholic; and look back, with proud satisfaction, on our emancipation from their corrupt system, without also looking forward, to guard vigilantly against the like corruptions; even as *they* triumphed in their abandonment of Pagan superstitions, while they forgot that Paganism itself was the offspring of the self-deceiving heart of man, in which the same corruptions, if not watchfully repressed, will be continually springing up afresh.

A more acceptable subject, perhaps, I might easily have found, in exposing the enormities of the church of Rome, and panegyrizing the comparative purity of our own; inasmuch as self-congratulation is more agreeable than self-examination. But with a view to our own practical improvement, there can be no doubt which is the more profitable. The apostle's warning, "be not high-minded, but fear," was not likely to be so gratifying to the church of Rome, to which it was addressed, as unmixed praise and congratulation; but it would have saved them, had they continued duly to attend to it, from the evils which it denounced.

Let the Protestant then consider their fall as recorded "for his admonition:" and let him profit by the example before him.

The errors which, with these views, I selected for consideration, as being among the most prominent, and usually regarded as most characteristic, of the Romish church,* but which I have endeavoured to trace to our common nature, are, 1, superstition; considered as consisting, not in this or that particular mode of worship, but in *misdirected* religious veneration, generally: 2, the tendency towards what may be called a vicarious service of God; a proneness to convert the Christian minister into a priest in the other sense of the word, and to substitute his sanctity of life and devotion, for those of the people: 3, the toleration of what are called "pious frauds;" either in the sacrifice of truth to supposed expediency, or in the propagation of what is believed to be the truth, by dishonest artifice: 4, an undue deference to human authority; as, in other points, so especially in forgetting the legitimate use of creeds, catechisms, liturgies, and other such compositions set forth by any church, and intruding them gradually into the place of Scripture, by habitually appealing to them (where the appeal ought always to be made to the records of inspiration) in *proof* of any doctrine that is in question: which practice I pointed out as not originally the consequence, but the cause, of the claim to inspiration and infallibility set up by the church: 5, lastly, I remarked, that intolerance, or the spirit of persecution, i. e., the disposition to enforce by secular coercion, not this or that system of religion, but, one's *own*, whatever it may be, is a fault inherent in human nature, and to which consequently all mankind are liable, however strongly they may reprobate (as, e. g., the Romish church has always done) persecution, or any form of compulsion, exercised on themselves.*

From these then, and all other Romish errors, Protestants cannot, as such, be exempt; and they are in the greater danger of them in proportion to their abhorrence of them as existing in that church, if they regard them as properly the offspring of Romanism, and not of human nature;—if they build their security on their being out of the pale of that corrupt church, and neglect to guard against the spirit of those corruptions, while they exult in the name of Protestants. This careless reliance on titles and privileges, is, as I have in this chapter been endeavouring to show, itself one of the most mischievous of the Romish errors, and which has mainly contributed to favour the introduction of the rest.

§. 6. In what way then, it may be asked, are we to apply practically what has been said, in guarding against this particular error? Let any one (I would reply) but look around him, and look within his own heart. Are there not multitudes who exult in the title of Christian—of Protestant—of Churchman—and in their belonging to a society endowed with such high privileges? There are: and would God the description, thus far, were even more universally applicable than it is; for in these things we *ought* to rejoice, even much more than we do. But do all who congratulate themselves on these advantages, and on these names, and who regard it, if not as some sort of merit, at least as a sure pledge of some divine favour, to possess them—do all of these reflect on the superior responsibility which is thus imposed on them? Do none of them (in feelings and in conduct at least, though not in express avowal) cherish a hope of being saved by their

* See Appendix, [B.]

* See Appendix [B.]

privileges, rather than by the use made of them? Do they reflect on those privileges as aggravating their condemnation if they do not rightly use them; or do they exult in their admittance to the wedding feast, forgetful that the guest who "had not put on the wedding garment," was cast "into outer darkness?" Do they regard the names of Christian and of Protestant as a *reproach* to those who bear them, if they are not "led by the Spirit of Christ"—if they do not in their heart and life, as well as with their lips, *protest* against the faults which they condemn in the Romanists?

