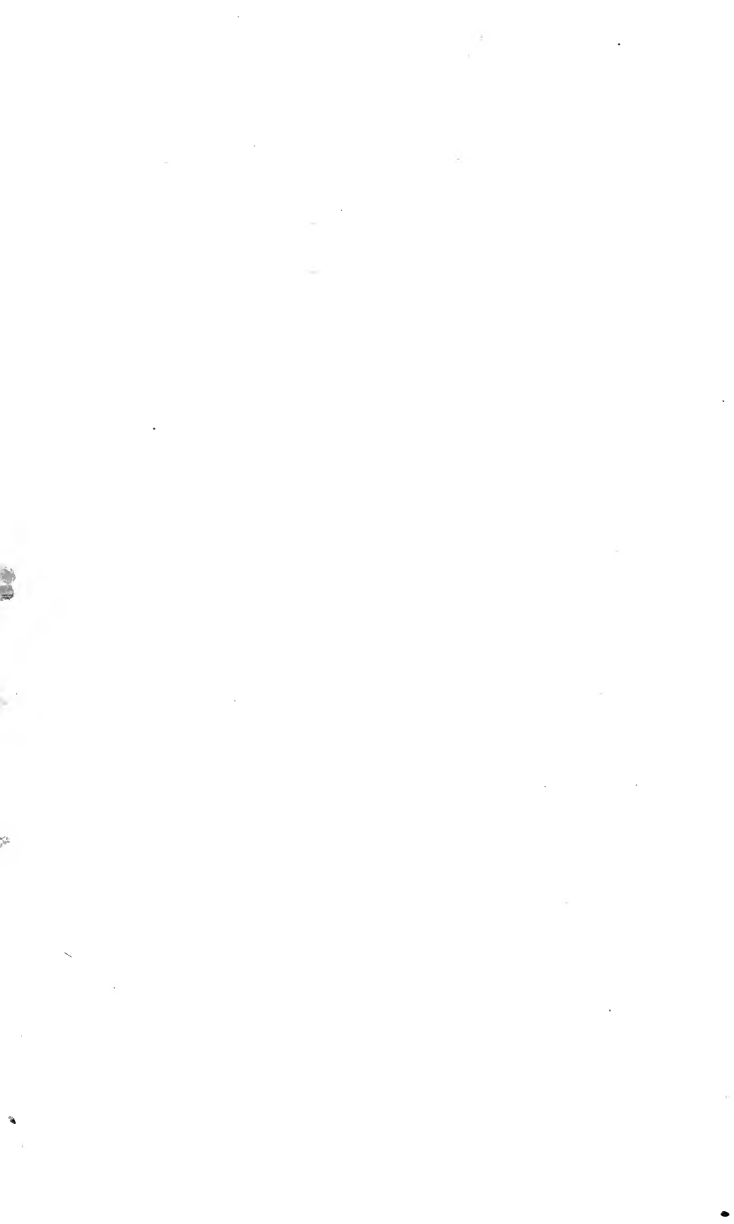


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A DISCOURSE

OF THE

LIBERTY OF PROPHESYING:

SHEWING

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF PRESCRIBING
TO OTHER MEN'S FAITH;

AND

THE INIQUITY OF PERSECUTING DIFFERING OPINIONS.

BY

JEREMY TAYLOR, D.D.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO KING CHARLES THE FIRST, AND SOME TIME
LORD BISHOP OF DOWN AND CONNOR.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE

REV. R. CATTERMOLE, B. D.

LONDON:

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THE measure of freedom enjoyed in a country will always be in proportion to the diffusion of knowledge and virtue among the people. In the latter ages, therefore, of the degenerate Roman empire, over which the mists of ignorance were settling with increasing density, and from which public virtue had fled, all remains of liberty became extinct. It was only by the disruption and removal of that gigantic despotism, and by the introduction of governments, in its place, with institutions which, though yet in all the rudeness of infancy, were in their nature more favourable to the development of the intellectual, and, in a still higher degree, of the moral powers of man, that a way could be prepared for the future admission of every free agent to the full exercise of his natural rights. To the gradual establishment of a national church, and to the existence of a feudal nobility, in each of the kingdoms formed by the Gothic and Celtic races, we owe our present enjoyment of what we justly deem the birth-right of moral and civilized human beings. Those ennobling sentiments which



were cultivated by that order of the community, with whom alone the light of learning and science remained, found their way by little and little into the bosoms of a bolder and more active and powerful class. The improvement of the vassal population, resulting from the humanizing influence of the clergy and the nobles, was assisted by many concurrent circumstances, such as the increase of commerce, the rise of independent republics, and the foundation of the great schools and universities. As the number of those increased who rose to the mental and moral dignity of free men, so did the number of those who sought and acquired a share of the rights of free men. These might be but ill understood, and find as yet no clear expounders, but they began at least to be practically vindicated. The strong holds of arbitrary power were by degrees undermined, and limits to irresponsible authority rose up in all directions; until, at length, the grand and animating spectacle presented itself, of a free and enlightened people, enjoying the bounties of Providence, and cultivating the best faculties of their being. Finally, law placed its sanction upon what intelligence and virtue had achieved; and that freedom in which the existing generation rejoiced, was secured by solemn enactments to posterity.

Such was the progress of civil freedom, nor was the growth of religious liberty the result of other

causes. In a country, where religion is purely a political engine, as was the case in pagan Rome, toleration is impossible, because under such circumstances treason and nonconformity are identical. Notwithstanding the boasted indulgence of the empire, in this respect, towards conquered nations, and the ease with which the popular superstition sat upon the powerful and intelligent classes, how far the Romans were from allowing liberty of conscience, sufficiently appears in the numerous and terrible persecutions by which they strove to exterminate the professors of that religion which even their great men have branded as "a new and mischievous superstition."

As long as the Christian church continued uncorrupted, the utmost forbearance and mildness towards the professors of heretical opinions, consistent with public order, appear to have prevailed. With corruption came in persecution. The first example of intolerance, on the part of Christians towards each other, appeared in the distractions occasioned by the followers of Arius, and by the other powerful sects which rose about the same time, or not long afterwards. But whatever severities were recommended and put in practice by these schismatics, by the Iconoclasts, at a later period, or by the church, in its angry endeavours to crush the swarms of heresies by which its peace was assailed, the rage of persecution among Chris-

tians, in those early times, always stopped short of the punishment of death.

That during the long interval from the seventh to the thirteenth century, while, in the eastern empire, religious disputes were carried on with the utmost fierceness and cruelty, we find comparatively few instances of extreme intolerance displayed by the church of Rome, may be accounted for without supposing the prevalence of a spirit of Christian forbearance, which is not to be met with even in the history of far more enlightened periods. Such were the power of the popedom and the feebleness and infrequency of resistance to its dictates, that we need not wonder if the successors of St. Peter were not often to be roused from the slumbers of sensual enjoyment, or withdrawn from the pursuits of ambition, and the contest with kings and emperors for temporal dominion, by controversies about doctrines, with obscure and unheeded speculatists. It was not till more decided indications of returning intellectual light presaged danger to the existence of that usurped ecclesiastical tyranny, that it thought proper to put forth its energies for the destruction of those whom it regarded as heretics. Scotus Erigena in the ninth century, and Berengarius in the eleventh, if not suffered to escape uninjured, were at least permitted to live, though chargeable with as bold invasions of the domains of established corruption, as those which, at a later day, were the excuse for deluging the valleys of the

Alps with the blood of the Vaudois, and crowding the statute-books of England with cruel and sanguinary laws,—which filled our dungeons with the persecuted followers of Wicliffe, and strewed Smithfield with the ashes of the martyrs.

It is a favourite but iniquitous proceeding of party writers, when it is their object to blacken the memory of those who maintained opinions adverse to their own, to charge upon individuals the faults and failings which they partook, and could not but partake, in common with their age. True it is, that it never occurred to the first reformers to generalize upon the subject of a free choice in religion; most surprising would the fact have been if it had. This was left for a subsequent generation; it could not have been expected of them, nor was it consistent with the part assigned them. While we duly reverence those venerable men, we deem it no disparagement to them, as partakers of the imperfections of humanity, to say, that had they had leisure to do so—had they contended expressly for a general principle, rather than for a direct personal claim, their efforts would in all probability have proved far less vigorous and effectual. But, in truth, the general principle was implied in the fact of the deliverance of themselves and their country, on the ground of right, from the oppressive tyranny of Rome. The stride that was made towards universal freedom of conscience by

Cranmer, and the great and good men who were associated with him, was actually larger than the state of knowledge and morality among the people could bear. If they are not to be compared for a wise liberality, on this point, with the authors and legislators of the eighteenth century, yet in how brilliant relief do their sentiments as well as their conduct stand out, in the light of humanity and tolerance, when we compare them with their opponents, even of the same period—when we place Ridley, Cranmer, and Hooper by the side, not of the bitter persecutors Gardiner and Bonner, but of the learned Warham, the accomplished Tonstal, and the gifted Sir Thomas More. Public opinion afterwards followed, *longo sed intervallo*. Little would the people have prized or understood an enlarged system of toleration, who, still stumbling in all the blindness of inveterate popery, flung back with brutal contempt in the faces of the reformers, the inestimable boon they had secured for them, and more than once rushed into rebellion in favour of an unmitigated return to the oppressions and the mummeries that had beguiled their forefathers—to masses, pilgrimages, prayers in an unknown tongue, and the use of images. Hence the majority hailed with delight the national relapse into all the miseries of the worst times of popery, in Mary's reign.

The lapse of a century of strife between the church of England and the parties who now—whether in

consequence of men's natural unreasonableness and discontent with the good they possess, or of the imperfect state in which the work of reformation had been left,—rose into opposition to her doctrines, discipline, and immunities, was necessary to prepare the national mind for the effectual agitation of this great question. If the church, in the prosperous days of Elizabeth and James, maintained her prerogatives against the Puritans with the severity of a parent assailed by the unreasonable clamours of rebellious children, these latter, however bitterly they complained of the hardship of their own position, never denied, upon general principles, the right of the former to persecute; 'their ardour for toleration was nothing more than impatience of individual suffering.' In the multiplication of sects that took place during the latter part of that period, and in the reign of the unhappy Charles, the animosity of each towards every other, equalled that which all in common bore towards the establishment. Each strove for the supremacy of its own opinions—none for an equal charitable tolerance of all speculative tenets alike; and when the most numerous and powerful of the religious factions opposed to the Church of England, at last obtained the ascendancy, its members proved too clearly by their arrogance and persecuting spirit how little effect calamity, which softens and corrects the passions of individuals, has in diminishing the hatreds and

smoothing the asperities of sects and parties. Still the anarchy of the latter years of King Charles, was the chaos in which the light of religious liberty was engendered. Here and there a calmer and wiser spirit began to perceive, that the only prospect of peace lay in the possibility of persuading each to relinquish some portion of its individual claims, in favour of the whole. Several smaller publications, setting forth the justice and advantages of this scheme, had already emanated from different quarters, (and especially from among the followers of Robert Brown,) when the church, now the victim of those severities which in her hour of prosperity she, it must be confessed, had not scrupled to exercise, and more susceptible, as it seems, of the lessons of adversity, than some of those communities who had felt it longer, raised a decisive and majestic voice in the great cause of religious toleration.

The celebrated treatise on the LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING, is scarcely more valuable for the consummate ability with which it handles this important subject, than it is interesting for the immediate circumstances under which it was produced, and striking as the production of the friend of Laud, and the favourite chaplain of the unfortunate Charles. The learning and genius of Taylor obtained for him, about the year 1633, soon after he had taken his degree of M. A. at Cambridge, the

favourable notice of that primate, to whom the bitterest enemies of his person and his memory could never refuse the praise of an accurate discerner of merit, and a munificent patron of learning. Discovering in the youthful divine talents capable of raising him above the sphere of a mere preacher, however popular or useful Laud removed him to Oxford, and placed him in University College, in order that he might carry on and complete his studies without interruption. Of this society he became a fellow, in the year 1636. In the great national struggle which followed, Taylor attached himself devotedly, from taste and principle as well as gratitude and regard, to the cause of the monarchy and the hierarchy. He was among the first to join the king at Oxford; he afterwards attended the royal army in his capacity as chaplain; and on the final ruin of the king's cause, he shared in the calamities which now fell upon the loyal part of the nation.

Deprived of his preferment, he retired into Wales, and having no other resource, engaged, for the support of his family, in the irksome labours of a school, at a place called Newton Hall, in Carmarthenshire. The remoteness of his retreat, however, did not screen him from molestation: he was several times imprisoned, and only released through the generous exertions of his friends, and by the connivance of some persons of influence

among the ruling party. "But that he" (writes the eloquent divine, in the Epistle Dedicatory, originally prefixed to the present Treatise*) "who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of his people, had provided a plank for me, I had been lost to all the opportunities of content or study. But I know not whether I have been more preserved by the courtesies of my friends, or the gentleness and mercies of a noble enemy." Who the noble enemy alluded to was, is not known; but the friends who chiefly consoled the period of his adversity—and he had domestic sorrows to distress him, besides the loss of property and preferment—were the Earl of Carbery and his lady, whose residence was at Golden Grove, in Taylor's neighbourhood. In the bosom of this family he continued for many years to enjoy the delights of friendship, and the comfort of administering the rites of religion, according to the proscribed forms of the national church; it was here also that many of his most admirable works were composed, particularly the *Life of Christ*, the most popular, and, in many respects,

* As this Dedication is very long, and consists chiefly of a recapitulation of the arguments brought forward in the Treatise itself, it has been deemed consistent with the design of the present publication to omit it. Some of the facts adduced in it, however, have been transferred to the present essay, and several of the most interesting passages preserved to the reader in the quotations.

the noblest of his writings, the Holy Living and Dying, and the greater part of his Sermons. It was, however, in all the freshness of recent affliction, while poverty and apprehension reigned within his household, and the crash of the falling throne and broken altar was loud without, deprived of books and leisure, that the work was written, of the design of which it now remains to give some account—a work truly wonderful, as having received its birth under such untoward circumstances, and which demonstrates how little was required by its accomplished author for the production of the noblest results of literary exertion, besides his own powerful intellect, and the unrivalled stores of secular and ecclesiastical learning with which his memory was furnished.

The general principle advanced in the LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING, is this: that as truth on all minor dogmas of religion is uncertain, and of small moment in its bearings upon the conduct of men, while peace and charity are things of undoubted certainty and importance, our desire to obtain the former ought to yield to the necessity of securing the latter; and every one, for the good of the community at large, ought to tolerate the differences of all others, while in turn he receives toleration for his own. But as it is indispensable somewhere to draw the line—as some standard of truth must be acknowledged, unless men were to

rush into boundless anarchy, or sink into mere indifference, of opinion, he proposes the confession of the apostles' creed, as the test of orthodoxy, and condition of union and communion among Christians.

A test so liberal and comprehensive, though we might not perhaps have expected to meet with its advocate in one conversant in that sphere of arbitrary prerogative, to which the author had so long been attached, was worthy of the pure and benevolent nature of Jeremy Taylor, and naturally enough suggested by the peculiar circumstances under which this splendid treatise was composed : that Taylor's mind was utterly averse from all harshness in the exercise of authority—that his temper was not only tolerant but tender towards all men, is sufficiently apparent to all who are in any degree acquainted with his moral and practical writings ; yet, had he still continued the admired orator of an arbitrary court, and the caressed favourite of a prelate, whom the coarse irritations of factious religionists, as much as his own disposition and principles, hurried into harsh and cruel measures, it is little likely the world had ever beheld the LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING. From the melancholy experience of the past, the present miserable wreck of all which he regarded as most dear and venerable, and the gloomy uncertainty which overhung the future, he sought refuge in the

depths of his own generous pity for the weaknesses, and errors, and in his respect for the rights, of his fellow-citizens. "I was determined," he says, "by the consideration of the present distemperatures and necessities, by my own thoughts, by the questions and scruples, the sects and names, the interests and animosities which at this day, and for some years past, have exercised and disquieted Christendom ;—being very much displeased that so many opinions and new doctrines are commenced among us, but more troubled that every man that hath an opinion, thinks his own and other men's salvation is concerned in its maintenance, but most of all that men should be persecuted and afflicted for disagreeing in such opinions which they cannot with sufficient grounds obtrude upon others necessarily, because they cannot propound them infallibly, and have no warrant of Scripture to do so."

