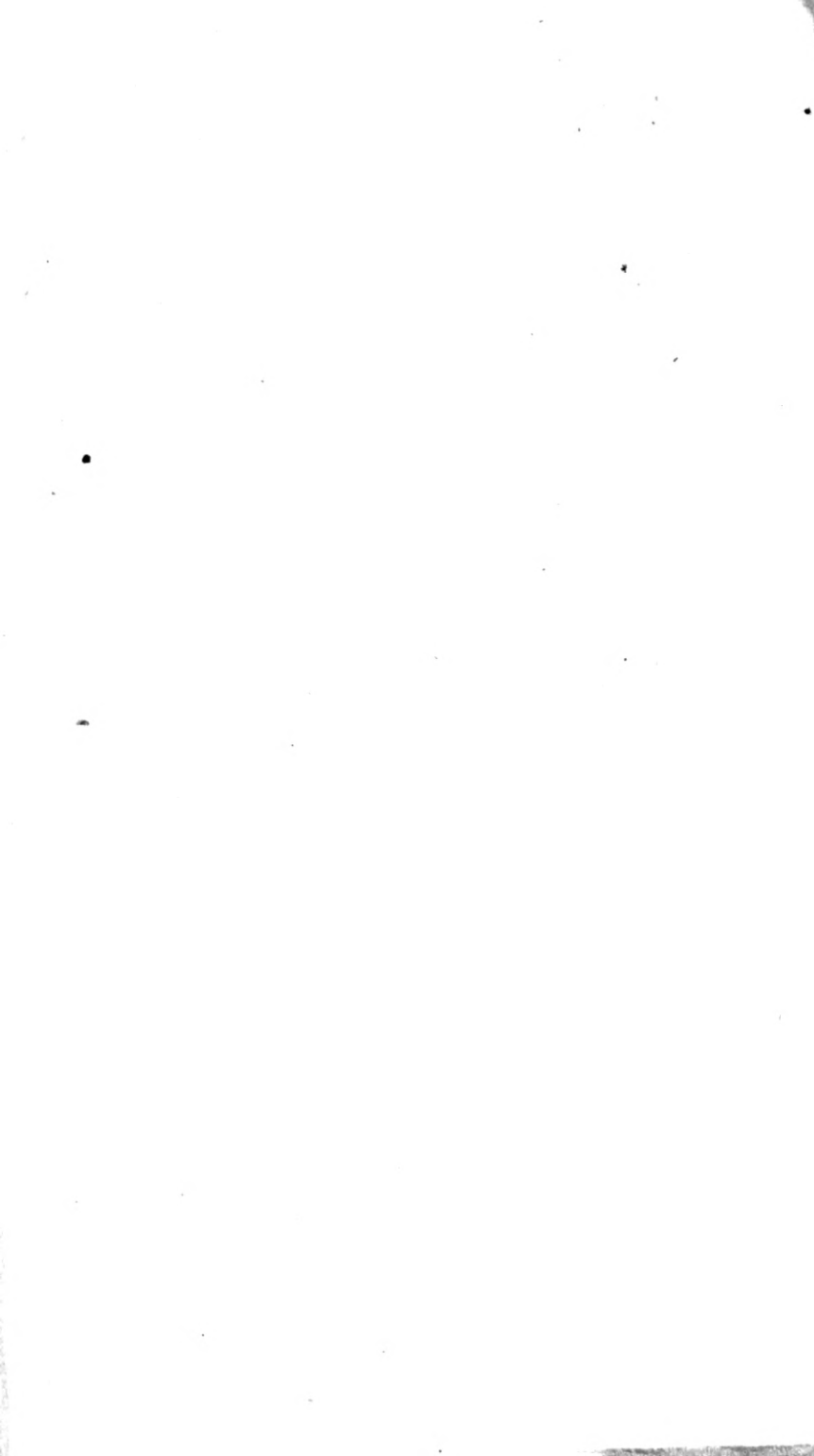




LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS





CHURCH MATTERS IN 1850.