Nor is it to the names of *Christian* and of *Protestant* alone, that these cautions will apply: every title which we claim that implies any peculiar advantage, involves a corresponding responsibility; and a corresponding danger, if we forget that responsibility. Does any one consider himself entitled to the name of churchman—of orthodox—of evangelical?—let him remember, that there is a perpetual danger of his relying in proud security on these titles—of trusting, not so much to his endeavours after personal holiness, as to the sanctity of the society, sect, or party, with which he is thus connected.

Some members of the Romish church, not satisfied with merely belonging to that church, and with the title of Catholics, have enrolled themselves in certain subordinate societies, (or religious orders as they are called,) enlisting themselves under the banner of some founder, of supposed superior sanctity. I am not now inquiring into the peculiar errors and superstitions actually connected with these institutions: had they been exempt from every thing of this kind, there would still have been a danger (which, in fact, must exist, more or less, in all religious communities whatever) of that evil which has so notoriously attended the religious societies of the Romish church:—the evil, I mean, of considering the mutual connexion of the members of such societies as a kind of *partnership;* in which each member may hope to derive *some* benefit at least, from the piety and purity of the whole body. This absurdity—the supposed transfer of the merits of one sinful mortal to the account of another—has indeed never been distinctly avowed except in the church of Rome: but the tendency towards such a feeling must have been inherent in the human heart, or men never could have been brought to acknowledge it. The danger of it is, as I have said inherent in the very nature of a religious *community*. As, in a partnership, the neglect of one man may often be in some degree remedied by the diligence of others; and as, in an army, the soldier who does not himself fight bravely, may sometimes, through the valour of his comrades and the skill of his general, be made partaker of the benefits, and sometimes even of the glory, of a victory; so, men are apt to transfer views thus familiar to them, to the case of members of a *religious* society. And this danger, being, as I have said, one which necessarily besets *every* religious society, can never be escaped except by incessant vigilance. For Christianity is essentially a social religion. We are "every one members one of another;" and the Author of our faith has decreed, that Christians are to further their own salvation, by labouring jointly to forward the salvation of each other. But it is by the personal faith and holiness of *each* individual Christian, that each individual Christian, after all, is to be made, through the intercession of the *one* Mediator and Redeemer, whose Spirit sanctifies his heart, acceptable before God. The pious labours of others can do nothing for any man, unless they lead him to labour in like manner for himself.

Richly endowed indeed is the church of Christ with the *means* of grace—with *privileges* and advantages of inestimable value; but if we fail to *use* these means, and to *avail* ourselves of these privileges, they will but increase our condemnation. The name of Christian—of Reformed, of Protestant Christian—instead of saving, will condemn, as doubly inexcusable, on the great day, when the secrets of men's hearts shall be disclosed, him, who, "naming the name of Christ," has not "departed from iniquity;"—who "heareth his words, and doeth them not;"—whose life and heart are not "reformed"—and who exults over the errors of the Romish church, while he supinely overlooks those evil propensities of our common nature, from which they took their rise. "For he is not a Jew," (nor, by parity of reasoning, a Christian—an orthodox, or an evangelical Christian—a Reformed, or a Protestant Christian,) "who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God"

APPENDIX.

[A.]