The person of the king had now been transferred from the custody of the parliamentary commissioners to that of Cromwell and the army—from the hands, that is to say, of the most, to those of the least intolerant, of the great sectarian parties ; and he was accordingly treated with more indulgence and respect. The author of the *LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING*, therefore, may have cherished a hope of promoting an accommodation between the captive sovereign and his victorious subjects, which, however slender, sufficed to rouse the zeal of a mind equally imbued with loyalty to his king

and regard for the happiness of his fellow-subjects. Taylor's experience of the temper of the parties must indeed have forbidden the indulgence of any very sanguine expectation, as to the effect of his arguments in softening their mutual animosities and dislikes. On the part of the king, scarcely any thing remained to be conceded; while, had further concession been in his power, such a rooted opinion prevailed of Charles's insincerity in his engagements, as must have rendered a cordial reconciliation impossible. On the other hand, the arrogance of the Presbyterians, and the extent of their demands, had increased in proportion to their success; nor did the indignation with which they regarded the host of wild sects, which, encouraged by their example, had now grown to be thorns in their sides, divert any portion of their settled hatred from the royalists and episcopalians. The fluctuations of Taylor's own mind, between his earnest desire to do something towards promoting the peace of the king and the safety of the country, and the fears he could not conceal, lest the mild arguments of enlightened moderation should be utterly thrown away amid the raging factions of the time, are thus powerfully expressed in the Dedication already quoted: "However," says he, "there are some exterminating spirits who think God to delight in human sacrifices,—yet if they were capable of cool and tame homilies, or would hear men of other opinions give a quiet account

without invincible resolutions never to alter their persuasions, I am very much persuaded it would not be very hard to dispute such men into mercies, and compliances, and tolerations mutual; such, I say, who are zealous for Jesus Christ; than whose doctrine never was any thing more merciful and humane, whose lessons were softer than nard, or the juice of the Candian olive. Upon the first apprehension, I designed a discourse to this purpose, with as much greediness as if I had thought it possible with my arguments to have persuaded the rough and hard-handed soldiers to have disbanded presently; for I had often thought of the prophecy, that, in the Gospel, *Our swords shall be turned into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning-hooks*; I knew that no tittle spoken by God's Spirit could return unperformed and ineffectual, and I was certain, that such was the excellency of Christ's doctrine, that if men would obey it Christians should never war one against another. In the mean time, I considered not, that it was *predictio concilii, non eventus*, till I saw what men were now doing, and ever had done, since the heats and primitive fervours did cool, and the love of interests swelled higher than the love of Christianity; but then on the other side, I began to fear that whatever I could say would be as ineffectual as it would be unreasonable; for if those excellent words which our blessed Master spake, could not charm the tumult of our spirits, I had little reason to hope that one

of the meanest and most ignorant of his servants could advance the end of that which he calls his great, and his old, and his new commandment, so well as the excellency of his own Spirit and discourses could. And yet since He who knew every event of things, and the success and efficacy of every doctrine, and that very much of it to most men and all of it to some men would be ineffectual, yet was pleased to consign our duty that it might be a direction to them that would, and a conviction and testimony against them that would not obey, I thought it might not misbecome my duty and endeavours, to plead for peace, and charity, and forgiveness, and permissions mutual, although I had reason to believe that such is the iniquity of men, and they so indisposed to receive such impressions, that I had as good plough the sands or till the air, as persuade such doctrines, which destroy men's interests, and serve no end but the great end of a happy eternity and what is in order to it. But because the events of things are in God's disposition, and I knew them not; and because, if I had known my good purposes would be totally ineffectual as to others, yet my own designation and purposes would be of advantage to myself, who might from God's mercy expect the retribution which he is pleased to promise to all pious intendments; I resolved to encounter with all objections."

To us it appears from the general tone of this great work, that although its gifted author was will-

ing to take advantage of the least chance that remained of bringing back the minds of the leading persons, on all sides, to a friendly and charitable temper, yet his real hope of a termination to the sufferings and distractions which the nation laboured under, rather reposed upon the good sense and right feeling of the people, generally; and that to them it is therefore to be regarded as mainly addressed. Those religious disputes, which had nearly brought the country to the brink of ruin, had no reference to matters essential to salvation, but were confined to points indifferent or of secondary moment. "For my own particular," he exclaims, "I cannot but expect, that God in his justice should enlarge the bounds of the Turkish empire, or some other way punish Christians, by reason of their pertinacious disputing about things unnecessary, undeterminable, and unprofitable, and for their hating and persecuting their brethren, which should be as dear to them as their own lives, for not consenting to one another's follies and senseless vanities. And in these trifles and impertinences men are curiously busy, while they neglect those glorious precepts of Christianity and holy life, which are the glories of our religion, and would enable us to a happy eternity." The impropriety of such disputes therefore, and the necessity of mutual forbearance in regard to the points in question, it is his object to make apparent, not only by proving their general uncertainty, as compared with those essential articles of the faith

in which all Christians are agreed, but further by showing at length the utter fallibility and incompetence of the means by which men arrive at their so confident conclusions, and the authorities to which they appeal with so much boldness. He alleges the difficulty of expounding Scripture in regard to speculative points,—the uncertainty of traditions,—the fallibility of popes, councils, fathers, and even of the church in its diffusive capacity, as being all liable to those innumerable causes of error and mistake, to which the human mind is ever exposed,—the innocency of theoretical error and invincible ignorance,—the force of inveterate prejudice, and the almost equal liability of all men alike, not excepting the wisest and the best, to be mistaken,—as grounds and incentives to general charity towards others, and motives to humility in each man's estimate of his own opinions; while yet the work cannot in general be fairly charged with any tendency to extenuate the criminality or danger of such dogmas, justly branded with the mark of heresy, as are subversive of morality in individuals, and of the good order of society.

Though accomplished, even beyond his contemporaries, in an age abounding in learned theologians, in the use of every weapon of polemical warfare, the mind of Jeremy Taylor was not formed for controversy; and when he engaged in it, it was never for the triumph of an opinion, but for the extension of truth and the promotion of godliness.

Nevertheless, ennobled as every subject was to his conception by the grand general views which his heavenward eye, even in the midst of discussions on inferior questions, ceased not to rest upon, he is seen to most advantage in those works where the wealth of his most affectionate heart, and the impassioned sublimity of his imagination, could be fully displayed. The reader who would become acquainted with what this celebrated writer truly was, as well as he who would seek from his works the highest profit which can be derived from the study of the uninspired labours of the human mind, must pass unread the *Ductor Dubitantium*,—though the favourite of its author himself,—and hasten through the pages even of the LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING, in order to luxuriate amid the holy thoughts and glowing imagery, which abound in his devotional and moral writings—in the Great Exemplar, or Life of Christ—the Holy Living and Dying, and his truly wonderful Sermons. As far, however, as the nature of the following work admitted the peculiar endowments of the author to appear, they will in every page be recognised. Its various and minute learning, its logical precision, the majestic march of its eloquent language, but especially its unequalled tone of moderation and candour, present a combination, which, together with the ever fresh interest of the subject, enables it to maintain its place, notwithstanding the celebrity of some others, and especially of that

of Locke, as the most distinguished treatise on Religious Liberty in our language.

While, however, we glory in the perfect candour and Christian mildness which appear in the following pages, as being truly in the spirit of the best times of that church of which its author is so remarkable an ornament, we feel that it would scarcely become us, on presenting our countrymen with an edition intended for the widest and most general circulation, to forbear pointing out one or two instances in which the singular goodness of his heart and his extreme desire of peace are thought to have carried him somewhat too far. In his observations, here and elsewhere, on the peculiar tenets of the church of Rome, there is nothing to disapprove : they exhibit the principles of our reformers, softened and mellowed by time and those reviving charities which would naturally reappear, when all occasions for irritating collision between the two churches were removed. That he was less judicious in his laboured apology for the principles *then* professed by the Anabaptists, we have his own acknowledgement, in the fact that he afterwards wrote a tract to explain himself more at large on this head, in consequence of the offence taken at the laxity of his language. This was added to the subsequent editions of the work ;* it was

* This addition is not reprinted in the present volume, from a wish to avoid exhausting the attention of the general reader, by unnecessarily confining it, through so many pages, to the minute details of a question of no great interest in our times.

followed likewise by a treatise in favour of infant baptism, a further qualification of the celebrated nineteenth section, afterwards incorporated into the Great Exemplar, of which beautiful work it forms the sixth discourse. Perhaps we may also venture to add, that less indulgence would have been shown towards those opinions, the origin of which may be traced to the heresy of Arius, had the excellent writer lived to see the period when the doctrines to which we allude, at that time scarcely acknowledged by a small and obscure party, came to be received with favour in the high places of the church.

It has been brought as a charge against Taylor, in relation to the argument of this work, that he bases his scheme of toleration on the weaknesses of mankind, which present a moral claim to tenderness and indulgence, rather than on the indefeasible right of every human being to the free exercise of his own thoughts and opinions. The difference results more from different views of men's capacities to enjoy freedom, the consequence perhaps of more or less experience of human life, than from any want of sympathy with their just claims, on the part of those who adopt the former method. That the soul of Taylor took a generous interest in every noble struggle of humanity, and responded to every sentiment inspired by the love of justice, will scarcely be called in question by any one familiar with his various writings of an ethical and

practical character. But there was, in his days, no need of the voice of such an advocate to swell the clamorous cry for immunities, which every man eagerly demanded for himself, and as eagerly denied to his neighbour. He had had a long and painful experience, how little individual impatience of restraint tended to secure equal toleration for all; and it was natural that in seeking that object he should follow an opposite course. Besides, the extent of natural right must ever be matter of debate and uncertainty, and its assertion liable to dangerous abuse, whereas it is evident to all that the limits of charity towards our brethren cannot be pushed too far, and that the freest use of it is consistent with the safety of all parties. Again, the claim of right can be a ground, at best, only for negative toleration; it vindicates the liberty of the individual, but provides him with no sphere for its exercise; the toleration, on the contrary, contemplated in the subjoined treatise, is positive and active. Its author recommends something more than a strenuous assertion of our own freedom, with merely a cold acquiescence in that of others: he proposes the practice of the greater, as best securing the less—that opposing parties should not only refrain from interfering with each other, but should mutually hold forth the right hand of fellowship, and, though differing invincibly on speculative articles, should communicate in the profession of the same essentials, and in

the reciprocation of all the brotherly and becoming charities of life.

In his seclusion at Golden Grove, or in its neighbourhood, Taylor continued to reside until the year 1658, when, at the earnest instance of his friends, he removed to Lisburn, near Portmore, the seat of the Earl of Conway, in the north of Ireland, where he accepted a lectureship under the patronage of that nobleman. At the period of the Restoration, he chanced to be in London; and thus, as one of the tried and valuable friends of monarchical and episcopal government, he immediately fell under the favourable notice of the King, and was shortly after nominated to the bishopric of Down and Connor, to which the small adjacent see of Dromore was subsequently added. It was fortunate for Bishop Taylor's peace, though not for the church's advantage, that the remoteness of his dioceses placed him far from the sphere of the profligate court of the second Charles, and secured him from any share in the public measures of his reign. This was one of the few periods—and the last—over which the filial admirers of the Church of England may desire to draw a veil. The age of the cruel persecutions in Scotland, and of the perfidious severities practised towards the nonconformists at home,—when the Church of England stooped to copy, against the Presbyterians, the worst parts of their own intolerant conduct, when the door of reconciliation was closed in the

wantonness of power, and the foundations of modern dissent laid upon an ever-widening basis,—presents a spectacle, to which we still revert with sorrow not unmixed with shame. What, then, must have been the pain with which it was contemplated, at the time, by the zealous advocate of fraternal and enlightened toleration? He found his consolation, we may hope, in the careful discharge of his episcopal functions, in occasionally adding to the list of his invaluable writings, in the employments of a devotion as impassioned and seraphic, as is consistent with the salutary equilibrium of the faculties of the human mind, and, doubtless, in the reflection, which must ever attend the authors of those distinguished works of genius, whose object is the promotion of God's glory and the honour and welfare of his creatures, that though the work through which, in the prime of his mature faculties, he had endeavoured to instil into his divided country the wisdom of forbearance and Christian love, had as yet produced no visible fruits, it had not been “cast upon the waters” in vain; but would in due time be found, though “after many days,” to have been concurring with other causes to secure for posterity the permanent blessings of religious peace.

We have alluded with all plainness to the errors of the governors of our church, in periods when exemption from such errors was not the rule, even among Protestants, but the singular exception;

and thus, as her fearless and affectionate children, we feel we may be allowed to speak. For, (to adopt the language of a contemporary writer,) “why should a clergyman of the present day feel interested in their defence? Surely it is sufficient for the warmest partisan of our establishment, that he can assert with truth,—when our church persecuted, it was on mistaken principles held in common by all Christendom. We can say, that our church, apostolical in its faith, primitive in its ceremonies, unequalled in its liturgical forms; that our church, which has kindled and displayed more bright and burning lights of genius and learning, than all other Protestant churches since the Reformation, was least intolerant, when all Christians unhappily deemed a species of intolerance their religious duty; that bishops of our church were among the first that contended against this error; and finally, that since the Revolution, when tolerance became general, the Church of England in a tolerating age, has shown herself eminently tolerant.”

It is not long since we witnessed the erasure from our statute-books of the only remaining acts of the legislature which could be regarded as restraints upon the most perfect liberty of conscience; and cordially shall we, for our part, rejoice in their removal, should the event prove, that sufficient care has been taken for the preservation of that venerable establishment, in which the deeply reflective writer just cited, “sees,” he tells us, “the greatest, if not the

sole safe *bulwark* of toleration." We cannot, however, shut our eyes to the fact of danger to be apprehended from the existence, in our times,—not indeed of a sect or party, but—of a multitude of persons, whose declared opinions place them beyond the pale of all parties and sects alike, who wilfully mistake for toleration, a licence to overleap and lay waste all the defences of the public faith. Yet even here we are willing rather to hail a motive to exertion, than to acknowledge a ground of discouragement; inasmuch as out of even this pernicious error we look to find the beneficent hand of the Supreme Ruler of events extracting good: for his Providence has supplied the means of cure in the very excess of the evil, which in hurting some, offending and rousing many, and endangering the comfort of all, will be the means of bringing men back to reflection, and thence to a peaceable submission to such sober and reasonable regulations for securing the full effect of Christianity upon this great nation, as will be found equally conducive to the welfare of the individual, and to the progressive improvement of the human race.

R. C.

London, December, 1833.

A DISCOURSE
OF THE
LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING.

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THE

LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING.

INTRODUCTION.