II. A CALL TO SPEAK OUT.

THE thing which we greatly feared has come upon us. A Court, not of the Church, but of the State, has licensed the denial of Sacramental Grace; the Archbishops and some of the Bishops have sanctioned the decision; and the English Prelacy in general, being earnestly called on to disavow it, at least by re-affirming the truth, has declined to do so. The House of Lords, with no small tokens of scorn, has refused even to take into consideration the Bishops' Bill for amendment of the anomalous Court, substantially on the very ground that it might prove a security against like disturbance of the Church's doctrine in future. And (that which, more than anything else, would seem to bring matters to a point) the Primate has signified his willingness to institute the Clerk condemned by his own Court for denial of Sacramental Grace; thereby setting

his official seal both to the Court's authority and to the venial nature of the false doctrine, and committing the Church by law established to both, *so far as he can commit it by any single ministerial act of his own*: a sad thought for those who are compelled to regard the Court as a profane though unconscious usurpation of sacred functions, and the doctrine as not only false but heretical. And this last grievous judgment will fall on us, in all probability, in the course of a very few weeks.

The first and most pressing question raised by this state of things is, of course, Whether and how far the faithful Clergy and Laity are called upon to break or suspend communion with a Bishop so far implicated in heresy? Many will ignore this at once—"What have we in Cumberland, or Ireland, or the Colonies, to do with the matter? it is too far off from us." But no one will do so, who really lays to heart, either the true doctrine of Church Membership, or (if he be a Priest) the force of his ordination vows. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;" much more such a principal member as the chief Metropolitan in our communion. And again, as Priests, we are not free to "pass by on

the other side," seeing we are sworn to "banish and drive away all erroneous doctrines contrary to God's word." It is better, on every account, to think the whole matter fairly over, and settle it, if one may, with one's own conscience, once for all.

The duty of breaking communion, when it exists, rests, in some cases, on purely moral grounds; in some, also, on grounds which may be called sacramental. The first, set forth in such passages as Rom. xvi. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 5; 2 John, 10. Now this is what moralists call a "duty of imperfect obligation:" *i. e.* though it is always binding as a principle, the manner and degree of its action must be modified by each man's circumstances; it is like the duty of avoiding bad company in general. It is not this with which our present argument is concerned.

The other, the sacramental aspect of the case, is brought before the contemplation of Christians by our Lord's sentence on those who neglect to hear the Church, as illustrated by the case of the incestuous Corinthian; and by the injunction to Titus to reject a heretic after the first and second admonition. The Church has always understood this part of

her discipline to imply, that persons knowingly communicating with those who are under her formal censures for heresy, contract the heretical taint themselves. And this it is which we naturally begin to apprehend, in our present unhappy circumstances: especially since we find in Church history that it was no unusual thing, in former days, for the orthodox of a town or diocese at once to suspend communion with a Bishop or other Teacher, when they were satisfied, on sufficient moral evidence, that he was really committed to any grave heresy.

Now it may appear at first sight, as if Mr. Gorham were under the formal censure of the Church, seeing that the Archbishop's Court has declared him unfit to be instituted by reason of false doctrine. But, first, the Court, most wrongfully as we believe, yet effectually in point of form, will have revoked its own sentence, if it issue a mandate for institution; therefore it cannot be strictly said that he is under the formal censure of the Church: and as a general rule, no person not under such censure communicates the taint of heresy to those continuing in fellowship with him. In the next place, though the doctrine virtually

sentenced by the Court of Arches, and acquitted by the Judicial Committee, is undoubted heresy by ancient Church Law, and we are ready to prove it such before a lawful Synod, yet it was not in the sentence condemned *as* heresy, cutting off from the Church, but only as false doctrine, causing unfitness for institution. For these two reasons I should say, that no man can as yet contract the stain of heresy, in a formal, ritual, or sacramental sense, by communicating with those whom the present question relates to: although of the *moral* guilt and scandal, possibly incurred by such communion, any one of us, according to his opportunities of knowing better, and other responsibilities, may be partaker to an indefinite degree. But of this each person must be left to judge for himself. The rule of charity in such matters verges sometimes nearer upon severity, sometimes upon leniency. As far as formal and legal proceedings go, it was a Canon in the very severest times, "Not to punish any as a Heretic, except he be adjudged such by the Bishop or some Ecclesiastical Authority."*

* In a Council at Toulouse, A.D. 1129. Hard. vi. part 2, p. 1150, E.