THE title of *Catholics* the Romanists claim, and apply to themselves, not merely as *belonging* to them, (and it is not denied that they are a branch, though a corrupt one, of the universal or Catholic church,) but as *distinctive*, and peculiar to the members of the church of Rome. And Protestants have usually, in language, conceded this claim. But I think that in so doing they manifest too exclusively the harmlessness of the dove, and leave the wisdom of the serpent entirely with their opponents. It is urged that these are offended at being called Papists; considering that as a term of reproach, from its being used only by their adversaries. That I may not seem to seek a quarrel, I have generally avoided that name: but let us not be so weak as to imagine that "Romanist," or any other title by which they can be, *properly*, designated, will ever fail, *when it shall have become common*, to be complained of as reproachful; or that they will ever acquiesce in any appellation which does not *imply a reproach to ourselves*. Even the apparently neutral designation of "members of the church of Rome," is one which we must not too confidently expect them to adopt or acquiesce in; nor is it unlikely that they may complain of it as reproachful, should it ever become their customary appellation among Protestants. For it implies that there are *other* churches, properly called churches, besides the church of Rome. *We* indeed are content to be designated as members of the church of England; and we regard them as belonging to a distinct church, over which, though we censure it as corrupt, we claim no supremacy; but they do not take a corresponding view of us: they do not regard us as constituting *any* distinct church, but as actually members, though schismatical and revolted members—subjects, de jure, though rebellious subjects—of *their church*. A name therefore which implies that there *are* other churches distinct from theirs, contradicts one of their fundamental tenets; viz., that they, and they only, are faithful members of the one true church. And this tenet they have embodied in the appellation they have chosen for themselves; which consequently implies, as I have said, a reproach to all other Christians. The title of Catholic, when used as distinctive, implies the exclusion of all others from the character of loyal members of the society which Christ founded—of "the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints," as it is expressed and explained in the Apostle's Creed: it implies, in short, that all others are heretics or schismatics.

This is no uncommon device. There is a sect who call themselves "Baptists," i. e., persons who *baptize;* thus implying that no others are *really* baptized, and that infant baptism is null and void. This is their distinctive tenet; which they are perfectly right in professing, if convinced of its truth: but it is an absurdity for any one who differs from them to give them this title, which palpably begs the question at issue, and condemns himself. The title of Antipædobaptist is to be sure somewhat cumbrous; but awkwardness of expression, or even circumlocution, is preferable to error and absurdity. "The same caution might well be extended to the use of the word *Unitarian*, as the title of a sect; for the term properly expresses a fundamental doctrine which the church holds. *Socinian* appears to me a better appellation. But this too I would avoid, if it gave serious offence; at the same time being careful to make it known that the word *Unitarian* is employed in compliance with a custom, which, however general, and perhaps harmless, I cannot but regard as objectionable."*

That the term Papist is a term of reproach, (though I do not insist on its being employed,) I can never admit. A "term of reproach" is *one which implies something disgraceful in the opinion of the party to whom it is applied.* Thus, heretic (in its ordinary, not perhaps in its etymological, sense) implies the holding of some *erroneous* tenet; it is, consequently, a reproachful term. But Papist implies simply one who *acknowledges the authority of the Pope:* and those to whom it is applied do, openly, acknowledge his authority.

"Considering the tendency of *words*," (says a writer whom I am proud to appeal to) "to influence *opinions*, I hold the right use of this word CATHOLIC to be of essential importance. The controversial writers of the church of Rome never fail to take advantage of the want of caution in this

* Note to Bishop Copleston's Sermon at the reopening of Abergavenny church.

respect observable among Protestants. Of this a strong example is given in a recent publication, which affords a gratifying proof of the strength of our cause, and of the weakness of the Romanists, whenever they are respectively brought to the test of Scripture and of reason. I allude to the correspondence between the clergy of Blackburn and the principal and other members of the Roman Catholic establishment at Stonyhurst. From this interesting publication I cannot do better than extract the following passage in one of Mr. Whittaker's letters to the principal of that institution.