THE infinite variety of opinions in matters of religion, as they have troubled Christendom with interests, factions, and partialities, so have they caused great divisions of the heart, and variety of thoughts and designs amongst pious and prudent men. For they all, seeing the inconveniences which the disunion of persuasions and opinions have produced directly or accidentally, have thought themselves obliged to stop this inundation of mischiefs, and have made attempts accordingly. But it hath happened to most of them as to a mistaken physician, who gives excellent physic but misapplies it, and so misses of his cure. So have these men: their attempts have therefore been ineffectual; for they put their help to a wrong part, or they have endeavoured to cure the symptoms, and have let the disease alone till it seemed incurable. Some have endeavoured to reunite these fractions, by propounding such a guide which they were all bound

to follow; hoping that the unity of a guide would have persuaded unity of minds; but who this guide should be, at last became such a question, that it was made part of the fire that was to be quenched, so far was it from extinguishing any part of the flame. Others thought of a rule, and this must be the means of union, or nothing could do it. But supposing all the world had been agreed of this rule, yet the interpretation of it was so full of variety that this also became part of the disease for which the cure was pretended. All men resolved upon this, that though they yet had not hit upon the right, yet some way must be thought upon to reconcile differences in opinion; thinking, so long as this variety should last, Christ's kingdom was not advanced, and the work of the gospel went on but slowly. Few men in the mean time considered, that so long as men had such variety of principles, such several constitutions, educations, tempers, and distempers, hopes, interests, and weaknesses, degrees of light, and degrees of understanding, it was impossible all should be of one mind. And what is impossible to be done is not necessary it should be done; and therefore, although variety of opinions was impossible to be cured, (and they who attempted it did like him who claps his shoulder to the ground to stop an earthquake,) yet the inconveniences arising from it might possibly be cured, not by uniting their beliefs,—that was to be despaired of,—but by curing that which caused these mischiefs, and accidental inconveniences of their disagreeings. For although these inconveniences, which every man sees and feels, were consequent to this diversity of persuasions, yet it was but accidentally and by chance; inasmuch as we

see that in many things, and they of great concernment, men allow to themselves and to each other a liberty of disagreeing, and no hurt neither. And certainly if diversity of opinions were of itself the cause of mischiefs, it would be so ever, that is, regularly and universally, (but that we see it is not :) for there are disputes in Christendom concerning matters of greater concernment than most of those opinions that distinguish sects and make factions; and yet because men are permitted to differ in those great matters, such evils are not consequent to such differences as are to the uncharitable managing of smaller and more considerable questions. It is of greater consequence to believe right in the question of the validity or invalidity of a death-bed repentance, than to believe aright in the question of purgatory; and the consequences of the doctrine of predetermination, are of deeper and more material consideration than the products of the belief of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of private masses; and yet these great concernments, where a liberty of prophesying in these questions hath been permitted, hath made no distinct communion, no sects of Christians, and the others have, and so have these too in those places where they have peremptorily been determined on either side. Since then if men are quiet and charitable in some disagreeings, that then and there the inconvenience ceases, if they were so in all others where lawfully they might, (and they may in most,) Christendom should be no longer rent in pieces, but would be reintegrated in a new Pentecost; and although the Spirit of God did rest upon us in divided tongues, yet so long as those tongues were of fire not to kindle strife, but to warm our

affections and inflame our charities, we should find that this variety of opinions in several persons would be looked upon as an argument only of diversity of operations, while the Spirit is the same; and that another man believes not so well as I, is only an argument that I have a better and a clearer illumination than he, that I have a better gift than he, received a special grace and favour, and excel him in this, and am perhaps excelled by him in many more. And if we all impartially endeavour to find a truth, since this endeavour and search only is in our power, (that we shall find it, being *ab extra*, a gift and an assistance extrinsical,) I can see no reason why this pious endeavour to find out truth shall not be of more force to unite us in the bonds of charity, than his misery in missing it shall be to disunite us. So that since a union of persuasion is impossible to be attained, if we would attempt the cure by such remedies as are apt to enkindle and increase charity, I am confident we might see a blessed peace would be the reward and crown of such endeavours.

But men are now-a-days, and indeed always have been, since the expiration of the first blessed ages of Christianity, so in love with their own fancies and opinions, as to think faith and all Christendom is concerned in their support and maintenance; and whoever is not so fond and does not dandle them like themselves, it grows up to a quarrel, which because it is in *materiâ theologiæ* is made a quarrel in religion, and God is entitled to it; and then if you are once thought an enemy to God, it is our duty to persecute you even to death, we do God good service in it; when, if we should examine the matter rightly, the question is either in *materiâ non reve-*

lata, or *minus evidenti*, or *non necessariâ*, either it is not revealed, or not so clearly, but that wise and honest men may be of different minds, or else it is not of the foundation of faith, but a remote superstructure, or else of mere speculation, or perhaps, when all comes to all, it is a false opinion, or a matter of human interest, that we have so zealously contended for; for to one of these heads most of the disputes of Christendom may be reduced; so that I believe the present fractions (or the most) are from the same cause which St. Paul observed in the Corinthian schism, ‘When there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal?’ It is not the differing opinions that is the cause of the present ruptures, but want of charity; it is not the variety of understandings, but the disunion of wills and affections; it is not the several principles, but the several ends that cause our miseries: our opinions commence and are upheld according as our turns are served and our interests are preserved, and there is no cure for us but piety and charity. A holy life will make our belief holy, if we consult not humanity and its imperfections in the choice of our religion, but search for truth without designs, save only of acquiring heaven, and then be as careful to preserve charity, as we were to get a point of faith: I am much persuaded we should find out more truths by this means; or however (which is the main of all) we shall be secured though we miss them; and then we are well enough.

For if it be evinced that one heaven shall hold men of several opinions, if the unity of faith be not destroyed by that which men call differing religions, and if an unity of charity be the duty of us all even towards persons that are not persuaded of every

proposition we believe, then I would fain know to what purpose are all those stirs, and great noises in Christendom; those names of faction, the several names of churches not distinguished by the division of kingdoms, the church obeying the government,* which was the primitive rule and canon, but distinguished by names of sects and men. These are all become instruments of hatred; thence come schisms and parting of communions, and then persecutions, and then wars and rebellion, and then the dissolutions of all friendships and societies. All these mischiefs proceed not from this, that all men are not of one mind, for that is neither necessary nor possible, but that every opinion is made an article of faith, every article is a ground of a quarrel, every quarrel makes a faction, every faction is zealous, and all zeal pretends for God, and whatsoever is for God cannot be too much. We by this time are come to that pass, we think we love not God except we hate our brother; and we have not the virtue of religion, unless we persecute all religions but our own: for lukewarmness is so odious to God and man, that we, proceeding furiously upon these mistakes, by supposing we preserve the body, we destroy the soul of religion; or by being zealous for faith, or which is all one, for that which we mistake for faith, we are cold in charity, and so lose the reward of both.

All these errors and mischiefs must be discovered and cured, and that is the purpose of this discourse.

* *Ut ecclesia sequatur imperium.*—Optat. B. iii.

SECTION I.

Nature of Faith.

FIRST, then, it is of great concernment to know the nature and integrity of Faith: for there begins our first and great mistake. For faith, although it be of great excellency, yet when it is taken for a habit intellectual, it hath so little room and so narrow a capacity, that it cannot lodge thousands of those opinions which pretend to be of her family.

For although it be necessary for us to believe whatsoever we know to be revealed of God,—and so every man does, that believes there is a God,—yet it is not necessary, concerning many things, to know that God hath revealed them; that is, we may be ignorant of, or doubt concerning the propositions, and indifferently maintain either part, when the question is not concerning God's veracity, but whether God hath said so, or no: that which is of the foundation of faith, that only is necessary; and the knowing or not knowing of that, the believing or disbelieving it, is that only which, as to the nature of the thing to be believed, is in immediate and necessary order to salvation or damnation.

Now, all the reason and demonstration of the world convinces us, that this foundation of faith, or the great adequate object of the faith that saves us, is that great mysteriousness of Christianity which Christ taught with so much diligence; for the credibility of which he wrought so many miracles; for

the testimony of which the apostles endured persecutions; that which was a folly to the Gentiles, and a scandal to the Jews, this is that which is the object of a Christian's faith: all other things are implicitly in the belief of the articles of God's veracity, and are not necessary in respect of the constitution of faith to be drawn out, but may there lie in the bowels of the great articles, without danger to any thing or any person, unless some other accident or circumstance makes them necessary. Now the great object which I speak of, is Jesus Christ crucified. 'I have determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;' so said St. Paul to the church of Corinth. This is the article upon the confession of which Christ built his church, viz. only upon St. Peter's creed, which was no more but this simple enunciation, 'We believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God:'* and to this salvation particularly is promised, as in the case of Martha's creed, *John*, xi. 27. To this the Scripture gives the greatest testimony, and to all them that confess it; 'For every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God:' and, 'Whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God:† the believing this article is the end of writing the four Gospels: 'These things are written, that ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God:‡ and then that this is sufficient follows: '*and that believing,*' viz. this article (for this was only instanced in) '*ye might have life through his name.*' This is that great article which, as to the nature of the things

* *Matt.* xvi. 19. † *1 John*, iv. 2, 15. ‡ *John*, xx. 31.

to be believed, is sufficient disposition to prepare a catechumen to baptism, as appears in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, whose creed was only this, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,' and upon this confession (saith the story) they both went into the water, and the Ethiop was washed, and became as white as snow.

In these particular instances, there is no variety of articles, save only that in the annexes of the several expressions, such things are expressed, as besides that Christ is come, they tell from whence, and to what purpose : and whatsoever is expressed, or is to these purposes implied, is made articulate and explicate, in the short and admirable mysterious creed of St. Paul, *Rom. x. 8.* 'This is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' This is the great and entire complexion of a Christian's faith ; and since salvation is promised to the belief of this creed, either a snare is laid for us, with a purpose to deceive us, or else nothing is of prime and original necessity to be believed, but this, *Jesus Christ our Redeemer* ; and all that which is the necessary parts, means, or main actions of working this redemption for us, and the honour for him is in the bowels and fold of the great article, and claims an explicit belief by the same reason that binds us to the belief of its first complexion, without which neither the thing could be acted, nor the proposition understood.

For the act of believing propositions is not for itself, but in order to certain ends ; as sermons are to good life and obedience ; for (excepting that it

acknowledges God's veracity, and so is a direct act of religion) believing a revealed proposition hath no excellency in itself, but in order to that end for which we are instructed in such revelations. Now God's great purpose being to bring us to him by Jesus Christ, Christ is our medium to God, obedience is the medium to Christ, and faith the medium to obedience, and therefore is to have its estimate in proportion to its proper end, and those things are necessary which necessarily promote the end, without which obedience cannot be encouraged or prudently enjoined: so that those articles are necessary, that is, those are fundamental points, upon which we build our obedience; and as the influence of the article is to the persuasion or engagement of obedience, so they have their degrees of necessity. Now all that Christ, when he preached, taught us to believe, and all that the apostles in their sermons propound, all aim at this, that we should acknowledge Christ for our Lawgiver and our Saviour; so that nothing can be necessary by a prime necessity to be believed explicitly, but such things which are therefore parts of the great article, because they either encourage our services or oblige them, such as declare Christ's greatness in himself, or his goodness to us. So that although we must neither deny nor doubt of any thing, which we know our great Master hath taught us; yet salvation is in special, and by name, annexed to the belief of those articles only, which have in them the endearments of our services, or the support of our confidence, or the satisfaction of our hopes, such as are—Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, forgiveness of sins by his blood, resurrection of the dead, and life eternal; because

these propositions qualify Christ for our Saviour and our Lawgiver, the one to engage our services, the other to endear them ; for so much is necessary as will make us to be his servants, and his disciples ; and what can be required more ? This only : salvation is promised to the explicit belief of those articles, and therefore those only are necessary, and those are sufficient ; but thus, to us in the formality of Christians, which is a formality superadded to a former capacity, we, before we are Christians, are reasonable creatures, and capable of a blessed eternity ; and there is a creed which is the Gentiles' creed, which is so supposed in the Christian creed, as it is supposed in a Christian to be a man, and that is, " he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

If any man will urge farther, that whatsoever is deducible from these articles by necessary consequence, is necessary to be believed explicitly, I answer : It is true, if he sees the deduction and coherence of the parts ; but it is not certain that every man shall be able to deduce whatsoever is either immediately, or certainly deducible from these premises ; and then, since salvation is promised to the explicit belief of these, I see not how any man can justify the making the way to heaven narrower than Jesus Christ hath made it, it being already so narrow, that there are few that find it.

In the pursuance of this great truth, the apostles, or the holy men their contemporaries and disciples, composed a creed to be a rule of faith to all Christians, as appears in Irenæus, Tertullian,*

* Apol. Contr. Gent. c. 47. De Veland. Virg. c. 1.

St. Cyprian,* St. Austin,† Ruffinus,‡ and divers others;§ which creed, unless it had contained all the entire object of faith, and the foundation of religion, it cannot be imagined to what purpose it should serve; and that it was so esteemed by the whole church of God in all ages, appears in this, that since faith is a necessary predisposition to baptism in all persons capable of the use of reason, all catechumens in the Latin church, coming to baptism, were interrogated concerning their faith, and gave satisfaction in the recitation of this creed. And in the east they professed exactly the same faith, something differing in words, but of the same matter, reason, design, and consequence; and so they did at Jerusalem, so at Aquileia. This was that “correct and blameless faith, proclaimed by the holy catholic and apostolic church, without any mixture of novelty or innovation.”¶ These articles were “the instructions delivered by the holy apostles and their fellow-labourers, to the holy churches of God.”¶¶ Now, since the apostles and apostolical men and churches in these their symbols, did recite particular articles to a considerable number, and were so minute in their recitation, as to descend to circumstances, it is more than probable that they omitted nothing of necessity; and that these arti-

* In *Exposit. Symbol.* † *Serm. v. de Tempore, c. 2.*

‡ In *Symbol apud Cyprian.*

§ All the orthodox fathers maintain that the creed is of apostolic origin.—*Sext. Senensis. lib. ii. Bibl. vide Genebr. lib. iii. de Trin.*

¶ *Ὁρεθη ἐν ἀμώμητος πίσις, ἣν περὶ κηρύττει ἡ ἀγία τοῦ θεοῦ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία κατ’ οὐδένα τρόπον καινισμὸν δεξαμένη.*

¶¶ *Τὰ τῶν αγίων ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν μετ’ ἐκείνων διατριψάντων ἐν ταῖς ἀγίαις Θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαις διδάγματα.*—*Lib. v. Cod. de St. Trin. et. Fid. Cath. cum. recta.*

cles are not general principles, in the bosom of which many more articles equally necessary to be believed explicitly and more particular, are infolded; but that it is as minute an explication of those fundamental principles of belief I before reckoned, as is necessary to salvation.

And therefore Tertullian calls the creed, “the rule of faith, by whose guidance, whatever appears ambiguous or obscure in Scripture may be investigated and explained.”* “The seal of the heart, and the oath of our warfare,”† St. Ambrose calls it: “the comprehension and perfection of our faith,”‡ as it is called by St. Austin, Serm. 115: “the confession, declaration, and rule of faith,”§ generally, by the ancients. The profession of this creed was the exposition of that saying of St. Peter, ‘the answer of a good conscience towards God:’ for of the recitation and profession of this creed, in baptism, it is that Tertullian says, “the soul is not consecrated by the water, but by the truth professed.”|| And of this was the prayer of Hilary, “Regard this expression of my conscience, that I may always hold fast the profession which I made by baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in token of my regeneration.”¶ And according to

* “Regulam fidei, quâ salvâ et formâ ejus manente in suo ordine, possit in Scriptura tractari et inquiri si quid videtur vel ambiguitate pendere vel obscuritate obumbrari.”

† “Cordis signaculum et nostræ militiæ sacramentum.”—Lib. iii. De Velandis Virgin.

‡ “Comprehensio fidei nostræ atque perfectio.”

§ “Confessio, expositio, regula fidei.”

|| “Anima non lotione, sed responsione sancitur.”—De Resur. Carnis.

¶ “Conserva hanc conscientiæ meæ vocem, ut quod in regenerationis meæ symbolo baptizatus in Patre, Filio, Spir. S. professus sum semper obtineam.”—Lib. xii. de Trinit.

the rule and reason of this discourse, (that it may appear that the creed hath in it all articles *primó et per se*, primely and universally necessary,) the creed is just such an explication of that faith which the apostles preached, viz. the creed which St. Paul recites, as contains in it all those things which entitle Christ to us in the capacities of our Lawgiver and our Saviour, such as enable him to the great work of redemption, according to the predictions concerning him, and such as engage and encourage our services. For, taking out the article of Christ's descent into hell, (which was not in the old creed, as appears in some of the copies I before referred to, in Tertullian, Ruffinus, and Irenæus; and indeed, was omitted in all the confessions of the eastern churches, in the church of Rome, and in the Nicene creed, which by adoption came to be the creed of the catholic church,) all other articles are such as directly constitute the parts and work of our redemption, such as clearly derive the honour to Christ, and enable him with the capacities of our Saviour and Lord. The rest engage our services by proposition of such articles, which are rather promises than propositions; and the whole creed, take it in any of the old forms, is but an analysis of that which St. Paul calls the word of salvation, whereby we shall be saved; viz. that we confess Jesus to be Lord, and that God raised him from the dead; by the first whereof he became our Lawgiver and our Guardian; by the second he was our Saviour: the other things are but parts and main actions of those two. Now, what reason there is in the world that can enwrap any thing else within the foundation; that is, in the whole body of articles simply and inseparably necessary,

or in the prime original necessity of faith, I cannot possibly imagine. These do the work, and therefore nothing can, upon the true grounds of reason, enlarge the necessity to the inclosure of other articles.

Now, if more were necessary than the articles of the creed, I demand, why was it made the characteristic note of a Christian from a heretic, or a Jew, or an infidel? Or to what purpose was it composed? Or if this was intended as sufficient, did the apostles, or those churches which they founded, know any thing else to be necessary? If they did not, then either nothing more is necessary, (I speak of matters of mere belief,) or they did not know all the will of the Lord, and so were unfit dispensers of the mysteries of the kingdom; or if they did know more was necessary, and yet would not insert it, they did an act of public notice, and consigned it to all ages of the church, to no purpose, unless to beguile credulous people by making them believe their faith was sufficient, having tried it by that touchstone apostolical, when there was no such matter.