As to voluntary suspension or indulgence of Communion, we have instances of the former in the case of the clergy and people of Constantinople, when they withdrew themselves from Nestorius on his first broaching his heresy; and in the Monks of Nazianzum, rejecting the elder Gregory on his signing the confession of Ariminum: of the latter, in St. Athanasius and St. Basil, dealing with Semi-Arians as with certain brethren, though they scrupled owning the Son to be "of One Substance" with the Father: St. Chrysostom too, in the time of the Meletian schism at Antioch, preached most earnestly against individuals taking on themselves to anathematize false teachers. Moreover, it is evident that in the proceedings above referred to, both at Constantinople and at Nazianzum, the denial of Communion was *personal* to Nestorius and Gregory respectively: it did not involve all who communicated with them. Not in the former case; for St. Cyril and all the orthodox Bishops at Ephesus treated those in communion with Nestorius, until he was condemned, as part of their own number. Not in the latter; for the younger and more renowned Gregory, as continuing apparently in

communion with each, became after some years the instrument of reconciliation between his father and his flock. And the controversy in each of these cases touched more or less directly the very foundation of the Faith.

I conclude, therefore, that in spite of certain appearances, we need not fear being as yet *formally* committed to the heresy which causes our alarm, either as individuals or as a Church, by continuing in communion with Prelates or others who favour it; but that there is very great danger of our being *morally* committed to it.

If we at all connive at it, we sin ourselves: as far as in us lies, we cause the Church of England to sin; we draw down God's judgments upon her; and we prepare the way for her to become, in no very long time, formally heretical, *i. e.* to cease from being a Church altogether. There is need, then, of anxious deliberation and of prompt action: but there is no need of hurry or excitement. Let no man's heart fail, as if perchance he were already out of the Church, but let each man pray in his heart, and calmly consider what he ought to do, in order that he and his children may continue in it.

Upon such sober consideration, I think we shall all of us come more and more to perceive, that this present grievance ought no longer to be taken by itself; that the time is passed for remedying it (if even it could have been remedied) by simple re-affirmation, however authoritative, of the portion of Christian doctrine to which it does violence: rather it must be taken as the "*comble de malheur*," the drop which was to make the waters of bitterness overflow. Combining it with all its circumstances, we may and ought to regard it as a providential call to examine at large the present relations of the Church to the State in England, and see whether it be possible for us to acquiesce in them any longer without very grievous sin.

With a heavy heart I will state my reasons for thinking so.

Redress in such a wrong as we have suffered, and security against its recurrence, can only be had (humanly speaking) by one of two processes: either the governing power in the State must allow the objectionable decision to be reviewed by proper authority, and the usurpation to be abated for the future; or the governing power in the Church must at all

hazards demur to the State's interference, and disregard its enactments. But what chance is there of right being done by the State, seeing that in the House of Lords, the most favourable tribunal (as we may assume it to be) for such a purpose, nearly two-thirds have declined even taking into consideration the allowed anomalies in the constitution of the Court of Appeal, *expressly because it might lead to a revision of the sentence?* What chance of relief from the other quarter alluded to, since it is understood that the Bishops of England have separated, after four meetings, with the avowed determination to make no declaration of doctrine; to ignore men's scruples, and let matters take their course? And some even of those who have spoken most strongly against the false doctrine, have acknowledged "legal respect" to be "due to the judgment recently delivered:" which can hardly mean less, than that they are not prepared to contravene it, in the only effectual way, by refusing institution.

I advert to these things, it will be observed, merely as to matters of fact—not to draw down blame upon those to whom I refer, but simply to help myself and others in judging

how far we may reasonably hope for their aid, in regard of this especial grievance. Many more particulars might be added, but these appear to me so significant, that I will go on at once to the next question: What is to be done, failing both the Parliament and the Episcopate? And this I should answer by another question: What has been the course of constitutional Reformers in this country, when their (seemingly) just demands have been doggedly refused by the Government of the time? What has been their course, and how has it answered? On some grievance of detail, some point of jurisprudence or finance, or some case which, like the present, appeared to touch "religious liberty," they found a lack of justice in the existing Courts or Parliaments; and this set them on examining the whole theory and system of those institutions, and if they had, or seemed to have, a good moral case, a fair appeal to the equity and good sense of their countrymen, and were able to point out what it was in the framework of the bodies then trusted with authority which baffled all their just pleas; they have in general, sooner or later, carried the mind of their country with them, not only for redress of the

special wrong, but (if need were) for the general re-modelling of the institution which seemed committed to the wrong. I propose that English Churchmen, who feel aggrieved by the late proceedings, should adopt a course analogous to this.