"It was not from a love of contending about words, still less from any reluctance to give every possible satisfaction to the Romish priesthood, that I persisted in refusing the unqualified term 'Catholic' to them and their church. The use which they make of it, when it is conceded to them, cannot be unknown to you. Dr. Milner, in his End of Religious Controversy, (Letter XXV.,) says of our church, 'Every time they address the God of truth, either in solemn worship or in private devotion, they are forced each of them to repeat, *I believe in* THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, and yet, if I ask any of them the question, *are you a* CATHOLIC? he is sure to answer me, *No! I am a* PROTESTANT!!—Was there ever a more glaring instance of inconsistency and self-condemnation among rational beings?' 'But,' says one of the Blackburn secular priests to me, 'where is the man who can or will accuse you of acting inconsistently with your religious principles,' supposing me to concede this appellation to their church and its members exclusively? I refer him for his answer to Dr. Milner, with whom I entirely agree, that a more glaring instance of inconsistency and self-condemnation 'cannot well exist among rational beings,' than that exhibited by Protestants, who confess before God that they believe in his holy Catholic church, and allow themselves to limit the practical use of the term to the church of Rome."—*Correspondence, &c., published at Blackburn*, 1829, p. 14.

"There is nothing I abhor more than religious persecution—nothing I would censure more strongly than a wanton offence given to the feelings of others, on account of a sincere difference in religious opinion. Yet I cannot carry this principle so far as to abstain from calling the members of that church who refuse to join in our reformation of its errors, by some appellation which marks their adherence to its communion, and their submission to its authority. *Papist* appears to me the most correct designation, because the differences in doctrine are often ingeniously softened down and even explained away by the more enlightened Roman Catholics; but I never met with one who did not hold that spiritual submission to the bishop of Rome in some sense or other was indispensable. The word Papist, however, is understood by them as a reproach. Let us then, in Christian charity, forbear to use it. But some phrase, indicative of their connexion with Rome, and of their dependence upon the authority of that see, whether Romish, or Romanist, or Roman Catholic, I hold to be not only allowable, but highly expedient, and even necessary: and heartily do I wish that all Protestants would form themselves to a habit of thus speaking, both in public and private: for then it would never be understood as a personal affront, but as a serious and firm resolution not to compliment away an important point, in which *our* feelings and *our* honour are at least as much concerned as *theirs*."*

"Yes, but" (I have heard it answered) "the term Papist implies more than mere submission to papal supremacy; it implies the adoption of an *erroneous* system and submission to a *usurped* authority." It implies no such thing. That indeed is *my opinion* respecting the Romish system; but the *word* does not denote that. The difference is practically very great and important between a word which itself *expresses error or wrong*, and a word which denotes some *thing* which the speaker *believes* to be erroneous or wrong. One person, for instance, may think a democracy the best form of government, and another may think it the worst; the one will consequently have the most pleasing, the other the most odious, associations with the term democrat; but the word itself is not used by them in two different senses; it expresses simply, an "advocate for democracy;" and it is not, in itself, either a term of honour or of reproach. On the other hand, "patriot" and "traitor" imply, respectively, honour and dishonour in their very signification.

Inattention to this obvious distinction leads to endless confusion of thought and practical perplexity. If every term is to be reckoned reproachful, which is associated in the mind of him who uses it with some odious or contemptible idea, then, the title of *Catholic* will itself be such, when applied by Protestants to designate the church of Rome. *Every* term, in short, will be a term of reproach when used by one who disapproves the opinion, system, or party, implied by it. The Mahometans associate with the title of *Christian* every thing that is hateful or despicable; shall we then complain or be ashamed of being called Christians? "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Mahometan, again, is a title which recalls to the Christian the idea of "disciple of an impostor: but the title itself does not imply Mahomet's being either a false or a true prophet; and *they* accordingly do not regard it as a reproachful title.

But the term Christian *would* be reproachful if applied *by one Mahometan to another;*

* Bishop Copleston's Sermon at Abergavenny, p. 23, 24.

because it expresses something which that other holds in abhorrence. So also the title of Mahometan would be a reproach if applied to a Christian; and Papist, again, for the same reason, is a term of reproach, if applied to one who professes himself a Protestant. An appellation, in short, is or is not reproachful, according to the professed tenets, *not of him who applies it*, but of him *to whom it is applied*. To be called a Papist, (i. e., "one who admits the pope's authority," is a reproach to him who does not, and none to him who does, profess that principle.