But if this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this creed, why shall we exclude any that preserve the same entire? Why is not our faith of these articles of as much efficacy for bringing us to heaven, as it was in the churches apostolical?—who had guides more infallible, that might without error have taught them superstructures enough, if they had been necessary. And so they did: but that they did not insert

* Vide Isidor de Eccles. Offic. lib. i. cap. 20. Suidam, Turnebum, lib. ii. c. 30. advers. Venant. For. in Exeg. Symb. Feuarent. in Iren. lib. i. c. 2.

them into the creed, when they might have done it with as much certainty as these articles, makes it clear to my understanding, that other things were not necessary, but these were; that whatever profit and advantages might come from other articles, yet these were sufficient; and however certain persons might accidentally be obliged to believe much more, yet this was the one and only foundation of faith upon which all persons were to build their hopes of heaven; this was therefore necessary to be taught to all, because of necessity to be believed by all. So that although other persons might commit a delinquency in a moral principle, if they did not know, or did not believe, much more because they were obliged to further disquisitions in order to other ends, yet none of these who held the creed entire could perish for want of necessary faith, though possibly he might for supine negligence or affected ignorance, or some other fault which had influence upon his opinions and his understanding, he having a new supervening obligation from accidental circumstances, to know and believe more.

Neither are we obliged to make these articles more particular and minute than the creed. For since the apostles, and indeed our blessed Lord himself, promised heaven to them who believed him to be the Christ that was to come into the world, and that he who believes in him should be partaker of the resurrection and life eternal, he will be as good as his word; yet because this article was very general, and a complexion rather than a single proposition, the apostles and others our fathers in Christ did make it more explicit; and though they have said no more than what lay entire and ready

formed in the bosom of the great article, yet they made their extracts to great purpose and absolute sufficiency, and therefore there needs no more deductions or remoter consequences from the first great article, than the creed of the apostles. For although whatsoever is certainly deduced from any of these articles made already so explicit, is as certainly true, and as much to be believed as the article itself, because nothing but what is true can flow from truth,* yet because it is not certain that our deductions from them are certain, and what one calls evident, is so obscure to another, that he believes it false; it is the best and only safe course to rest in that explication the apostles have made; because, if any of these apostolical deductions were not demonstrable evidently to follow from that great article to which salvation is promised, yet the authority of them who compiled the symbol, the plain description of the articles from the words of Scripture, the evidence of reason demonstrating these to be the whole foundation, are sufficient upon great grounds of reason to ascertain us; but if we go farther, besides the easiness of being deceived, we relying upon our own discourses, (which though they may be true, and then bind us to follow them, but yet no more than when they only seem truest,) yet they cannot make the thing certain to another, much less necessary in itself. And since God would not bind us upon pain of sin and punishment, to make deductions ourselves, much less would he bind us to follow another man's logic as an article of our faith; I say much less another man's, for our own integrity (for we will

* "Ex veris possunt nil nisi vera sequi."

certainly be true to ourselves, and do our own business heartily) is as fit and proper to be employed as another man's ability. He cannot secure me that his ability is absolute and the greatest, but I can be more certain that my own purposes and fidelity to myself is such. And since it is necessary to rest somewhere, lest we should run to an infinity, it is best to rest there where the apostles and the churches apostolical rested; when not only they who are able to judge, but others who are not, are equally ascertained of the certainty and of the sufficiency of that explication.

This I say, not that I believe it unlawful or unsafe for the church or any of the ecclesiastical rulers, or any wise man to extend his own creed to any thing which may certainly follow from any one of the articles; but I say, that no such deduction is fit to be pressed on others as an article of faith; and that every deduction which is so made, unless it be such a thing as is at first evident to all, is but sufficient to make a human faith, nor can it amount to a divine, much less can be obligatory to bind a person of a differing persuasion to subscribe under pain of losing his faith, or being a heretic. For it is a demonstration, that nothing can be necessary to be believed under pain of damnation, but such propositions of which it is certain that God hath spoken and taught them to us, and of which it is certain that this is their sense and purpose: for if the sense be uncertain, we can no more be obliged to believe it in a certain sense, than we are to believe it at all, if it were not certain that God delivered it. But if it be only certain that God spake it, and not certain to what sense, our faith of it is to be as indeterminate as its sense;

and it can be no other in the nature of the thing, nor is it consonant to God's justice to believe of him that he can or will require more. And this is of the nature of those propositions, which Aristotle calls *θέσεις*, to which, without any further probation, all wise men will give assent at its first publication. And therefore deductions inevident, from the evident and plain letter of faith, are as great recessions from the obligation, as they are from the simplicity and certainty of the article. And this I also affirm, although the church of any one denomination, or represented in a council, shall make the deduction or declaration. For unless Christ had promised his Spirit to protect every particular church from all errors less material; unless he had promised an absolute, universal infallibility even in the most trifling matters; unless superstructures be of the same necessity with the foundation, and that God's Spirit doth not only preserve his church in the being of a church, but in a certainty of not saying any thing that is less certain; (and that whether they will or no too;) we may be bound to peace and obedience, to silence and to charity, but have not a new article of faith made: and a new proposition, though consequent (as it is said) from an article of faith, becomes not therefore a part of the faith, nor of absolute necessity. "What did the church ever aim at doing by the decrees of her councils, but to make what was believed before, believed afterwards more firmly?"* said Vicentius Lirinensis: whatsoever was of necessary belief before is so still, and hath a new degree added, by reason

* "Quid unquam aliud ecclesia conciliorum decretis enisa est, nisi ut quod antea simpliciter credebatur, hoc idem postea diligentius crederetur?"—Contra Hæres. cap. 32.

of a new light or a clear explication; but no propositions can be adopted into the foundation. The church hath power to intend our faith, but not to extend it; to make our belief more evident, but not more large and comprehensive. For Christ and his apostles concealed nothing that was necessary to the integrity of Christian faith, or salvation of our souls: Christ declared all the will of his Father, and the apostles were stewards and dispensers of the same mysteries, and were faithful in all the house, and therefore concealed nothing, but taught the whole doctrine of Christ; so they said themselves. And, indeed, if they did not teach all the doctrine of faith, an angel or a man might have taught us other things than what they taught, without deserving an anathema, but not without deserving a blessing for making up that faith entire, which the apostles left imperfect. Now, if they taught all the whole body of faith, either the church in the following ages lost part of the faith, (and then where was their infallibility, and the effect of those glorious promises, to which she pretends, and hath certain title?—for she may as well introduce a falsehood as lose a truth, it being as much promised to her, that the Holy Ghost shall lead her into all truth, as that she shall be preserved from all errors, as appears, *John*, xvi. 13,) or if she retained all the faith which Christ and his apostles consigned and taught, then no age can, by declaring any point, make that to be an article of faith, which was not so in all ages of Christianity before such declaration. And, indeed, if the church,* by de-

* Vide Jacob Almain. in 3. Sent. d. 25. Q. Unic. Dub. 3. "Patet ergo, quod nulla veritas est catholica ex approbatione ecclesiæ vel Papæ."—Gabr. Biel. in 3. Sent. Dist. 25. q. Unic. art. 3. Dub. 3. ad finem.

clarating an article, can make that to be necessary which before was not necessary, I do not see how it can stand with the charity of the church so to do, (especially after so long experience she hath had, that all men will not believe every such decision or explication,) for by so doing, she makes the narrow way to heaven narrower, and chalks out one path more to the devil than he had before, and yet the way was broad enough when it was at the narrowest. For before, differing persons might be saved in diversity of persuasions; and now, after this declaration, if they cannot, there is no other alteration made, but that some shall be damned, who before, even in the same dispositions and belief, should have been beatified persons. For, therefore, it is well for the fathers of the primitive church, that their errors were not discovered; for if they had been contested, (for that would have been called discovery enough,) either they must have relinquished their errors, or been expelled from the church.* But it is better as it was; they went to heaven by that good fortune, whereas, otherwise they might have gone to the devil. And yet there were some errors, particularly that of St. Cyprian, that was discovered, and he went to heaven, it is thought; possibly they might so too for all this pretence. But suppose it true, yet whether that declaration of an article of which with safety we either might have doubted or been ignorant, do more good than the damning of those many souls occasionally, but yet certainly and foreknowingly, does hurt, I leave it to all wise and good men to determine. And yet, besides this, it cannot enter

* “*Vel errores emendassent, vel ab ecclesiâ ejecti fuissent.*”—*Bellar. de Laicis, lib. iii. c. 20. § Ad primam Confirmationem.*

into my thoughts, that it can possibly consist with God's goodness, to put it into the power of man so palpably and openly to alter the paths and inlets to heaven, and to straiten his mercies, unless he had furnished these men with an infallible judgment, and an infallible prudence, and a never-failing charity; that they should never do it but with great necessity, and with great truth, and without ends and human designs, of which I think no arguments can make us certain what the primitive church hath done in this case: I shall afterwards consider and give an account of it, but for the present, there is no insecurity in ending there where the apostles ended, in building where they built, in resting where they left us, unless the same infallibility which they had, had still continued, which I think I shall hereafter make evident it did not. And therefore those extensions of creed which were made in the first ages of the church, although for the matter they were most true, yet, because it was not certain that they should be so, and they might have been otherwise, therefore they could not be in the same order of faith, nor in the same degrees of necessity to be believed with the articles apostolical; and therefore whether they did well or no in laying the same weight upon them, or whether they did lay the same weight or no, we will afterwards consider.

But to return. I consider that a foundation of faith cannot alter; unless a new building be to be made, the foundation is the same still: and this foundation is no other but that which Christ and his apostles laid—which doctrine is like himself, yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever: so that the articles of necessary belief to all, (which

are the only foundation,) they cannot be several in several ages, and to several persons. Nay, the sentence and declaration of the church cannot lay this foundation, or make any thing of the foundation, because the church cannot lay her own foundation : we must suppose her to be a building, and that she relies upon the foundation, which is therefore supposed to be laid before, because she is built upon it ; or (to make it more explicate) because a cloud may arise from the allegory of building and foundation, it is plainly thus : the church being a company of men obliged to the duties of faith and obedience, the duty and obligation being of the faculties of will and understanding, to adhere to such an object, must presuppose the object made ready for them ; for as the object is before the act in order of nature, and therefore not to be produced or increased by the faculty, (which is receptive, and cannot be active upon its proper object,) so the object of the church's faith is in order of nature before the church, or before the act and habit of faith, and therefore cannot be enlarged by the church, any more than the act of the visive faculty can add visibility to the object. So that if we have found out what foundation Christ and his apostles did lay—that is, what body and system of articles, simply necessary, they taught and required of us to believe—we need not, we cannot go any further for foundation, we cannot enlarge that system or collection. Now, then, although all that they said is true, and nothing of it to be doubted or disbelieved, yet as all that they said is neither written nor delivered, (because all was not necessary,) so we know that of those things which are written some things are as far off from the foundation as those things which were omitted, and there

fore, although now accidentally they must be believed by all that know them, yet it is not necessary all should know them; and that all should know them in the same sense and interpretation, is neither probable nor obligatory: but, therefore, since these things are to be distinguished by some differences of necessary and not necessary, whether or no is not the declaration of Christ and his apostles, affixing salvation to the belief of some great comprehensive articles, and the act of the apostles, rendering them as explicit as they thought convenient, and consigning that creed made so explicit, as a tessera of a Christian, as a comprehension of the articles of his belief, as a sufficient disposition, and an express of the faith of a catechumen, in order to baptism,—whether or no, I say, all this be not sufficient probation that these only are of absolute necessity, that this is sufficient for mere belief in order to heaven, and that therefore whosoever believes these articles heartily and explicitly, as St. John's expression is, 'God dwelleth in him,' I leave it to be considered and judged of from the premises: only this, if the old doctors had been made judges in these questions, they would have passed their affirmative; for to instance in one for all, of this it was said by Tertullian: "This symbol is the one sufficient, immovable, unalterable, and unchangeable rule of faith, that admits no increment or decrement; but if the integrity and unity of this be preserved, in all other things men may take a liberty of enlarging their knowledges and prophesyings, according as they are assisted by the grace of God."*

* "Regula quidem fidei una omnino est sola immobilis et irreformabilis, &c. Hâc lege fidei manente cætera jam disciplinæ et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante scilicet et proficiente usque in finem gratia Dei."—*Lib. de Veland. Virg.*

SECTION II.

Of Heresy and the nature of it, and that it is to be accounted according to the strict capacity of Christian faith, and not in opinions speculative; nor ever to pious persons.

AND thus I have represented a short draught of the object of faith, and its foundation; the next consideration, in order to our main design, is to consider what was and what ought to be the judgment of the apostles concerning heresy; for although there are more kinds of vices than there are of virtues, yet the number of them is to be taken by accounting the transgressions of their virtues, and by the limits of faith; we may also reckon the analogy and proportions of heresy, that as we have seen who was called faithful by the apostolical men, we may also perceive who were listed by them in the catalogue of heretics, that we in our judgments may proceed accordingly.

And first, the word Heresy is used in Scripture indifferently—in a good sense for a sect or division of opinion, and men following it; or sometimes in a bad sense, for a false opinion signally condemned. But these kind of people were then called antichrists and false prophets more frequently than heretics, and then there were many of them in the world. But it is observable that no heresies are noted with distinct particularity in Scripture, but such as are great errors practical—such whose doctrines taught impiety, or such who denied the com-

ing of Christ directly or by consequence, not remote or wiredrawn, but prime and immediate: and therefore, in the code *De S. Trinitate et Fide Catholica*, heresy is called “a wicked opinion and an ungodly doctrine.”*

The first false doctrine we find condemned by the apostles, was the opinion of Simon Magus, who thought the Holy Ghost was to be bought with money. He thought very dishonourably to the blessed Spirit; but yet his followers are rather noted of a vice, neither resting in the understanding, nor derived from it, but wholly practical. It is simony, not heresy, though in Simon it was a false opinion, proceeding from a low account of God, and promoted by his own ends of pride and covetousness: the great heresy that troubled them was the doctrine of the necessity of keeping the law of Moses, the necessity of circumcision; against which doctrine they were therefore zealous, because it was a direct overthrow to the very end and excellency of Christ's coming. And this was an opinion most pertinaciously and obstinately maintained by the Jews, and had made a sect among the Galatians, and this was indeed wholly in opinion; and against it the apostles opposed two articles of the creed, which served at several times, according as the Jews changed their opinion, and left some degrees of their error: ‘I believe in Jesus Christ, and I believe the holy catholic church;’ for they therefore pressed the necessity of Moses's law, because they were unwilling to forego the glorious appellative of being God's own peculiar people; and that salvation was of the Jews, and that the rest of the world

* Ἄσεβης ὁδῶσα, ἔ ἀθέμιτος διδασκαλία.

were capable of that grace no otherwise but by adoption into their religion, and becoming proselytes. But this was so ill a doctrine, as that it overthrew the great benefits of Christ's coming; for 'if they were circumcised, Christ profited them nothing;' meaning this, that Christ will not be a Saviour to them who do not acknowledge him for their Lawgiver; and they neither confess him their Lawgiver nor their Saviour, that look to be justified by the law of Moses, and observation of legal rites; so that this doctrine was a direct enemy to the foundation, and therefore the apostles were so zealous against it. Now, then, that other opinion, which the apostles met at Jerusalem to resolve, was but a piece of that opinion; for the Jews and proselytes were drawn off from their lees and sediment by degrees, step by step. At first, they would not endure any should be saved but themselves and their proselytes. Being wrought off from this height by miracles, and preaching of the apostles, they admitted the Gentiles to a possibility of salvation, but yet so as to hope for it by Moses's law. From which foolery when they were with much ado dissuaded, and told that salvation was by faith in Christ, not by works of the law, yet they resolved to plough with an ox and an ass still, and join Moses with Christ; not as shadow and substance, but in an equal confederation; Christ should save the Gentiles if he was helped by Moses, but alone Christianity could not do it. Against this the apostles assembled at Jerusalem, and made a decision of the question, tying some of the Gentiles (such only who were blended by the Jews as fellow-countrymen) to observation of such rites which the Jews had derived by tradition from Noah, intending by

this to satisfy the Jews, as far as might be, with a reasonable compliance and condescension; the other Gentiles, who were unmixed, in the meanwhile remaining free, as appears in the liberty St. Paul gave the church of Corinth, of eating idol sacrifices, (expressly against the decree at Jerusalem,) so it were without scandal. And yet for all this care and curious discretion, a little of the leaven still remained: all this they thought did so concern the Gentiles, that it was totally impertinent to the Jews; still they had a distinction to satisfy the letter of the apostle's decree, and yet to persist in their old opinion; and this so continued, that fifteen Christian bishops, in succession, were circumcised, even until the destruction of Jerusalem, under Adrian, as Eusebius reports.*

First, by the way, let me observe, that never any matter of question in the Christian church was determined with greater solemnity, or more full authority of the church, than this question concerning circumcision: no less than the whole college of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and that with a decree of the highest sanction: 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.' Secondly, either the case of the Hebrews in particular was omitted, and no determination concerning them, whether it were necessary or lawful for them to be circumcised, or else it was involved in the decree, and intended to oblige the Jews. If it was omitted, since the question was concerning what was essential, (for 'I Paul say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing,') it is very remarkable how the apostles, to gain the Jews, and to comply

* Euseb. lib. iv. Eccles. Hist. c. 5.

with their violent prejudice in behalf of Moses's law, did for a time tolerate their dissent even in what was otherwise essential, which I doubt not but was intended as a precedent for the church to imitate for ever after: but if it was not omitted, either all the multitude of the Jews, (which St. James, then their bishop, expressed by "many myriads:"*) 'Thou seest how many myriads of Jews that believe, and yet are zealots for the law;' and Eusebius, speaking of Justus, says, he was one "of the infinite multitude of the circumcision, who believed in Jesus,)"† I say all these did perish, and their believing in Christ served them to no other ends, but in the infinity of their torments to upbraid them with hypocrisy and heresy; or, if they were saved, it is apparent how merciful God was, and pitiful to human infirmities, that in a point of so great concernment did pity their weakness, and pardon their errors, and love their good mind, since their prejudice was little less than insuperable, and had fair probabilities, at least it was such as might abuse a wise and good man (and so it did many) they did err with a good intention. And, if I mistake not, this consideration St. Paul‡ urged as a reason why God forgave him who was a persecutor of the saints, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief; that is, he was not convinced in his understanding, of the truth of the way which he persecuted; he in the meanwhile remaining in that incredulity, not out of malice or ill ends, but the mistakes of humanity and a pious zeal, therefore 'God had

* Acts xxi. 20.