The object, apparently, of those who bear sway in these matters, is either to force us into a nonjuring movement, or to make us acquiesce in what has been done, as a less evil than leaving our folds to the wolf, and separating ourselves from our erring but not heretical brethren. Our Prime Ministers and our Chief Justices, with their Acts of Parliament, are dealing with us and our parishes as a tyrant might, who should get a man's wife and children into his power, and say, "Come into my terms, or I butcher them." I dare say they mean nothing of the kind, but this is what their proceedings really come to. One may hope, however, that there is yet an alternative remaining. It is possible, that when the whole case of the Church, not in regard of this doctrine, nor of this tribunal, only, but in all its relations to the State and Law of England, is fairly and fully set before the people of England, we shall carry them with us, in our demand of

redress; especially since one material clause of any such demand would be, that the Church's prerogatives (so called), as well as her restraints, should be considered with a view to re-adjustment, as the real necessities of her people may require. Fairness and reverence cannot be *quite* extinguished in our country; the plain tale we have to tell *must* win a certain degree of attention.

We shall not, of course, be simple enough to begin with anything so obsolete as Magna Charta and the Coronation Oath; how that by the one it is acknowledged as the first principle of our Law, that "the Church of England shall have all her rights and privileges without diminution or disturbance;" and by the other, all our Sovereigns successively pledge themselves "to maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel." We know better, in our time, than to advance such topics as these, either in or out of Parliament. But what we *do* think hard and complain of is this: that the age makes an exception in our disfavour to the received principles of English Toleration. We are the one religious body in the Queen's dominions, to which the following privileges are expressly denied:—To

declare our own Doctrines; to confirm, vary, and repeal our own Canons; to have a voice in the nomination of our own chief Pastors; to grant or withhold our own Sacraments, according to our own proper rule as a religious body.

Our case is, in short, — 1. That we are denied these four privileges, which all other religionists have: 2. That there is no sufficient reason in the fact of our Church being “Established” (whatever the word Establishment means) to justify such denial: but, 3. That if it should appear, on further consideration, that “Establishment” is, in our case, incompatible with these liberties, we earnestly implore that measures may be speedily taken for relieving us of such painful support: and *that* for this obvious reason; that we had rather be a Church in Earnest separate from the State, than a Counterfeit Church in professed Union with the State. This is our case, in brief. The several portions of it will require separate and detailed consideration.

To confine myself at present to that which is most immediately distressing: we say, that our being a religious body implies our settling and declaring our own Doctrines by some au-

thority within ourselves. For how can another man settle and declare what I believe? The very notion is monstrous and self-contradictory. And if one individual cannot do this for another, how can it be done for the Church by a body which is not of the Church?

Two replies will be made to this: 1. That the present Court of Appeal does not claim to decide on doctrine; 2. That it is not alien to the Church.

Now it is all very well to say that our doctrines remain as they were; that the "Judgment" was merely the application of legal skill to the interpretation of certain documents. But some of those who are most forward in that argument seem hardly to be in earnest. For thus it is with them—thus it was (*e. g.*) with Lord Lansdowne in the debate on the Bishops' Bill. When he spoke of the power now assigned to the Judicial Committee, he said it was merely to decide facts, not to settle questions of doctrine. But when he spoke of the same power as proposed to be transferred to the Bishops, then it would be "letting loose all the winds of doctrine." Both statements, obviously, cannot stand.

But, not to waste time upon the subtleties

of advocates, let us see what will be the issue in practice; what the effect must be upon parochial teaching. And I know not how to exhibit this so effectually as by inserting here the substance of a correspondence relating to a Parochial Petition on the subject.

The Petition was as follows, addressed to the Bishop of the Diocese :—

“ Right Reverend Father in God,

“ We, your dutiful children in Christ, Communicants worshipping in the Church of ——, most humbly implore your fatherly aid in a serious matter of religion and conscience.

“ We have been informed, and believe, that in a certain cause relating to the Doctrine of Holy Baptism, lately tried within this realm, it has been finally decreed to be lawful for a Clergyman to teach, that not all Infants admitted to Holy Baptism receive therein remission of sins by spiritual Regeneration, but only some favoured ones, on whom an act of special grace has previously passed.

“ We beg leave to represent to your Lordship, that it altogether confounds and amazes us to hear that there is any doubt in the matter; we having been always taught and accustomed to receive the solemn words of the Prayer-book in their plain and natural sense.

“ And as, being so instructed by the Church, we

have come away from the Burial Service in more or less Hope, that our departed brethren rest in peace; so, in obedience to the same instruction, we have returned from the Baptismal Service in undoubting and earnest Faith, that our little ones are in a state of salvation by the grace given them in that Holy Sacrament.