But we are told that the term is used by none but the adversaries of the Romanists, and therefore they have a right to complain of it. At this rate they may *make* any title they will a term of reproach, by simply refusing to apply it to themselves. And we may be assured they *will* do so with *every* title which *does not imply a reproach to us*. To call themselves distinctively Catholics, is (as *they* at least are well aware, whatever we may be) to call *us* heretics. Let them be admonished, that when they except against the name of Papists, and assume that of Catholics, declaiming at the same time against the cruelty of using reproachful language—let them be admonished, that the censure applies, not to us, but to themselves.

And let it not be thought that this is a trifling "question of words and names:" it was a wise maxim, laid down and skilfully acted on by some of the leaders of the French revolution, that "names are things." Great is the practical effect in all debate and controversy, of suffering to pass unnoticed and to become established, such terms as beg the question, and virtually imply a decision on one side. I remember to have met with a Romanist (by no means bigotted) of the middle class of society, with whom I had a good deal of discussion of the points wherein we differed. What seemed to dwell most on his mind was, the inconsistency, as he deemed it, of our professing belief in "the holy Catholic church;" when "yours," he said, "is *not* the Catholic church."

[B.]

Different persons will, of course, be chiefly struck by different faults, among those charged on the Romanists. Many, for instance, would place foremost one which I have not noticed under a distinct head, and to which they give the title of "self-righteousness." The word does not perhaps savour of the purest English;* but what they mean is, a confident trust in the *merit* of our own good works, as sufficient to *earn* eternal happiness, and as entitling us to that as a just reward.

The Romish church, however, has not in reality ever set this forth as one of her distinct tenets. If any one will consult, what is of decisive authority in that church, the decrees of the council at Trent, he will perceive, that though they may perhaps have made an injudicious use of the word "merit," the abstract question between them and others (not Antinomians) is chiefly verbal. For they admit, and solemnly declare, that nothing we can do can be acceptable before God except for the sake of Jesus Christ; and that we are unable to perform good works except by his Spirit working in us: so that what is called a Christian's righteousness is, at the same time, the righteousness of Christ, although the Scriptures promise, repeatedly and plainly, that it will, through his goodness, not "lose its reward."

That part of their theory which is the most objectionable on this score is the doctrine, that from the pains of *Purgatory*, Christ has not redeemed us, but we are to be rescued either by penances done in this life, or by masses offered in our behalf after our death.

But I do think, that, in practice, the Romish system tends to foster the error in question; not so much, however, by the use of the words "merit," and "reward," as by the importance attached to the *actual performance* of a vast multitude of specific works, many of them arbitrarily prescribed, such as abstinence from particular meats on particular days, repetition of "Ave Marias" and "Pater-nosters" —pilgrimages — crossings, &c., which have a manifest tendency to absorb the attention in the *act* itself—to draw off the mind from the endeavour after inward purity—and to create the feeling so congenial to our nature, that we have been so far advancing in the performance of something *intrinsically* capable of forwarding our salvation.

It is worth remarking, that the great heathen moralist, who understood more of the character of Christian virtue than many Christians do, dwells strongly on the principle, that while, in the arts, *the thing produced* is what we chiefly look to, in moral action, on the contrary, the frame of mind of the *agent* is the principal point; virtuous *actions* being only the means, though the necessary means, of *making* him, and of *proving* him to be, (what is to be the ultimate object sought after,) an habitually good *man*.* But it is an easier task for man, such as he is by nature, to conform his outward actions to a certain precisely fixed *rule*, and to applaud himself for that conformity, than, by incessant vigilance and

* According to the analogy of the other similar compounds in our language, such as "self-love," "self-condemnation," "self-tormentor," &c. "self-righteousness" should signify, upright dealing in respect to one's self.