† "Ex infinitâ multitudine eorum qui ex circumcissione in Jesum credebant."—Lib. iii. 32. Eccles. Hist.

‡ 1 Tim. i.

mercy on him.' And so it was in this great question of circumcision; here only was the difference, the invincibility of St. Paul's error, and the honesty of his heart caused God so to pardon him as to bring him to the knowledge of Christ, which God therefore did because it was necessary, as an intermediate step. No salvation was consistent with the actual remanency of that error; but in the question of circumcision, although they, by consequence, did overthrow the end of Christ's coming, yet because it was such a consequence, which they, being hindered by a prejudice not impious, did not perceive, God tolerated them in their error, till time and a continual dropping of the lessons and dictates apostolical did wear it out. And then the doctrine put on its apparel, and became clothed with necessity; they in the mean time so kept to the foundation, that is, Jesus Christ crucified and risen again, that although this did make a violent concussion of it, yet they held fast with their heart what they ignorantly destroyed with their tongue, (which Saul before his conversion did not,) that God, upon other titles than an actual dereliction of their error, did bring them to salvation.

And in the descent of so many years, I find not any one anathema passed by the apostles or their successors, upon any of the bishops of Jerusalem, or the believers of the circumcision; and yet it was a point as clearly determined, and of as great necessity, as any of those questions that at this day vex and crucify Christendom.

Besides this question, and that of the resurrection, commenced in the church of Corinth, and promoted, with some variety of sense, by Hymenæus and Philetus in Asia, who said that the resurrection

was past already, I do not remember any other heresy named in Scripture, but such as were errors of impiety in moral practice; such as was, particularly, forbidding to marry, and the heresy of the Nicolaitans, a doctrine that taught the necessity of lust and frequent fornication.

But in all the animadversions against errors made by the apostles in the New Testament, no pious person was condemned, no man that did invincibly err, or with a good intention; but something that was amiss in the principle of action, was that which the apostles did redargue. And it is very considerable, that even they of the circumcision, who in so great numbers did heartily believe in Christ, and yet most violently retain circumcision, and without question went to heaven in great numbers, yet of the number of these very men, they came deeply under censure, when to their error they added impiety: so long as it stood with charity and without human ends and secular interests, so long it was either innocent or connived at; but when they grew covetous, and for filthy lucre's sake taught the same doctrine which others did in the simplicity of their hearts, then they turned heretics, then they were termed seducers; and Titus was commanded to look to them, and to silence them: 'For there are many that are intractable and vain babblers, seducers of minds, especially they of the circumcision, who seduce whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.' These indeed were not to be endured, but to be silenced, by the conviction of sound doctrine, and to be rebuked sharply, and avoided.

For heresy is not an error of the understanding, but an error of the will. And this is clearly in-

sinuated in Scripture, in the style whereof faith and a good life are made one duty, and vice is called opposite to faith, and heresy opposed to holiness and sanctity. So in St. Paul: 'For (saith he) the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned;*' *a quibus quod aberrarunt quidam*, from which charity, and purity, and goodness, and sincerity, because some have wandered, they have turned aside unto vain jangling. And immediately after, he reckons the oppositions to faith and sound doctrine, and instances only in vices that stain the lives of Christians, 'the unjust, the unclean, the uncharitable, the liar, the perjured person;' these are the enemies of the true doctrine. And therefore St. Peter, having given in charge, to add to our virtue patience, temperance, charity, and the like, gives this for a reason: 'for if these things be in you and abound, ye shall be fruitful in the *knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' So that knowledge and faith is part of a good life.† And St. Paul calls faith, or the form of sound words, 'the doctrine that is according to godliness,' 1 *Tim.* vi. 3. And to believe in the truth, and to have pleasure in unrighteousness,‡ are by the same apostle opposed, and intimate, that piety and faith is all one thing: faith

* 1 *Tim.* i.

† "Quid igitur credulitas vel fides? Opinor fidelitèr hominem Christo credere; id est, fidelem Deo esse: hoc est, fideliter Dei mandata servare."

"What then is belief or faith? It is, in my opinion, faithfully to believe in Christ; that is, to be faithful to God: in other words, faithfully to keep his commandments."—So Salvian.

‡ Εὐσεβείῃ τῶν χριστιανῶν ζῆσησκεία; that is, "our religion, or faith; the whole manner of serving God.—C. *de summa Trinit. et Fide Cathol.*

must be entire and holy too, or it is not right. It was the heresy of the Gnosticks, that it was no matter how men lived, so they did but believe aright: which wicked doctrine Tatianus, a learned Christian, did so detest, that he fell into a quite contrary: "It is of no consequence what a man believes, but only what he does."* And thence came the sect of the Encratites. Both these heresies sprang from the too nice distinguishing the faith from the piety and good life of a Christian: they are both but one duty. However they may be distinguished, if we speak like philosophers; they cannot be distinguished, when we speak like Christians. For to believe what God hath commanded, is in order to a good life; and to live well is the product of that believing, and as proper emanations from it, as from its proper principle, and as heat is from the fire. And therefore, in Scripture, they are used promiscuously in sense, and in expression, as not only being subjected in the same person, but also in the same faculty; faith is as truly seated in the will as in the understanding, and a good life as merely derives from the understanding as the will. Both of them are matters of choice and of election, neither of them an effect natural and invincible or necessary antecedently.† And, indeed, if we remember that St. Paul reckons heresy amongst the works of the flesh, and ranks it with all manner of practical impieties, we shall easily perceive, that if a man mingles not a vice with his opinion, if he be innocent in his life, though deceived in his doctrine, his error is his misery, not his crime; it makes him

* "Non est curandum quid quisque credat, id tantum curandum est quod quisque faciat."

† "Necessaria ut fiant, non necessaria facta."

an argument of weakness and an object of pity, but not a person sealed up to ruin and reprobation.

For as the nature of faith is, so is the nature of heresy, contraries having the same proportion and commensuration. Now faith, if it be taken for an act of the understanding merely, is so far from being that excellent grace that justifies us, that it is not good at all, in any kind but naturally, and makes the understanding better in itself, or pleasing to God, just as strength doth the arm, or beauty the face, or health the body; these are natural perfections indeed, and so knowledge and a true belief is to the understanding. But this makes us not at all more acceptable to God; for then the unlearned were certainly in a damnable condition, and all good scholars should be saved, (whereas I am afraid too much of the contrary is true.) But unless faith be made moral by the mixtures of choice and charity, it is nothing but a natural perfection, not a grace or a virtue; and this is demonstrably proved in this, that by the confession of all men, of all interests and persuasions in matters of mere belief, invincible ignorance is our excuse if we be deceived, which could not be, but that neither to believe aright is commendable, nor to believe amiss is reprobable; but where both one and the other is voluntary and chosen antecedently or consequently, by prime election or *ex post facto*, and so comes to be considered in morality, and is part of a good life or a bad life respectively. Just so it is in heresy; if it be a design of ambition and making of a sect, (so Erasmus expounds St. Paul, ἀρετικὸν ἀνθρώπων;)* if it be for filthy lucre's sake, as it was in some that

* "Alieni sunt a veritate qui se obarmant multitudine."—Chryst.

were of the circumcision; if it be of pride and love of pre-eminence, as it was in *Diotrephes*; or out of peevishness and indocibleness of disposition, or of a contentious spirit; that is, that their feet are not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in all these cases the error is just so damnable as is its principle, but therefore damnable not of itself, but by reason of its adherency. And if any shall say any otherwise, it is to say that some men shall be damned when they cannot help it, perish without their own fault, and be miserable for ever, because of their unhappiness to be deceived through their own simplicity and natural or accidental, but inculpable infirmity.

For it cannot stand with the goodness of God, who does so know our infirmities, that he pardons many things in which our wills indeed have the least share, (but some they have,) but are overborne with the violence of an impetuous temptation; I say, it is inconsistent with his goodness to condemn those who err where the error hath nothing of the will in it, who therefore cannot repent of their error, because they believe it true, who therefore cannot make compensation, because they know not that they are tied to dereliction of it. And although all heretics are in this condition, that is, they believe their errors to be true; yet there is a vast difference between them who believe so out of simplicity, and them who are given over to believe a lie, as a punishment or an effect of some other wickedness or impiety. For all have a concomitant assent to the truth of what they believe; and no man can at the same time believe what he does not believe, but this assent of the understanding in heretics is caused not by force of argument, but the argument is made forcible by

something that is amiss in his will; and although a heretic may peradventure have a stronger argument for his error than some true believer for his right persuasion, yet it is not considerable how strong his argument is; (because in a weak understanding, a small motive will produce a great persuasion, like gentle physic in a weak body;) but that which here is considerable, is, what it is that made his argument forcible. If his invincible and harmless prejudice, if his weakness, if his education, if his mistaking piety, if any thing that hath no venom, nor a sting in it, there the heartiness of his persuasion is no sin, but his misery and his excuse; but if any thing that is evil in the principle of his conduct did incline his understanding, if his opinion did commence upon pride, or is nourished by covetousness, or continues through stupid carelessness, or increases by pertinacity, or is confirmed by obstinacy, then the innocency of the error is disbanded, his misery is changed into a crime and begins its own punishment. But, by the way, I must observe, that when I reckoned *obstinacy* amongst those things which make a false opinion criminal, it is to be understood with some discretion and distinction. For there is an obstinacy of will which is indeed highly guilty of misdemeanor; and when the school makes pertinacity or obstinacy to be the formality of heresy, they say not true at all, unless it be meant the obstinacy of the will and choice; and if they do, they speak imperfectly and inartificially, this being but one of the causes that make error become heresy. The adequate and perfect formality of heresy is whatsoever makes the error voluntary and vicious, as is clear in Scripture, reckoning covetousness, and

pride, and lust, and whatsoever is vicious, to be its causes ; (and in habits or moral changes and productions, whatever alters the essence of a habit, or gives it a new formality, is not to be reckoned the efficient but the form ;) but there is also an obstinacy, (you may call it,) but, indeed, is nothing but a resolution and confirmation of understanding, which is not in a man's power honestly to alter ; and it is not all the commands of humanity that can be argument sufficient to make a man leave believing that for which he thinks he hath reason, and for which he hath such arguments as heartily convince him. Now, the persisting in an opinion finally, and against all the confidence and imperiousness of human commands, that makes not this criminal obstinacy, if the erring person have so much humility of will as to submit to whatever God says, and that no vice in his will hinders him from believing it. So that we must carefully distinguish continuance in opinion from obstinacy, confidence of understanding from peevishness of affection, a not being convinced from a resolution never to be convinced upon human ends and vicious principles. "We are acquainted with some persons who are unwilling to relinquish what they have once believed ; nor can they be easily convinced, but still persist in retaining the notions they have once adopted, though in the spirit of peace and charity ; in which case we neither use compulsion nor authority," saith St. Cyprian.* And he himself was such a one ; for he

* "Scimus quosdam quod semel imbiberint nolle deponere, nec propositum suum facile mutare, sed salvo inter collegas pacis et concordie vinculo quædam propria quæ apud se semel sint usurpata retinere ; qua in re nec nos vim cuiquam facimus, aut legem damus."—*Lib. ii. Ep. 1.*

persisted in his opinion of rebaptisation until death, and yet his obstinacy was not called criminal, or his error turned to heresy. But to return.

In this sense it is that a heretic is *αυτοκατάκριτος*, self-condemned, not by an immediate express sentence of understanding, but by his own act or fault brought into condemnation. As it is in the canon law, *Notorius percussor clerici* is *ipso jure* excommunicate, not *per sententiam latam ab homine*, but *à jure*. “A man who strikes a clergyman, is excommunicated by his own conscience, not so much by a public verdict as by right.” No man hath passed sentence from a judgment-seat, but law hath decreed it by express enactment: so it is in the case of a heretic. The understanding, which is judge, condemns him not by an express sentence; for he errs with as much simplicity in the result, as he had malice in the principle: but there is *sententia lata à jure*, his will which is his law, that hath condemned him. And this is gathered from that saying of St. Paul, 2 *Tim.* iii. 13. ‘But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.’ First they are evil men; malice and peevishness is in their wills: then they turn heretics and seduce others, and while they grow worse and worse, the error is master of their understanding; they are deceived themselves, ‘given over to believe a lie,’ saith the apostle. They first play the knave, and then play the fool; they first sell themselves to the purchase of vain glory or ill ends, and then they become possessed with a lying spirit, and believe those things heartily, which if they were honest they should, with God’s grace, discover and disclaim. So that now we see that a hearty persuasion in a false article does not always make

the error to be esteemed involuntary ; but then only when it is as innocent in the principle as it is confident in the present persuasion. And such persons who by their ill lives and vicious actions, or manifest designs (for by their fruits ye shall know them) give testimony of such criminal indispositions, so as competent judges by human and prudent estimate may so judge them, then they are to be declared heretics, and avoided. And if this were not true, it were vain that the apostle commands us to avoid an heretic : for no external act can pass upon a man for a crime that is not cognizable.