“We have not doubted, but earnestly believed, that, inasmuch as they have now received the one Baptism for the remission of sins, the sin in which they were born is for Christ’s sake remitted unto them; so that, being now made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven, they are free to believe and do, by God’s grace, all that is needful for their continuance in that state of salvation.

“All this we have been used to believe, and do believe; and, God enabling us, we will live and die in that faith, and will do what we can to secure the same to our children. In which purpose, as we hope for your Lordship’s approval and blessing, so we earnestly implore you to aid us, by such means as the Chief Shepherd shall put into your heart, for removing any doubt which may have arisen on this point, namely,—

“Whether or no the Church holds it needful to be believed, that, by the Blood and Merits of our Saviour Christ, Original Sin is remitted to all Infants in Holy Baptism?”

“We humbly ask your Lordship’s blessing, and

also your forgiveness, if we have erred in this our Petition, or in anything contained therein: being always,

“ Right Reverend Father in God,
 “ Your Lordship’s very dutiful children and
 “ servants in Christ,
 _____”

It was accompanied by a letter, of which the following are extracts:—

“ I should not be doing justice to my flock, were I not to add that I am convinced, by actual inquiry and conversation, that they have not been putting their names down for form’s sake, nor to please their betters, but with intelligence and hearty goodwill. My Lord, may I venture, in their name and in my own (that I add not Another, the most sacred of all names), very seriously to implore your Lordship to take their case into consideration, and in some way to give them, for themselves and their children, that security which they so earnestly desire, and which none but their Bishop can give them, against being hereafter taught by authority that the foundation of their Faith and Hope, their ingrafting into Christ by His Holy Baptism, is an uncertainty, and their sins, peradventure, only as the sins of the heathen, requiring no such very deep or special repentance. . . . You may judge how anxiously we wait, both they and I, for something to reassure our minds, and to satisfy us that, whatever the State may

decree, the Bishops of the Church of England will not suffer our Faith in so great a doctrine to be disturbed. I can truly avouch to your Lordship, that the plain, simple, devout spirits, those who have been most tried by suffering, and who seem most to long after goodness—those of my flock who have never heard before of controversy—are not the least deeply impressed with the importance of this matter. How, then, can it be thought to be a matter of subtle disputation, or of mere temporary excitement? Nay, my Lord, it is a matter of life and death The amount of distress and perplexity, I fear of unbelief also, is daily increasing: our adversaries on both sides rejoice, and all the while (as I verily believe) we are nearly all of one mind as against the extreme doctrine which has been advanced and sanctioned. If all who repudiate that error would but join us in saying so, and in strengthening the hands of your Lordship and the rest of our Fathers, the Church's doctrine would soon be vindicated, so far as it may have been impugned, and we should be relieved from the open scorn and shame, before all Christendom, of having to obey such a Court as now overrules our Church Courts, even in questions of the Faith; for surely no Government could resist the united application of both the great sections of the Church. Thus Truth and Peace might both, through God's mercy, be cared for. But I see no other way.*

* Among the many sorrows and disappointments of the time, not the least is the way in which those who are called

What I anticipate, if this may not be, I will not trouble your Lordship with detailing. You know as well as I do the ways in which earnest minds are likely to be affected, when the Faith appears to them to be touched, and those to whom they look for its assertion take no notice I do not love anticipating difficulties. I am sure (please God) the Church of England will never deny the Faith; nor can it ever become a man's duty to leave that Church. But, my Lord, in saying this I mean the Old Church of England, such as I was baptized and bred in,—not such as the established body will become, if it really, by speech or by silence, accept the doctrine set forth in this judgment. In such case the Church of England will be to me the protesting minority, not the society recognised, if any be still recognised, by the State. I do not say that such a sad consummation could take place in a short time, though a short time might make it, humanly speaking, inevitable. But our dutiful feelings of every kind would make us slow to acknowledge it. But what I meant to convey to your Lordship is the undoubting conviction of myself and many others, that if this sad disturbance of doctrine continue, sooner or later we shall be visited either with a very

moderate Low Churchmen have hitherto seemed to receive every proposal of this kind: I mean the proposal that we should unite in a sort of *Formula Concordiæ*, affirming Regeneration in Baptism, but guarding against disparagement of the further grace of Conversion where needed.

distressing separation from the Establishment (besides very many fallings away on both sides) or with an effort, hardly to be resisted, for an entirely new arrangement of the Church's relations with the State. There are many grievances besides this, which I need not detail to your Lordship, the least of which might well warrant a certain degree of boldness in seeking a remedy; and I cannot believe that our countrymen will refuse their sympathy when the case is fairly brought before them. But it will be a fearful step, and I will hope that it may never become our duty to try it."