* See Arist. Eth. b. ii.

self-examination, to rectify and regulate the inward character.*

It is a great mistake, however, to imagine that Protestants, even those who are the forwardest in condemning this particular kind of spiritual pride, called by them "self-righteousness," are therefore exempt from the danger of spiritual pride altogether. On the contrary, one may find but too plain symptoms of the same disease, even in some who the most abhor and condemn all reliance on the merit of good works. For pride is too natural an inmate of the human heart to be effectually excluded by being merely "at *one* entrance quite shut out." There are some, as I have above remarked,† who substitute an unerring party for an unerring church, or renounce the shackles of papal infallibility, as it were in a spirit of rivalry, that they may become each a pope to himself. And these will commonly be found to have merely changed the form, not the substance, of spiritual pride. One may sometimes hear a man professing himself the chief of sinners—proclaiming his own righteousness to be filthy rags—calling himself a brand plucked from the burning—resting his confidence of salvation wholly on the atonement of his Redeemer, and on the imputation to himself of the righteous works performed by Christ‡—and acknowledging that he has received every thing from God's free and unmerited bounty; and thence fully trusting that he must have completely attained Christian humility; at least as far as he does completely adhere to his profession, that whatever he possesses is due to the free grace of God. On this ground we may conceive the Pharisee in the parable to have congratulated himself on his *humility* as well as his other virtues; since he exclaims, in pious gratitude, God, *I thank thee*, that I am not as other men are!" But the Pharisee, it will be answered, rested on his good works—his scrupulous fasting and paying of tithes. Is there then *no other* conceivable spiritual pride than precisely that of the Pharisee? no other subject of excessive self-confidence and self-congratulation? If there be, it is evident that we cannot, any more than the Pharisee, be exempted from the danger, by merely acknowledging (as he did) that all we have is the gift of God. And in fact, it may too often be found, that a Christian, who renounces the Romish tenets respecting good works, and who abhors the very name of "merit," as applied to himself or to other men, will have renounced boasting, only in words, and will be full of the most overweening confidence in his own gifts and graces. For there is a striking resemblance between the Romanist and the fanatical pietist, in their each craving after, (though from different quarters,) and each in consequence flattering himself as having attained some such *definite and certain assurance*, the one from his church, the other from his feelings, as may finally supersede hesitation and self-distrust—destroy the true nature and value of faith—and deprive the present life of its character as a state of *discipline*. As the one accordingly relies in proud security on his unerring church, so the other will proclaim himself enlightened throughout, as to the whole Gospel scheme, by the Divine Spirit; and so far he is right, that the aid of the Holy Spirit *is* promised us to "help our infirmities," and that without this help sought and granted, the clearest intellectual powers will leave a man bewildered, or ill-satisfied. But he who honestly avails himself of this promise, and is truly "led by the Spirit," will be filled with gratitude indeed for the past, and with cheering hope for the future, but with no arrogant self-confidence, or uncharitable disdain. Without entering into any minute discussion (for which this is not the place*) of the different kinds and degrees of spiritual assistance, it is evident that all such enlightening of the mind either is or is not of such a character as to amount to *inspiration*, and imply infallibility. If in any case a man is convinced that he has *not* any claim to this, he ought, in *some* way or other, to manifest that conviction, and show that he makes allowances for this difference: if he does reckon himself properly inspired, he ought at least not to censure the Romish church for the presumptuous *arrogance* of her claim, but honestly to join issue on the question, whether they or he are *justified* in such a claim: a question which, it appears to me, can only be settled by the performance of sensible miracles.

And I cannot but think the Romanists have the advantage in point of consistency over many modern fanatics, inasmuch as their church does acknowledge the reasonableness of such an appeal, and claim miraculous powers. But one may find in some Protestants, while they pretend to no such powers, and abjure all arrogant assumption, a decided pretension, if not always expressed in words, at least implied in the whole tenor of their language, to inspiration, properly so called. They state their own views of religion with no less oracular dogmatism than the Romanists;—they bestow no less unhesitating and unsparing censure on all who do not coincide in these views, or who do not, to the minutest tittle, conform to their phraseology in expressing them;—and they look down with the same pharisaical and self-sufficient contempt on every one who does not adopt the notions which they (as they often express themselves) have been taught by the Spirit of God. And if any one remains unconvinced by their arguments, or by their assertions instead of argument, or if he meet these with such objections as they are at a loss to answer, they

* See Essays V. and VIII. Second Series.