Now every man that errs, though in a matter of consequence, so long as the foundation is entire, cannot be suspected justly guilty of a crime to give his error a formality of heresy ; for we see many a good man miserably deceived ; (as we shall make it appear afterwards ;) and he that is the best amongst men, certainly hath so much humility to think he may be easily deceived ; and twenty to one but he is, in something or other ; yet, if his error be not voluntary, and part of an ill life, then because he lives a good life, he is a good man, and therefore no heretic : no man is an heretic against his will. And if it be pretended that every man that is deceived, is therefore proud, because he does not submit his understanding to the authority of God or man respectively, and so his error becomes a heresy ; to this I answer, that there is no Christian man but will submit his understanding to God, and believe whatsoever he hath said ; but always provided he knows that God hath said so, else he must do his duty by a readiness to obey when he shall know it. But for obedience or humility of the un-

derstanding towards men, that is a thing of another consideration, and it must first be made evident that his understanding must be submitted to men ; and who those men are, must also be certain, before it will be adjudged a sin not to submit. But if I mistake not, Christ's saying, ' Call no man master upon earth,' is so great a prejudice against this pretence, as I doubt it will go near wholly to make it invalid. So that as the worshipping of angels is a humility indeed, but it is voluntary and a will-worship to an ill sense, not to be excused by the excellency of humility, nor the virtue of religion ; so is the relying upon the judgment of man an humility too, but such as comes not under that obedience of faith which is the duty of every Christian, but intrenches upon that duty which we owe to Christ as an acknowledgment that he is our great Master, and the Prince of the catholic church. But whether it be or be not, if that be the question, whether the disagreeing person be to be determined by the dictates of men, I am sure the dictates of men must not determine him in that question, but it must be settled by some higher principle : so that if of that question the disagreeing person does opine, or believe, or err *bonâ fide*, he is not therefore to be judged a heretic, because he submits not his understanding ; because, till it be sufficiently made certain to him that he is bound to submit, he may innocently and piously disagree ; and this not submitting is therefore not a crime, (and so cannot make a heresy,) because without a crime he may lawfully doubt whether he be bound to submit or no, for that is the question. And if in such questions which have influence upon a whole system of theology, a man may doubt lawfully if he doubts

heartily, because the authority of men being the thing in question, cannot be the judge of this question, and therefore being rejected, or (which is all one) being questioned, that is, not believed, cannot render the doubting person guilty of pride, and by consequence not of heresy, much more may particular questions be doubted of, and the authority of men examined, and yet the doubting person be humble enough, and therefore no heretic for all this pretence. And it would be considered that humility is a duty in great ones as well as in idiots.* And as inferiors must not disagree without reason, so neither must superiors prescribe to others without sufficient authority, evidence, and necessity too; and if rebellion be pride, so is tyranny; both may be guilty of pride of understanding, sometimes the one in imposing, sometimes the other in a causeless disagreeing; but in the inferiors it is then only the want of humility, when the guides impose or prescribe what God hath also taught, and then it is the disobeying God's dictates, not man's, that makes the sin. But then this consideration will also intervene, that as no dictate of God obliges me to believe it, unless I know it to be such; so neither will any of the dictates of my superiors engage my faith, unless I also know, or have no reason to disbelieve, but that they are warranted to teach them to me, therefore, because God hath taught the same to them; which if I once know, or have no reason to think the contrary, if I disagree, my sin is not in resisting human authority, but divine. And, therefore, the whole business of submitting our understanding to human authority

* Mean, or illiterate persons.

comes to nothing; for either it resolves into the direct duty of submitting to God, or, if it be spoken of abstractedly, it is no duty at all.

But this pretence of a necessity of humbling the understanding, is none of the meanest arts whereby some persons have invaded and usurped a power over men's faith and consciences; and therefore we shall examine the pretence afterwards, and try if God hath invested any man, or company of men, with such a power. In the mean time, he that submits his understanding to all that he knows God hath said, and is ready to submit to all that he hath said if he but know it, denying his own affections, and ends, and interests, and human persuasions, laying them all down at the foot of his great master, Jesus Christ, that man hath brought his understanding into subjection, and every proud thought unto the obedience of Christ; and this is the obedience of faith, which is the duty of a Christian.

But to proceed. Besides these heresies noted in Scripture, the age of the apostles, and that which followed, was infested with other heresies; but such as had the same formality and malignity with the precedent, all of them either such as taught practical impieties, or denied an article of the creed. Egesippus, in Eusebius, reckons seven only prime heresies, that sought to deflower the purity of the church: that of Simon, that of Thebutes, of Cleobius, of Dositheus, of Gortheus, of Masbotheus. I suppose Cerinthus to have been the seventh man, though he express him not: but of these, except the last, we know no particulars, but that Egesippus says, they were false Christs, and that their doctrine was directly against God and his blessed

Son. Menander, also, was the first of a sect; but he bewitched the people with his sorceries. Cerinthus's doctrine pretended enthusiasm, or a new revelation, and ended in lust and impious theorems in matter of uncleanness. The Ebionites* denied Christ to be the Son of God, and affirmed him mere man, begot by natural generation, (by occasion of which and the importunity of the Asian bishops, St. John wrote his Gospel,) and taught the observation of Moses's law. Basilides taught it lawful to renounce the faith, and take false oaths in time of persecution. Carpocrates was a very bedlam, half-witch, and quite mad-man, and practised lust, which he called the secret operations to overcome the potentates of the world. Some more there were, but of the same nature and pest; not of a nicety in dispute, not a question of secret philosophy, not of atoms, and undiscernible propositions, but open defiances of all faith, of all sobriety, and of all sanctity; excepting only the doctrine of the Millennaries, which in the best ages was esteemed no heresy, but true catholic doctrine, though since it hath justice done to it, and hath suffered a just condemnation.

Hitherto, and in these instances, the church did esteem and judge of heresies, in proportion to the rules and characters of faith. For faith being a doctrine of piety as well as truth, that which was either destructive of fundamental verity, or of Christian sanctity was against faith, and if it be made a sect, was heresy; if not, it ended in personal impiety and went no farther. But those who, as St. Paul says, not only did such things, but had

* Vide Hilar. lib. i. De Trin.

pleasure in them that do them, and therefore taught others to do what they impiously did dogmatize, they were heretics both in matter and form, in doctrine and deportment, towards God, and towards man, and judicable in both tribunals.

But the Scripture and apostolical sermons, having expressed most high indignation against these masters of impious sects, leaving them under prodigious characters, and horrid representments, as calling them men of corrupt minds, reprobates concerning the faith, given over to strong delusions, to the belief of a lie, false apostles, false prophets, men already condemned, and that by themselves, anti-Christ, enemies of God; and heresy itself, a work of the flesh, excluding from the kingdom of heaven; left such impressions in the minds of all their successors, and so much zeal against such sects, that if any opinion commenced in the church not heard of before, it oftentimes had this ill luck to run the same fortune with an old heresy. For because the heretics did bring in new opinions in matters of great concernment, every opinion *de novo* brought in was liable to the same exception; and because the degree of malignity in every error was oftentimes undiscernible, and most commonly indemonstrable, their zeal was alike against all; and those ages being full of piety, were fitted to be abused with an over-active zeal, as wise persons and learned are with a too much indifferency.

But it came to pass, that the further the succession went from the apostles, the more forward men were in numbering heresies, and that upon slighter and more uncertain grounds. Some footsteps of this we shall find, if we consider the sects that are said to have sprung in the first three hundred years,

and they were quick in their springs and falls; fourscore and seven of them are reckoned. They were indeed reckoned afterward, and though when they were alive, they were not condemned with as much forwardness, as after they were dead; yet even then, confidence began to mingle with opinions less necessary, and mistakes in judgment were oftener and more public than they should have been. But if they were forward in their censures, (as sometimes some of them were,) it is no great wonder they were deceived. For what principle or criterion had they then to judge of heresies, or condemn them, besides the single dictates or decretals of private bishops? for Scripture was indifferently pretended by all; and concerning the meaning of it, was the question. Now there was no general council all that while, no opportunity for the church to convene; and if we search the communicatory letters of the bishops and martyrs in those days, we shall find but few sentences decretory concerning any question of faith, or new-sprung opinion. And in those that did, for aught appears, the persons were misreported, or their opinions mistaken, or at most, the sentence of condemnation was no more but this: such a bishop who hath had the good fortune by posterity to be reputed a catholic, did condemn such a man of such an opinion, and yet himself erred in as considerable matters, but meeting with better neighbours in his life-time, and a more charitable posterity, hath his memory preserved in honour. It appears plain enough in the case of Nicholas, the deacon of Antioch, upon a mistake of his words whereby he taught to abuse the flesh, viz. by acts of austerity and self-denial, and mortification; some wicked people, that were glad

to be mistaken and abused into a pleasing crime, pretended that he taught them to abuse the flesh by filthy commixtures and pollutions: this mistake was transmitted to posterity with a full cry, and acts afterwards found out to justify an ill opinion of him. For by St. Jerome's time it grew out of question, but that he was the vilest of men, and the worst of heretics: * accusations that, while the good man lived, were never thought of, for his daughters were virgins, and his sons lived in holy celibacy all their lives, and himself lived in chaste wedlock; and yet his memory had rotted in perpetual infamy, had not God (in whose sight the memory of the saints is precious) preserved it by the testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus, † and from him of Eusebius and Nicephorus. ‡ But in the catalogue of heretics made by Philastrius, he stands marked with a black character, as guilty of many heresies; by which one testimony we may guess what trust is to be given to those catalogues. Well, this good man had ill luck to fall into unskilful hands at first; but Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Lactantius, (to name no more,) had better fortune; for it being still extant in their writings that they were of the millenary opinion, Papias before, and Nepos after, were censured hardly, and the opinion put into the catalogue of heresies; and yet these men never suspected as guilty, but, like the children of the captivity, walked in the midst of the flame, and not so much as the smell of fire passed on them.

* "Nicolaus Antiochenus, omnium immunditiarum conditor, chorus duxit fæmineos."—Ad Ctesiph. And again: "Iste Nicolaus Diaconus ita immundus extitit ut etiam in præsepi Domini nefas perpetrârit."—Epist. de Fabiano lapso.

† Lib. iii. Stromat.

‡ Lib. iii. c. 26, Hist.

But the uncertainty of these things is very memorable in the story of Eustathius, bishop of Antioch, contesting with Eusebius Pamphilus: Eustathius accused Eusebius for going about to corrupt the Nicene creed, of which slander he then acquitted himself (saith Socrates);* and yet he is not cleared by posterity, for still he is suspected, and his fame not clear. However, Eusebius then escaped well; but, to be quit with his adversary, he recriminates, and accuses him to be a favourer of Sabellius, rather than of the Nicene canons: an imperfect accusation, God knows, when the crime was a suspicion, proveable only by actions capable of divers constructions, and at the most made but some degrees of probability, and the fact itself did not consist in any particular, and therefore was to stand or fall, to be improved or lessened, according to the will of the judges, whom in this case Eustathius, by his ill fortune and a potent adversary, found harsh towards him, insomuch that he was for heresy deposed in the synod of Antioch. And though this was laid open in the eye of the world, as being most ready at hand, with the greatest ease charged upon every man, and with greatest difficulty acquitted by any man, yet there were other suspicions raised upon him privately, or at least talked of afterwards, and pretended as causes of his deprivation, lest the sentence should seem too hard for the first offence. And yet, what they were no man could tell, saith the story. But it is observable what Socrates saith, as in excuse of such proceedings: † *It is the*

* Lib. i. c. 23.

† Τοῦτο δὲ ἐπὶ παντῶν εἰώθησι τῶν καταιρουμένων ποιεῖν οἱ ἐπίσκοποι, κατηγοροῦντες μὲν καὶ ἀσεβῆ λέγοντες, τὰς δὲ αἰτίας τῆς ἀσεβείας οὐ λέγουσι.—Lib. i. c. 24.

manner among the bishops, when they accuse them that are deposed, they call them wicked, but they publish not the actions of their impiety.' It might possibly be that the bishops did it in tenderness of their reputation: but yet hardly; for to punish a person publicly and highly is a certain declaring the person punished guilty of a high crime; and then to conceal the fault, upon pretence to preserve his reputation, leaves every man at liberty to conjecture what he pleaseth, who possibly will believe it worse than it is, inasmuch as they think his judges so charitable as therefore to conceal the fault, lest the publishing of it should be his greatest punishment, and the scandal greater than his deprivation.* However, this course, if it were just in any, was unsafe in all, for it might undo more than it could preserve, and therefore is of more danger than it can be of charity. It is therefore too probable that the matter was not very fair, for in public sentence the acts ought to be public; but that they rather pretend heresy to bring their ends about, shows how easy it is to impute that crime, and how forward they were to do it. And that they might and did then as easily call heretic as afterward, when Vigilius was condemned of heresy, for saying there were antipodes; or as the friars of late did, who suspected Greek and Hebrew of heresy, and called their professors heretics, and had like to have put Terence and Demosthenes into the *Index Expurgatorius*. Sure enough they railed at them *pro concione*; therefore, because they understood them not, and had reason to believe they

* "Simpliciter pateat vitium fortasse pusillum,
Quod tegitur, majus creditur esse malum."—Martial.

would accidentally be enemies to their reputation among the people.

By this instance, which was a while after the Nicene council, where the acts of the church were regular, judicial, and orderly, we may guess at the sentences passed upon heresy, at such times and in such cases, when their process was more private and their acts more tumultuary, their information less certain, and therefore their mistakes more easy and frequent. And it is remarkable in the case of the heresy of Montanus, the scene of whose heresy lay within the first three hundred years, though it was represented in the catalogues afterwards; and possibly the mistake concerning it is to be put upon the score of Epiphanius, by whom Montanus and his followers were put into the catalogue of heretics, for commanding abstinence from meats, as if they were unclean and of themselves unlawful. Now the truth was, Montanus said no such thing; but commanded frequent abstinence, enjoined dry diet and an ascetic table, not for conscience' sake, but for discipline; and yet, because he did this with too much rigour and strictness of mandate, the primitive church disliked it in him, as being too near their error, who, by a Judaical superstition, abstained from meats as from uncleanness. This, by the way, will much concern them who place too much sanctity in such rites and acts of discipline; for it is an eternal rule, and of never-failing truth, that such abstinences, if they be obtruded as acts of original immediate duty and sanctity, are unlawful and superstitious. If they be for discipline, they may be good, but of no very great profit: it is that bodily exercise which St. Paul says profiteth but little; and just in the

same degree the primitive church esteemed them, for they therefore reprehended Montanus for urging such abstinences with too much earnestness, though but in the way of discipline; for that it was no more, Tertullian, who was himself a Montanist, and knew best the opinions of his own sect, testifies: and yet Epiphanius, reporting the errors of Montanus, commends that which Montanus truly and really taught, and which the primitive church condemned in him, and therefore represents that heresy to another sense, and affixes that to Montanus which Epiphanius believed a heresy, and yet which Montanus did not teach. And this also, among many other things, lessens my opinion very much of the integrity or discretion of the old catalogues of heretics, and much abates my confidence towards them.

And now that I have mentioned them casually in passing by, I shall give a short account of them; for men are much mistaken: some in their opinions concerning the truth of them, as believing them to be all true; some concerning their purpose, as thinking them sufficient not only to condemn all those opinions there called heretical, but to be a precedent to all ages of the church to be free and forward in calling heretic. But he that considers the catalogues themselves, as they are collected by Epiphanius, Philastrius, and St. Austin, shall find that many are reckoned for heretics for opinions in matters disputable and undetermined, and of no consequence; and that, in these catalogues of heretics, there are men numbered for heretics which by every side respectively are acquitted; so that there is no company of men in the world that admit these catalogues as good records or suf-

ficient sentences of condemnation. For the churches of the reformation, I am certain they acquit Aërius for denying prayer for the dead, and the Eustathians for denying invocation of saints. And I am partly of opinion, that the church of Rome is not willing to call the Collyridians heretics for offering a cake to the Virgin Mary, unless she also will run the hazard of the same sentence for offering candles to her; and that they will be glad with St. Austin (l. vi. De Hæres. c. 86) to excuse the Tertullianists* for picturing God in a visible, corporal representment. And yet these sects are put in the black book by Epiphanius, and St. Austin, and Isidore respectively. I remember also that the Osseni are called heretics, because they refused to worship toward the east; and yet in that dissent I find not the malignity of a heresy, nor any thing against an article of faith or good manners; and it being only in circumstance, it were hard, if they were otherwise pious men and true believers, to send them to hell for such a trifle. The Parermeutæ refused to follow men's dictates like sheep, but would expound Scripture according to the best evidence themselves could find, and yet were called heretics, whether they expounded true or no. The Pauliciani,† for being offended at crosses; the Proclians, for saying, in a regenerate man all his sins were not quite dead, but only curbed and assuaged, were called heretics, and so condemned; for aught I know, for affirming that which all pious men feel in themselves to be too true. And he that will consider how numerous the catalogues are, and to what a volume they are come in their last collections, to no less

* D. Thom. i. Contr. Gent. c. 21.

† Euthym. part i. tit. 21. Epiphan. Hæres. 64.

than five hundred and twenty, (for so many heresies and heretics are reckoned by Prateolus,) may think that if a retrenchment were justly made of truths, and all impertinences, and all opinions, either still disputable or less considerable, the number would much decrease; and therefore that the catalogues are much amiss, and the name heretic is made a bugbear to affright people from their belief, or to discountenance the persons of men, and disrepute them, that their schools may be empty and their disciples few.