The Petition and Letter were shown to a person, who, looking at them with all kindness, was yet unable to sympathise with the alarm of the Petitioners; alleging, what has been so often stated, that the Doctrine of the Church does in fact remain unaffected by the decision.

To his remarks it was replied, in substance, as follows:—

“ I observe, that neither in your letter, nor in any other of the statements similar to it which I have met with in various quarters, of more or less authority, is it affirmed that we have mistaken the real state of the case at present. At this moment, as I suppose, it is fully open to myself, for instance, to alter, if I saw fit, the whole course of my teaching on

Holy Baptism, and tell the people that it is quite uncertain whether or no their infants have any spiritual benefit thereby, and whether their own sins are not as the sins of the heathen, committed against no special grace. The same course is equally free to any curate or schoolmaster teaching in our parish. We could none of us be checked in so doing by any ecclesiastical authority. Am I wrong in imagining this to be the real state of the case at present? I shall be too happy to be told that I am.

“ But if I am not wrong, this is our people’s grievance. It would be a great inconvenience, a sore grievance, to be open to two contradictory ways of teaching on *any* serious practical point of religion. But when the point so left open is of the very substance of the Faith, the grievance, to those who hold the Faith, is, in the strict sense of the word, *intolerable*. We cannot and we must not be easy, until by God’s mercy we have obtained deliverance from it.

“ If it be as you state, that the Judicial Committee have left the doctrine of the Church what they found it, and if that doctrine concerning Baptism be at present liable to such contradictory expositions as I have above indicated, all we can say is, that we have hitherto lived and been at peace in a mistaken view of that doctrine; but that now it has been explained to us, we can no longer be at peace. Hitherto we thought ourselves protected by the law of our English Church against denial of Sacramental Grace, as

against denial of the Trinity, or Incarnation, or any other vital doctrine of the Gospel. If this judgment stands, we are not so protected. Whether we were right or wrong before, the loss to our feelings is just the same. We cannot be as we were until this great article is (as I should say) re-affirmed, or (as you would say) affirmed, by competent authority. Such is, of course, the feeling of all those who hold the doctrine, and hold it as fundamental; as every one must, I conceive, who in reality holds it at all.

“ But even more earnestly than for them, would I wish to plead for the thousands and tens of thousands who know nothing of it, or know it only to scorn it—who are going on lightly in grievous sin, because, not being aware of the high and supernatural state to which they have been called, they have not a conception how grievous their sins are. Sadly do I feel that the doctrine which has now been sanctioned is the very doctrine by which, according to all my parochial and other experience, the Evil One has his own way with our lost sheep. As he said to Eve by the tree of knowledge, ‘Ye shall not surely die,’ so he says to us beside the tree of life, ‘Ye have not surely lived again;’ and the practical conclusion is the same: ‘You need not be so much afraid of this or that dangerous liberty.’

“ This is the reason, and not simply for our love of antiquity, nor in order to complete a theological system, why we cling so earnestly to the literal meaning of what we have been taught concerning

Holy Baptism, and why it so breaks our hearts to see the contrary allowed and prevailing. Our own consciences inform us but too clearly, how ruinous it is for a careless Christian to be told, that, in respect of profaning special grace, his sins are but as the sins of the heathen; which thing, when it came into the mind of the Jews, they were told that it could not be at all;* and if not with them, much less, surely, with us.