† Chap. IV. ‡ See Essay VI. Second Series.

* See Essay IX. Second Series.

will in general boldly and promptly resort to the cheap expedient of pronouncing him incapable of comprehending the subject, from being in an unregenerate state: for "the natural man receiveth not the things that are of God; and such, they conclude at once, must be the condition of any one who disallows, or, still more, who refutes, their opinions, which they are sure are the "things of God." Any, the slightest, departure from the standard of their (as it might be called, in analogy to their own phraseology) "self-infallibility," is regarded by them as a decisive proof of entire spiritual blindness.

But still, inasmuch as they abhor "self-righteousness," claiming no merit whatsoever for their own good works, and pretending *only* to the character of the peculiarly favoured and inspired people of God, they flatter themselves that they are quite safe from spiritual pride; and thus they complete their presumptuous confidence, by adding to the list of their other perfections, the perfect attainment of genuine Christian humility. Being utter strangers to self-distrust and humble vigilance, they feel, for this very reason, the more secure against any deficiency of these; and the very completeness of their spiritual pride makes them the more completely confident of being wholly free from it.

If such be, as I fear it is, but too true a picture of the language and tone of feeling which may not unfrequently be met with, even among those who not only condemn the arrogance of the Romish plea of merit, but are sedulous in warning Protestants against the like sin, this furnishes a strong, and afflicting, and awful instance of a delusion by which our spiritual enemy can obtrude upon us some vice, dressed up in the very garb of the opposite virtue, even at the very time when we are occupied in the most vehement reprobation of it: while we are, in one point, scrupulous to "strain off the gnat," and in another, ready to "swallow the camel."

Never will the sin of spiritual pride more easily beset us, than under the guise of a self abhorring humility. And never will the preacher be more successful in making (apparent) converts, than when he is unconsciously flattering the evil propensities of man's corrupt nature, while he appears to repress them. "It is sometimes considered as a proof of the advantage to be obtained from the habit which I am here presuming to discourage, that such preaching generally proves attractive to the lower classes. This, however, may be accounted for, without furnishing any justification of the practice. For, first, the lower classes, unless they are truly religious, usually *are* gross sinners, and, therefore, are neither surprised nor shocked at being supposed so themselves, and at the same time feel a sort of pleasure which need not be encouraged, when they hear their superiors brought down to the same level: and, secondly, it seems to furnish them with a sort of excuse for their sins, to find that they are so universal, and so much to be expected of human nature."* Nothing indeed is more likely to be popular, and less likely to be profitable, than to act the part of the Stoic philosopher to Damasippus; (Hor. Sat. iii. b. 2;) who assured him that he need not feel any shame at his own follies, at least as compared with those of other men,† since all except the true wise-men‡ were equally foolish and insane,‖ though in various ways; and that he had only to enrol himself in this privileged and enlightened philosophical sect, adopt the maxims of his new school,§ and immediately look down with disdain on those he had been accustomed to look up to with a mixture of reverence, envy, despair, and dislike.¶

The whole of this admirable satire is well worth a re perusal, with a view to the present subject, for the sake of the light it throws on the substantial identity, under the most different forms and names, of human nature in all ages and countries.

It ever must have been, and ever will be, a far more irksome task to human nature, to drink, drop by drop, the medicine, so bitter to the "natural man," of self-abasement, than to get rid of the potion in a single draught;—to weed out, one by one, deep-rooted habits, and gradually to retrace his steps by daily perseverance, than to leap at once to a secure eminence, from which he may look back, in the exultation of superiority, on those whose greater forwardness in the Christian course he had been used to regard with almost hopeless mortification.

Well therefore may we expect, that those who are not sedulously on their guard, will be often seduced by a temptation which addresses itself at once to the impatient indolence, to the jealousy, and to the pride, of the human heart.