So that I shall not need to instance how that some men were called heretics by Philastrius, for rejecting the translation of the Seventy, and following the Bible of Aquila, wherein the great faults mentioned by Philastrius are, that he translates *χριστὸν θεοῦ* not *Christum*, but *unctum Dei*, the Anointed of God; and instead of Emanuel, writes *Deus nobiscum*, God with us. But this most concerns them of the primitive church, with whom the translation of Aquila was in great reputation: it was supposed he was a greater clerk, and understood more than ordinary. It may be, so he did: but whether yea or no, yet since the other translators, by the confession of Philastrius, when compelled by urgent necessity, did pass by some things, if some wise men, or unwise, did follow a translator who understood the original well, (for so Aquila had learnt amongst the Jews,) it was hard to call men heretics for following his translation, especially since the other Bibles (which were thought to have in them contradictories, and, it was confessed, had omitted some things) were excused by necessity; and the others' necessity of following Aquila, when they had no better, was not at all considered, nor a

less crime than heresy laid upon their score. Such another was the heresy of the Quartodecimani; for the Easterlings were all proclaimed heretics, for keeping Easter after the manner of the east; and as Socrates and Nicephorus report, the bishop of Rome was very forward to excommunicate all the bishops of the lesser Asia, for observing the feast according to the tradition of their ancestors, though they did it modestly, quietly, and without faction; and although they pretended, and were as well able to prove their tradition from St. John, of so observing it, as the western church could prove their tradition derivative from St. Peter and St. Paul. If such things as these make up the catalogues of heretics, (as we see they did,) their accounts differ from the precedents they ought to have followed; that is, the censures apostolical; and therefore are unsafe precedents for us; and unless they took the liberty of using the word heresy in a lower sense than the world now doth, since the councils have been forward in pronouncing anathema, and took it only for a distinct sense, and a differing persuasion in matters of opinion and minute articles, we cannot excuse the persons of the men: but if they intended the crime of heresy against those opinions, as they laid them down in their catalogues, that crime (I say) which is a work of the flesh, which excludes from the kingdom of heaven, all that I shall say against them is, that the causeless curse shall return empty, and no man is damned the sooner because his enemy cries 'Oh, accursed!' and they that were the judges and accusers might err as well as the persons accused, and might need as charitable construction of their opinions and practices as the other. And of this we

are sure, they had no warrant from any rule of Scripture, or practice apostolical, for driving so furiously and hastily in such decretory sentences. But I am willing rather to believe their sense of the word heresy was more gentle than with us it is, and for that they might have warrant from Scripture.

But, by the way, I observe that although these catalogues are a great instance to show that they whose age and spirits were far distant from the apostles, had also other judgments concerning faith and heresy than the apostles had, and the ages apostolical; yet these catalogues, although they are reports of heresies in the second and third ages, are not to be put upon the account of those ages, nor to be reckoned as an instance of their judgment; which, although it was in some degrees more culpable than that of their predecessors, yet in respect of the following ages it was innocent and modest. But these catalogues I speak of were set down according to the sense of the then present ages, in which as they in all probability did differ from the apprehensions of the former centuries, so it is certain there were differing learnings, other fancies, divers representments and judgments of men, depending upon circumstances, which the first ages knew and the following ages did not; and therefore the catalogues were drawn with some truth, but less certainty, as appears in their differing about the authors of some heresies; several opinions imputed to the same, and some put in the roll of heretics by one, which the other left out; which to me is an argument that the collectors were determined, not by the sense and sentences of the three first ages, but by themselves, and some circumstances about them, which to reckon for here-

tics, which not. And that they themselves were the prime judges, or perhaps some in their own age together with them; but there was not any sufficient external judicatory, competent to declare heresy, that by any public or sufficient sentence or acts of court had furnished them with warrant for their catalogues. And therefore they are no argument sufficient that the first ages of the church, which certainly were the best, did much recede from that which I showed to be the sense of the Scripture and the practice of the apostles; they all contented themselves with the apostles' creed as the rule of the faith, and therefore were not forward to judge of heresy but by analogy to their rule of faith; and those catalogues made after these ages are not sufficient arguments that they did otherwise, but rather of the weakness of some persons, or of the spirit and genius of the age in which the compilers lived, in which the device of calling all differing opinions by the name of heresies, might grow to be a design to serve ends, and to promote interests, as often as an act of zeal and just indignation against evil persons, destroyers of the faith, and corrupters of manners.

For whatever private men's opinions were, yet, till the Nicene council, the rule of faith was entire in the apostles' creed; and provided they retained that, easily they broke not the unity of faith, however differing opinions might possibly commence in such things in which a liberty were better suffered than prohibited with a breach of charity. And this appears exactly in the question between St. Cyprian, of Carthage, and Stephen, bishop of Rome, in which one instance it is easy to see what was lawful and safe for a wise and good man, and

yet how others began, even then, to be abused by that temptation, which since hath invaded all Christendom. St. Cyprian rebaptized heretics, and thought he was bound so to do; calls a synod in Africa, as being metropolitan, and confirms his opinion, by the consent of his suffragans and brethren, but still with so much modesty, that if any man was of another opinion, he judged him not, but gave him that liberty that he desired himself: Stephen, bishop of Rome, grows angry, excommunicates the bishops of Asia and Africa, that in divers synods had consented to rebaptization, and, without peace and without charity, condemns them for heretics. Indeed, here was the rarest mixture and conjunction of unlikelihoods that I have observed. Here was error of opinion with much modesty and sweetness of temper on one side; and on the other, an over-active and impetuous zeal to attest a truth. It uses not to be so, for error usually is supported with confidence, and truth suppressed and discountenanced by indifferency. But that it might appear that the error was not the sin but the uncharitableness, Stephen was accounted a zealous and furious person, and St. Cyprian,* though deceived, yet a very good man, and of great sanctity. For although every error is to be opposed, yet, according to the variety of errors so is there variety of proceedings. If it be against faith, that is, a destruction of any part of the foundation, it is with zeal to be resisted; and we have for it an apostolical warrant, 'Contend earnestly for the faith:' but then, as these things recede farther from the foundation, our certainty is the less, and their ne-

* Vid. St. Aug. lib. ii. c. 6. De Baptis. contra Donat.

cessity not so much; and therefore it were very fit that our confidence should be according to our evidence, and our zeal according to our confidence, and our confidence should then be the rule of our communion; and the lightness of an article should be considered with the weight of a precept of charity. And therefore, there are some errors to be reprov'd, rather by a private friend than a public censure, and the persons of the men not avoided, but admonish'd, and their doctrine rejected, not their communion: few opinions are of that malignity which are to be rejected with the same exterminating spirit, and confidence of aversation, with which the first teachers of Christianity condemn'd Ebion, Manes, and Cerinthus: and in the condemnation of heretics, the personal iniquity is more considerable than the obliquity of the doctrine, not for the rejection of the article, but for censuring the persons; and therefore it is the piety of the man that excus'd St. Cyprian, which is a certain argument that it is not the opinion, but the impiety that condemn's and makes the heretic. And this was it which Vincentius Lirinensis said, in this very case of St. Cyprian: "Strange as it may appear, we judge the catholic authors and the heretics that followed, to be of one and the same opinion. We excuse the teachers, and condemn the scholars. They who wrote the books are the inheritors of heaven, while the defenders of these very books are thrust down to hell."* Which saying, if we confront against the

* "Unius et ejusdem opinionis (mirum videri potest) iudicamus auctores catholicos, et sequaces hæreticos. Excusamus magistros, et condemnamus scholasticos. Qui scripserunt libros sunt hæredes cæli, quorum librorum defensores detruduntur ad infernum."—Adv. Hæres. c. ii.

saying of Salvian, condemning the first authors of the Arian sect, and acquitting the followers, we are taught by these two wise men, that an error is not it that sends a man to hell, but he that begins the heresy, and is the author of the sect, is the man marked out to ruin ; and his followers escaped, when the heresiarch commenced the error upon pride and ambition, and his followers went after him in simplicity of their heart ; and so it was most commonly : but on the contrary, when the first man in the opinion was honestly and invincibly deceived, as St. Cyprian was, and that his scholars, to maintain their credit, or their ends, maintained the opinion, not for the excellency of the reason persuading, but for the benefit and accruments, or peevishness, as did the Donatists, who, as St. Austin said of them, indulged themselves in their lusts, upon the supposed authority of Cyprian ; then the scholars are the heretics, and the master is a catholic. For his error is not the heresy formally, and an erring person may be a catholic. A wicked person in his error becomes heretic, when the good man in the same error shall have all the rewards of faith. For whatever an ill man believes, if he therefore believe it because it serves his own ends, be his belief true or false, the man hath an heretical mind ; for to serve his own ends, his mind is prepared to believe a lie. But a good man, that believes what according to his light, and upon the use of his moral industry he thinks true, whether he hits upon the right or no, because he hath a mind desirous of truth, and prepared to believe every truth, is therefore acceptable to God ; because nothing hindered him from it but what he could not help, his misery and his weakness, which being im-

perfections merely natural, which God never punishes, he stands fair for a blessing of his morality, which God always accepts. So that now, if Stephen had followed the example of God Almighty, or retained but the same peaceable spirit which his brother of Carthage did, he might, with more advantage to truth, and reputation both of wisdom and piety, have done his duty in attesting what he believed to be true; for we are as much bound to be zealous pursuers of peace, as earnest contenders for the faith. I am sure, more earnest we ought to be for the peace of the church, than for an article which is not of the faith, as this question of rebaptization was not; for St. Cyprian died in belief against it, and yet was a catholic, and a martyr for the Christian faith.

The sum is this, St. Cyprian did right in a wrong cause; (as it hath been since judged;) and Stephen did ill in a good cause. As far, then, as piety and charity is to be preferred before a true opinion, so far is St. Cyprian's practice a better precedent for us, and an example of primitive sanctity, than the zeal and indiscretion of Stephen: St. Cyprian had not learned to forbid to any one a liberty of prophesying or interpretation, if he transgressed not the foundation of faith and the creed of the apostles.

Well, thus it was, and thus it ought to be, in the first ages, the faith of Christendom rested still upon the same foundation, and the judgments of heresies were accordingly, or were amiss; but the first great violation of this truth was, when general councils came in, and the symbols were enlarged, and new articles were made as much of necessity to be believed as the creed of the apostles, and damnation

threatened to them that did dissent ; and at last the creeds multiplied in number, and in articles, and the liberty of prophesying began to be something restrained.

And this was of so much the more force and efficacy, because it began upon great reason, and in the first instance, with success good enough. For I am much pleased with the enlarging of the creed, which the council of Nice made, because they enlarged it to my sense ; but I am not sure that others are satisfied with it ; while we look upon the article they did determine, we see all things well enough ; but there are some wise personages consider it in all circumstances, and think the church had been more happy if she had not been in some sense constrained to alter the simplicity of her faith, and make it more curious and articulate, so much that he had need be a subtle man to understand the very words of the new determinations.

For the first Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, in the presence of his clergy, entreats somewhat more curiously of the secret of the mysterious Trinity and Unity ; so curiously, that Arius* (who was a sophister too subtle as it afterward appeared) misunderstood him ; and thought he intended to bring in the heresy of Sabellius. For while he taught the unity of the Trinity, either he did it so inartificially or so intricately, that Arius thought he did not distinguish the persons, when the bishop intended only the unity of nature. Against this Arius furiously drives ; and to confute Sabellius, and in him (as he thought) the bishop, distinguishes the natures too, and so to secure the

* Socra. lib. i. c. 3.

article of the Trinity, destroys the Unity. It was the first time the question was disputed in the world; and in such mysterious niceties, possibly every wise man may understand something, but few can understand all, and therefore suspect what they understand not, and are furiously zealous for that part of it which they do perceive. Well, it happened in these as always in such cases, in things men understand not they are most impetuous; and because suspicion is a thing infinite in degrees, for it hath nothing to determine it, a suspicious person is ever most violent; for his fears are worse than the thing feared, because the thing is limited, but his fears are not; so that upon this grew contentions on both sides, and tumults, railing and reviling each other;* and then the laity were drawn into parts, and the Meletians abetted the wrong part, and the right part, fearing to be overborne, did any thing that was next at hand to secure itself. Now, then, they that lived in that age, that understood the men, that saw how quiet the church was before this stir, how miserably rent now, what little benefit from the question, what schism about it, gave other censures of the business than we since have done, who only look upon the article determined with truth and approbation of the church generally since that time. But the epistle of Constantine to Alexander and Arius,† tells the truth, and chides them both for commencing the question; Alexander for broaching it, Arius for taking it up: and although this be true, that it had been better for the church it never had begun, yet, being begun, what is to be done in it? Of this, also, in that admi-

* Id. lib. i. c. 6.

† Cap 7.

rable epistle, we have the emperor's judgment; (I suppose not without the advice and privity of Hosius, bishop of Corduba, whom the emperor loved and trusted much, and employed in the delivery of the letters;) for first he calls it, "a certain vain piece of a question, ill begun and more unadvisedly published; a question which no law or ecclesiastical canon defineth; a fruitless contention, the product of idle brains; a matter so nice, so obscure, so intricate, that it was neither to be explicated by the clergy, nor understood by the people; a dispute of words; a doctrine inexplicable, but most dangerous when taught, lest it introduce discord or blasphemy; and therefore, the objector was rash, and the answerer unadvised; for it concerned not the substance of faith, or the worship of God, nor any chief commandment of Scripture, and therefore, why should it be the matter of discord? For though the matter be grave; yet, because neither necessary nor explicable, the contention is trifling and toyish. And therefore, as the philosophers of the same sect, though differing in explication of an opinion, yet more love for the unity of their profession, than disagree for the difference of opinion; so should Christians, believing in the same God, retaining the same faith, having the same hopes, opposed by the same enemies, not fall at variance upon such disputes, considering our understandings are not all alike, and therefore, neither can our opinions in such mysterious articles: so that the matter being of no great importance, but vain, and a toy, in respect of the excellent blessings of peace and charity, it were good that Alexander and Arius should leave contending, keep their opinions to themselves, ask each other forgive-

ness, and give mutual toleration." This is the substance of Constantine's letter, and it contains in it much reason, if he did not undervalue the question; but it seems it was not then thought a question of faith, but of nicety of dispute; they both did believe one God, and the Holy Trinity. Now, then, that he afterward called the Nicene council, it was upon occasion of the vileness of the men of the Arian part, their eternal discord and pertinacious wrangling, and to bring peace into the church; that was the necessity; and in order to it was the determination of the article. But for the article itself, the letter declares what opinion he had of that, and this letter was by Socrates called "a wonderful exhortation, full of grace and sober counsels;" and such as Hosius himself, who was the messenger, pressed with all earnestness, with all the skill and authority he had.

I know the opinion the world had of the article afterwards, is quite differing from this censure given of it before; and therefore they have put it into the creed (I suppose) to bring the world to unity, and to prevent sedition in this question, and the accidental blasphemies, which were occasioned by their curious talkings of such secret mysteries, and by their illiterate resolutions. But although the article was determined with an excellent spirit, and we all, with much reason, profess to believe it; yet it is another consideration, whether or no, it might not have been better determined, if with more simplicity; and another yet, whether or no, since many of the bishops who did believe this thing yet did not like the nicety and curiosity of expressing it, it had not been more agreeable to the practice of the apostles, to have

made a determination of the article by way of exposition of the apostles' creed, and to have left this in a rescript, for record to all posterity, and not to have enlarged the creed with it; for since it was an explication of an article of the creed of the apostles, as sermons are of places of Scripture, it was thought by some, that Scripture might, with good profit and great truth, be expounded, and yet the expositions not put into the canon, or go for Scripture, but that left still in the naked original simplicity; and so much the rather, since that explication was further from the foundation, and though most certainly true, yet not penned by so infallible a spirit, as was that of the apostles, and therefore not with so much evidence as certainty. And if they had pleased, they might have made use of an admirable precedent to this and many other great and good purposes; no less than of the blessed apostles, whose symbol they might have imitated, with as much simplicity as they did the expressions of Scripture, when they first composed it. For it is most considerable, that although, in reason, every clause in the creed should be clear, and so inopportune and unapt to variety of interpretation, that there might be no place left for several senses or variety of expositions; yet, when they thought fit to insert some mysteries into the creed, which in Scripture were expressed in so mysterious words, that the last and most explicit sense would still be latent, yet they who (if ever any did) understood all the senses and secrets of it, thought it not fit to use any words but the words of Scripture, particularly in the articles of Christ's descending into hell, and sitting at the right hand of God, to show us, that those creeds are best which keep the very

words of Scripture; and that faith is best which hath greatest simplicity; and that it is better, in all cases, humbly to submit, than curiously to inquire and pry into the mystery under the cloud, and to hazard our faith by improving our knowledge: if the Nicene fathers had done so too, possibly the church never would have repented it.