“ If then one could persuade one’s self that the late decision (supposing it a decision of the Church) had not altered our Anglican doctrine, it would be no comfort, but only the additional sorrow, that our Church had for so many years given up a fundamental truth, most necessary as a safeguard of souls. But I hope and trust that the assumption is erroneous. I cannot think that such entire denial of all real Sacramental Grace, as I find in the writings of Mr. Gorham and Mr. Goode, was ever tolerated by our Church as a Church. I think there is a clear and broad distinction to be drawn between their teaching and that of the school which has been usually called Calvinistic—that of Whitgift, for example, and of Ussher; and the distinction is this: that our Calvinists, whether logically or no, acknowledged Baptism to be the ordinary channel of Regeneration; whereas the school of Zuinglius, to which belong the two living writers whom I have named, will not allow it to be the channel of any

* Ezekiel, xx. 32.

grace, but merely the 'formal making over,'—the outward sign and evidence, that when the condition is accomplished, then such and such a mercy will be given: just as the sign of the cross on the forehead, or the sight of a cross on a church-gable, is an edifying and comfortable sign to those who believe what it reminds them of. This is what we apprehend, and would guard against the teaching people to believe,—that they are unregenerate, in the sense of their not being so united to Christ, as to be transferred into a state really supernatural, in which, as their blessings and privileges are immeasurably greater, so their sins are immeasurably worse, than in their natural condition. The old Calvinists, as a school within the Church, never, that I know of, denied this. Their feeling was with the Reformer Bradford, that 'we ought to believe of ourselves that we are regenerate by our Baptism, the Sacrament thereof requiring no less faith.*' The difficulty about Perseverance might cause them at times to use sayings seemingly inconsistent with this, as sometimes did also the Schoolmen, perhaps even St. Augustine himself. But *as a school*, I have no doubt that they held, or meant to hold, Baptismal Regeneration, even as St. Augustine did. But this modern school denies it on a totally different ground—a ground common to them with Socinians: That inward grace can in no real sense be conferred by outward signs, nor made dependent on man's

* As quoted in the "Christian Remembrancer," No. 67, p. 44.

ministerial acts. Now, the denial of the remission of sin to a baptized infant is an extreme, and, I believe, an almost unprecedented, assertion of this modern doctrine. Therefore it may be condemned without inclusively condemning the Elizabethan school of Calvinistical divines; and also, confessedly, without touching the great majority of those who may be supposed to represent that school at present. They whom such condemnation would really touch are, for the most part, of a different cast, such as Hoadly and others of the eighteenth century.

“ All this, I suppose, would be part of our case, were we allowed to bring this matter to a really theological issue; besides all the proofs from Scripture and antiquity, which the Judicial Committee felt obliged simply to ignore: (although, by deciding as they did on the meaning of the Elizabethan divines, they in effect settled a much more intricate question than the wider view would have brought before them).

“ Now as the simple ones in our flock cannot rest while their portion in Christ is made doubtful, so neither can those rest who have sworn to drive away erroneous and strange doctrines, while the whole Article of Sacramental Grace is, in their apprehension, surrendered without a single reference to Scripture, as interpreted by the whole Church, and the Church of England in imminent danger of *material* (I do not yet say *formal* and *deliberate*) heresy.

“These our convictions are too deep and too sacred to be given up in deference even to such authority as now calls on us to part with them. We, in effect, are constrained to appeal from our immediate superiors to a free and lawful synod; and until we can obtain such a synod, we must consider ourselves as going on under appeal, and in every dutiful and charitable way must bring it before those who can help us.

“I need not say to you how painful and mournful I feel this state of things to be. I feel that one is placed, for an indefinite while to come—very likely for the remainder of one’s short life—in a state of great danger and temptation,—in danger of real or seeming undutifulness and strife. May I ask your forgiveness and kind interpretation beforehand, that if I should seem to go beyond what is right, you would believe that I do it in ignorance?”

These extracts appear to me to bring out, in a manner which cannot easily be explained away, the true doctrinal force of the late decision, as amounting at least to this: that whereas hitherto the deniers of Sacramental Grace, few or many, moderate or violent, have been generally understood to go on in our Church *by sufferance*, henceforth they will go on under the known warrant and sanction of the Law; as if you had inadvertently allowed

some mischievous neighbour to pass to and fro through your garden, and found, to your disgust, that he had established a right of way. It would be small comfort, in such a case, to tell you that the Law remained as it was.

Or we may suppose an analogous case: that persons taking liberties on the other side had been not only holding but teaching Transubstantiation, and that by some accident the Judicial Committee had decided this to be lawful; could any one maintain that, if admitted, it left our system of doctrine on the Sacraments unaffected?

It is too plain. A judicial sentence contrary to a prevailing construction, though its force be short of legislation, cannot be denied to be a practical change in the Law; and if the Law involved an Article of Faith, the change, to the believer, must be an intolerable grievance: a religious grievance in any case, but a political grievance also, if, as in the present instance, the decision be made by an authority alien to the religious body whose faith is in question.