To the topics I have touched on in the course of this work, I might have added, besides many others, some allusion to the re-introduction among some Protestants of *auricular confession*, though so far modified as

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* Sumner, Apostolical Preaching, p. 133.

† . . . . . hoc te
Credo modo insanum; nihilo ut sapientior ille
Qui te deridit. Sat. iii. b. ii. l. 51.

‡ . Hæc populos, hæc magnos formula reges,
Excepto sapiente, tenet. l. 45.

‖ It should be remembered, that the *equality of all faults* was a favourite doctrine of the Stoics.

§ . . . unde ego mira
Descripsi docilis præcepta hæc, tempore quo me
Solatus jussit sapientem pascere barbam,
Atque a Fabricio non tristem ponte reverti. l. 34.

¶ . . . . . amico
Arma dedit, posthac ne compellarer inultus. l. 297

not to be made to a *priest;* by which alteration I conceive both the *good*, in some instances, and the *evil*, in many more of the Romish practice, is diminished. That good as well as evil—beneficial as well as pernicious effects—have been produced by auricular confession, I have not a doubt. And this perhaps has had its share in the wide diffusion, long continuance, and partial restoration of the practice. But the chief cause is, I am convinced, (as in the case of the other Romish practices,) that there is a natural craving in mankind for this unburdening of the conscience, by confession to a fellow-creature. The Romish system has taken advantage of this, by misinterpreting the scriptural recommendation, to "confess our sins one to another," as a *requisition* of a *regular* and *complete* periodical confession, making a portion of Christian discipline. And the practice so established, whether with Romanists or Protestants, I am convinced does evil ten times oftener, and of ten thousand times greater magnitude, than good: nor can I but regard it as, practically, one of the very worst parts of Romanism. Indeed, my chief reason for not dwelling on it further is, that I *could not*, with propriety, exhibit it in its true colours, or describe what I not only believe, but I may say, know,* respecting its effects.

Enough however has been said on several points, and perhaps more than enough, for minds disposed to follow up a principle in its several applications, to show the necessity of unceasing vigilance, and, not indeed of often repeated thorough *reformations*, (which are always attended with more or less evil,) but, of such perpetual revision, renovation, purification, and progressive *improvement*, in every system, as shall supersede the necessity of great changes; such constant attention to keep every thing, as it were, in good *repair*, that there shall be no need of totally pulling down and rebuilding.

* See Dedication.

But there is an error common to many of those who in other respects vary infinitely in their views; to many, both of the adherents of the unreformed Romish church, with its long accumulated load of abuses; and of those who are fully satisfied with the system of some reformed church; and again of those who advocate further reform, from the most extravagant to the most moderate. The error, I mean, of conceiving a system, whether actually existing, or ideal, so framed, as to *keep itself in good order;*—one that either is, or may be, so wisely constituted as to remain perfect, or as near as is possible to perfection, without any call for incessantly watchful care on our part. This error, I say, is common to men of the most opposite views. Some attribute this character to the church of Rome, as founded by the apostles; or to some Protestant church, as reformed by Luther or Calvin; resigning themselves to tranquil security against all but external dangers, and apprehending none but sudden and violent innovations; forgetful of the wise remark of Bacon, that "Time is the greatest innovator; though his changes creep in so quietly as to escape notice."* Others, on the contrary, see numberless defects, real or imaginary, in these churches, and wish for a total, or for a partial change: still flattering themselves, like their opponents, that a system once established on their principles will continue, without further care or vigilance, to answer all its purposes for ever;—in short, that the machine will go right, if undisturbed, without ever needing to be regulated, or to be wound up. Never let it be forgotten, then, that we are beset by the same truly chimerical hope, in human affairs, which has misled so many speculators in mechanics; the vain expectation of attaining the PERPETUAL MOTION.

* "Novator maximus, Tempus . . . . quod novationes ita insinuat ut sensus fallant."

THE END.

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