That the deciding Court is in effect alien to the Church, cannot fairly be doubted by those

who will consider, not merely the possible accident of its consisting of Dissenters and enemies to the Church, but also the fact that it is by no means a creature of the Royal Supremacy, but rather of Parliament restraining that Supremacy; and of what sort of Parliament? We may take its character from a writer who clearly knows a great deal about it, and wishes to make the best of it:—"Every year, almost every day that passes, more distinctly develops and embodies a sentiment that does and will resolutely, and on each occasion that may offer, refuse to the members of the Church and her ministers, except upon the condition of disobedience to her laws, the commonest and most vital privileges of religious freedom, under the plea of her civil establishment."* Now it is no use talking unrealities, especially when they deceive nobody: we all know that in these days the Supremacy of the Crown, together with its other great functions, is virtually put into commission, to be exercised by those whom the permanent majority of the House of Commons shall think fit to trust with it; and the sentence just quoted will enable us to judge, whether a Court appointed under such

* "Quarterly Review," No. CLXXI. p. 63.

control, without the slightest check from any ecclesiastical authority, deserves to be called an Alien Court or no.

And here—I will just mark it by the way—is the broad distinction between what is now doing among us, and what in former times, good or bad, Roman Emperors or English Kings and Parliaments, or other Civil Powers, have been allowed to do, in the way of taking liberties with Church Courts. The Sovereign in those cases always professed to be Christian. The Parliaments were in theory (as has been said) a sort of “Lay Synods of the Church.” The way to make the cases parallel would be, for Her Majesty, in the exercise of Her Supremacy, to decline that Parliamentary control which, under our present Constitution, she acknowledges in all public matters, and to be advised, *bonâ fide*, by Churchmen and Spiritual Men. I do not see the impossibility of such a thing; on the contrary, it seems to me to combine itself in theory well enough with other arrangements which appear desirable: but at any rate, until this take place, we shall not be as our forefathers were, neither can we be fairly pressed to submit ourselves on the ground of its being no more than what they allowed, nor taunted

by Roman Catholics, or others, as if we had been pledged 300 years since to all we now deprecate.

Whether it were right or wrong to allow Justinian, Charlemagne, or Charles I. to appoint Judges of Doctrine, it was not the same thing as allowing a modern Prime Minister to do so.

Nor are there wanting clear signs of the special danger incurred in our case, by every year and every month of our continuing subject to such interference. The Prime Minister (I speak not of him personally) is, of course, the representative of the popular will, and what the popular will is in matters of doctrine we may judge by this—that the most popular of our newspapers, commending the decision in the Gorham Case, adopted for its own the famous Letter of Constantine, deprecating proceedings against Arius; in which letter he calls the Controversy on the Divinity of our Lord “ a certain *empty question*, which ought neither to have been asked nor answered: a dispute about *matters trifling to an excess of insignificance* :” and tells the Bishops, “ You may keep up communion with each other, however decidedly your opinions vary *in some*

minute points of detail." And again, a noble person, whom it is impossible to name without respect, is reported to have said in the debate on the Bishops' Bill, that "if a heresy were such as could not be made patent to four or five impartial judges accustomed to judicial investigations,—*if it required a practised, professed, theological eye to discover it*, it had better be left alone." Once more: on the same occasion, a Prelate, to whom we are all bound to look up, thought it necessary to disclaim all concurrence in the doctrine, "that there resided in the body of Bishops, in their official character, any peculiar and exclusive prerogative, or even any pre-eminent or transcendant qualification, which rendered them the only proper judges upon questions of doctrine arising in the Church."*

It is but too plain how the old dogmatic theology, the Creeds of the Church, by which we are sworn to live or die, would fare with a generation, of which these are favourable specimens.

The whole argument concerning our first grievance may be summed up in two short questions. To all, calling themselves Church-

* Debate of June 5.

men, we may say, Is there not a treasure of Sacred Truth, and a living Body entrusted with that treasure? and can it be right for any consideration to make over the trust to those who are not of the Body? Again, to all candid persons of every Creed we may say, Is it not a part of Religious Liberty for a Religious Body to declare its own doctrine; or, if its civil and social position equitably interfere with its freedom in this respect, to be allowed at least a choice, which of the two it will forego?

With these suggestions I take leave of the subject for the present, hoping before long to deal with another portion of it, and earnestly desiring always so to speak of it, as to leave the least possible excuse for impatient hearing.

July 20, 1850.