And indeed the experience the church had afterwards, showed that the bishops and priests were not satisfied in all circumstances, nor the schism appeased, nor the persons agreed, nor the canons accepted, nor the article understood, nor any thing right, but when they were overborne with authority, which authority, when the scales turned, did the same service and promotion to the contrary.

But it is considerable, that it was not the article or the thing itself that troubled the disagreeing persons, but the manner of representing it: for the five dissenters, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis, Maris, Theonas, and Secundus, believed Christ to be very God of very God; but the clause of *ὁμοούσιος* they derided, as being persuaded by their logic, that he was neither of the substance of the Father, by division, as a piece of a lump, nor derivation, as children from their parents, nor by production, as buds from trees; and nobody could tell them any other way at that time, and that made the fire to burn still. And that was it I said; if the article had been with more simplicity, and less nicety determined, charity would have gained more, and faith would have lost nothing. And we shall find the wisest of them all, for so Eusebius Pamphilus*

* Vide Sozomen, lib. ii. c. 18.

was esteemed, published a creed or confession in the synod; and though he and all the rest believed that great mystery of godliness, 'God manifested in the flesh,' yet he was not fully satisfied; nor so soon of the clause of 'one substance,' till he had done a little violence to his own understanding; for even when he had subscribed to the clause of 'one substance,' he does it with a protestation, that "heretofore he never had been acquainted, nor accustomed himself to such speeches." And the sense of the word was either so ambiguous, or their meaning so uncertain, that Andreas Fricius* does, with some probability, dispute, that the Nicene fathers, by *ομοούσιος*, did mean *likeness* to the Father, not *unity of essence*.† Sylva, iv. c. 1. And it was so well understood by personages disinterested, that when Arius and Euzoius had confessed Christ to be *Deus verbum*, without inserting the clause of 'one substance,' the emperor, by his letter, approved of his faith, and restored him to his country and office, and the communion of the church. And a long time after, although the article was believed with nicety enough,‡ yet when they added more words still to the mystery, and brought in the word *ὑπόστασις*, (*hypostasis*,) saying there were three hypostases in the Holy Trinity, it was so long before it could be understood, that it was believed therefore, because they would not oppose their superiors, or disturb the peace of the

* Socrat. lib. i. cap. 26.

† "Patris similitudinem, non essentiæ unitatem."

‡ "It was no injudicious application that some one made of the saying of Ariston, the philosopher, to the nice exposition of this mystery: 'Black hellebore cleanses and heals, if it be taken in a state of consistence; but when bruised and broken small, it suffocates.'"

church, in things which they thought could not be understood: insomuch that St. Jerome writ to Damasus: "Pray determine, for I shall not hesitate to speak of three hypostases, if you command me:" and again: "I implore thee, by the Saviour of the world and the United Trinity, that thou wouldst authorize me, by thy letters, either to speak or to be silent on the subject of the hypostases."*

But, without all question, the fathers determined the question with much truth; though I cannot say the arguments upon which they built their decrees were so good as the conclusion itself was certain; but that which in this case is considerable, is, whether or no they did well in putting a curse to the foot of their decree, and the decree itself into the symbol, as if it had been of the same necessity. For the curse, Eusebius Pamphilus could hardly find in his heart to subscribe: at last he did; but with this clause, that he subscribed it because the form of curse did only "forbid men to acquaint themselves with foreign speeches and unwritten languages," whereby confusion and discord is brought into the church. So that it was not so much a magisterial high assertion of the article, as an endeavour to secure the peace of the church. And to the same purpose, for aught I know, the fathers composed a form of confession, not as a prescript rule of faith, to build the hopes of our salvation on, but as a *tessera* (mark) of that communion, which by public authority was therefore

* "Discerne, si placet, obsecro; non timebo tres hypostases dicere si jubetis.—Obtestor beatitudinem tuam per crucifixum mundi Salutem, per ὁμοούσιον Trinitatem, ut mihi epistolis tuis, sive tacendarum sive dicendarum hypostaseôn detur autoritas."

established upon those articles, because the articles were true, though not of prime necessity, and because that unity of confession was judged, as things then stood, the best preserver of the unity of minds.

But I shall observe this, that although the Nicene fathers, in that case, at that time, and in that conjuncture of circumstances, did well, (and yet their approbation is made by after ages *ex post facto*,) yet, if this precedent had been followed by all councils, (and certainly they had equal power, if they had thought it equally reasonable,) and that they had put all their decrees into the creed, as some have done since, to what a volume had the creed by this time swelled! and all the house had run into foundation, nothing left for superstructures. But that they did not, it appears, first, that since they thought all their decrees true, yet they did not think them all necessary, at least not in that degree; and that they published such decrees, they did it declaratively, not imperatively; as doctors in their chairs, not masters of other men's faith and consciences. Secondly, and yet there is some more modesty or wariness, or necessity, (what shall I call it?) than this comes to; for why are not all controversies determined? but even when general assemblies of prelates have been, some controversies that have been very vexatious, have been pretermitted, and others of less consequence have been determined. Why did never any general council condemn, in express sentence, the Pelagian heresy, that great pest, that subtle infection of Christendom? and yet divers general councils did assemble while the heresy was in the world. Both these cases, in several degrees, leave men

in their liberty of believing and prophesying. The latter proclaims, that all controversies cannot be determined to sufficient purposes; and the first declares, that those that are, are not all of them matters of faith, and themselves are not so secure but they may be deceived: and therefore, possibly, it were better it were let alone; for if the latter leaves them divided in their opinions, yet their communions, and therefore probably their charities, are not divided; but the former divides their communions, and hinders their interest; and yet for aught is certain, the accused person is the better catholic. And yet, after all this, it is not safety enough to say, let the council or prelates determine articles warily, seldom, with great caution, and with much sweetness and modesty: for though this be better than to do it rashly, frequently, and furiously, yet if we once transgress the bounds set us by the apostles in their creed, and not only preach other truths, but determine them magisterially as well as exegetically, although there be no error in the subject-matter, (as in Nice there was none,) yet if the next ages say they will determine another article, with as much care and caution, and pretend as great a necessity, there is no hindering them but by giving reasons against it: and so, like enough, they might have done against the decreeing the article at Nice; yet that is not sufficient; for since the authority of the Nicene council hath grown to the height of a mountainous prejudice against him that should say it was ill done, the same reason and the same necessity may be pretended by any age and in any council, and they think themselves warranted, by the great precedent at Nice, to proceed as peremptorily as they did: but

then, if any other assembly of learned men may possibly be deceived, were it not better they should spare the labour, than that they should, with so great pomp and solemnities, engage men's persuasions, and determine an article which after ages must rescind? For, therefore, most certainly in their own age, the point, with safety of faith and salvation, might have been disputed and disbelieved: and that many men's faiths have been tied up by acts and decrees of councils, for those articles in which the next age did see a liberty had better been preserved, because an error was determined, we shall afterward receive a more certain account.

And therefore the council of Nice did well, and Constantinople did well; so did Ephesus and Chalcedon; but it is because the articles were truly determined (for that is part of my belief): but who is sure it should be so beforehand, and whether the points there determined were necessary or no to be believed or to be determined? If peace had been concerned in it, through the faction and division of the parties, I suppose the judgment of Constantine, the emperor, and the famous Hosius of Corduba, is sufficient to instruct us; whose authority I rather urge than reasons, because it is a prejudice and not a reason I am to contend against.

So that such determinations and publishing of confessions, with authority of prince and bishop, are sometimes of very good use for the peace of the church; and they are good also to determine the judgment of indifferent persons, whose reasons of either side are not too great to weigh down the probability of that authority: but for persons of confident and imperious understandings, they on whose

side the determination is, are armed with a prejudice against the other, and with a weapon to affront them, but with no more to convince them; and they against whom the decision is, do the more readily betake themselves to the defensive, and are engaged upon contestation and public enmities, for such articles which either might safely have been unknown, or with much charity disputed. Therefore the Nicene council, although it have the advantage of an acquired and prescribing authority, yet it must not become a precedent to others, lest the inconveniences of multiplying more articles, upon as great pretence of reason as then, make the act of the Nicene fathers, in straitening prophesying, and enlarging the creed, become accidentally an inconvenience. The first restraint, although, if it had been complained of, might possibly have been better considered of; yet the inconvenience is not visible, till it comes by way of precedent to usher in more. It is like an arbitrary power, which, although by the same reason it take sixpence from the subject it may take a hundred pounds, and then a thousand, and then all, yet so long as it is within the first bounds, the inconvenience is not so great; but when it comes to be a precedent or argument for more, then the first may justly be complained of, as having in it that reason in the principle which brought the inconvenience in the sequel; and we have seen very ill consequents from innocent beginnings.

And the inconveniences which might possibly arise from this precedent, those wise personages also did foresee; and therefore, although they took liberty in Nice to add some articles, or at least more explicitly to declare the first creed, yet they then

would have all the world to rest upon that, and go no farther, as believing that to be sufficient. St. Athanasius declares their opinion:* “That faith, which those fathers there confessed, was sufficient for the refutation of all impiety, and the establishment of all faith in Christ and true religion.” And therefore there was a famous epistle written by Zeno the emperor, called the *Ἐνωτικὸν*,† or the Epistle of Reconciliation, in which all disagreeing interests are entreated to agree in the Nicene symbol; and a promise made, upon that condition, to communicate with all other sects; adding, withal, that the church should never receive any other symbol than that which was composed by the Nicene fathers. And however Honorius was condemned for a Monothelite, yet, in one of the epistles which the sixth synod alleged against him, (viz. the second,) he gave them counsel that would have done the church as much service as the determination of the article did; for he advised them not to be curious in their disputings, nor dogmatical in their determinations about that question; and because the church was not used to dispute in that question, it were better to preserve the simplicity of faith, than to ensnare men’s consciences by a new article. And when the emperor Constantius was, by his faction, engaged in a contrary practice, the inconvenience and unreasonableness was so great, that a prudent heathen observed and noted it in this character of Constantius, “That he mixed the Christian religion, pure and simple in itself, with a weak and

* “Ἡ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων κατα τὰς θείας γραφὰς ὁμολογηθεῖσα πίστις, ἀντάρκης ἐστὶ πρὸς ἀνατροπὴν μὲν πάσης ἀσεβείας, σὺντασιν δὲ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐν Χριστῷ πίστεως.—Epist. ad Epict.

† Evag. lib. iii. c. 14.

foolish superstition, perplexing to examine, but useless to contrive; and excited dissensions which were widely diffused, and which were maintained with a war of words, while he endeavoured to regulate every sacred rite by his own will."*

And yet men are more led by example than either by reason or by precept; for in the council of Constantinople one article, wholly new, was added; viz. "I believe one baptism for the remission of sins:" and then, again, they were so confident that that confession of faith was so absolutely entire, and that no man ever after should need to add any thing to the integrity of faith, that the fathers of the council of Ephesus pronounced anathema to all those that should add any thing to the creed of Constantinople. And yet, for all this, the church of Rome, in a synod at Gentilly, added the clause of "Filioque" to the article of the procession of the Holy Ghost; and what they have done since all the world knows. All men were persuaded that it was most reasonable the limits of faith should be no more enlarged; but yet they enlarged it themselves, and bound others from doing it; like an intemperate father, who, because he knows he does ill himself, enjoins temperance to his son, but continues to be intemperate himself.

But now, if I should be questioned concerning the symbol of Athanasius, (for we see the Nicene symbol was the father of many more, some twelve or thirteen symbols in the space of a hundred

* "Christianam religionem absolutam et simplicem anili superstitione confudit. In quâ scrutandâ perplexiùs quam in componendâ gratiùs, excitavit dissidia quæ progressa fusiùs aluit concertatione verborum, dum ritum omnem ad suum trahere conatur arbitrium."

years,) I confess I cannot see that moderate sentence and gentleness of charity in his preface and conclusion, as there was in the Nicene creed. Nothing there but damnation and perishing everlastingly, unless the article of the Trinity be believed, as it is there, with curiosity and minute particularities, explained. Indeed, Athanasius had been soundly vexed on one side, and much cried up on the other; and therefore it is not so much wonder for him to be so decretory and severe in his censure; for nothing could more ascertain his friends to him, and disrepute his enemies, than the belief of that damnatory appendix; but that does not justify the thing. For the articles themselves, I am most heartily persuaded of the truth of them, and yet I dare not say, all that are not so are irrevocably damned, because without this symbol the faith of the apostles' creed is entire, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; that is, he that believeth such a belief as is sufficient disposition to be baptized, that faith with the sacrament is sufficient for heaven. Now the apostles' creed does one; why, therefore, doth not both entitle us to the promise? Besides, if it were considered concerning Athanasius's creed, how many people understand it not, how contrary to natural reason it seems, how little the Scripture* says of those curiosities of explication, and how tradition was not clear on his side for the article itself, much less for those forms and minutes; how himself is put to make an answer, and excuse, for the fathers† speaking in favour

* Vide Hosium de Author. S. Scrip. lib. iii. p. 53, et Gordon. Huntlaum. tom. i. controv. i. de Verbo Dei, cap. 19.

† Vide Gretser. et Tanner. in colloq. Ratisbon. Eusebium fuisse Arianum ait Perron, lib. iii. cap. 2, contra Jacobum

of the Arians, at least so seemingly that the Arians appealed to them for trial, and the offer was declined; and after all this, that the Nicene creed itself went not so far, neither in article, nor anathema, nor explication; it had not been amiss if the final judgment had been left to Jesus Christ, for he is appointed Judge of all the world, and he shall judge the people righteously, for he knows every truth, the degree of every necessity, and all excuses that do lessen or take away the nature or malice of a crime; all which I think Athanasius, though a very good man, did not know so well as to warrant such a sentence. And put case, the heresy there condemned be damnable, (as it is damnable enough,) yet a man may maintain an opinion that is in itself damnable, and yet he, not knowing it so, and being invincibly led into it, may go to heaven; his opinion shall burn, and himself be saved. But, however, I find no opinions in Scripture called damnable but what are impious in their effect upon the life, or directly destructive of the faith or the body of Christianity; such of which St. Peter speaks;* ‘bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them: these are the false prophets, who out of covetousness make merchandize of you through cozening words.’ Such as these are truly heresies, and such as these are certainly damnable. But because there are no degrees either of truth or falsehood, every true pro-

Regem. Idem ait Originem negasse Divinitatem Filii et Spir. S. lib. ii. c. 7, de Euchar. contra Duplessis. Idem, cap. 5, observ. 4, ait, Irenæum talia dixisse quæ qui hodiè diceret, pro Ariano reputaretur. Vide etiam Fisher. in resp. ad 9 Quæst. Jacobi Reg. et Epiphan. in Hæres. 65.

* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

position being alike true, that an error is more or less damnable, is not told us in Scripture, but is determined by the man and his manners, by circumstance and accidents; and therefore the censure in the preface and end are arguments of his zeal and strength of his persuasion; but they are extrinsical and accidental to the articles, and might as well have been spared. And, indeed, to me it seems very hard to put uncharitableness into the creed, and so to make it become as an article of faith, though perhaps this very thing was no faith of Athanasius,* who, if we may believe Aquinas, made this manifestation of faith, *non per modum symboli, sed per modum doctrinæ*; that is, if I understood him right, not with a purpose to impose it upon others, but with confidence to declare his own belief; and that it was prescribed to others as a creed, was the act of the bishops of Rome; so he said; nay, possibly it was none of his. So said the patriarch of Constantinople, Meletius, about one hundred and thirty years since, in his epistle to John Douza: "We do not scruple plainly to protest that the creed is falsely ascribed to Athanasius, which was corrupted by the Roman pontiffs."† And it is more than probable that he said true, because this creed was written originally in Latin, which in all reason Athanasius did not, and it was translated into Greek; it being apparent that the Latin copy is but one, but the Greek is various, there being three editions, or translations rather, expressed by Genebrard, lib. iii. de Trinit. But, in this particular, who list may better satisfy himself in a disputation

* D. Tho. 22æ. q. i. artic. 1. ad 3.

† "Athanasio falso adscriptum symbolum cum pontificum Rom. appendice illâ adulteratum, luce lucidiùs contestamur."

De Symbolo Athanasii, printed at Wertzburg, 1590, supposed to be written by Serrarius or Clencherus.

And yet I must observe, that this symbol of Athanasius, and that other of Nice, offer not at any new articles; they only pretend to a further explication of the articles apostolical; which is a certain confirmation that they did not believe more articles to be of belief necessary to salvation: if they intended these further explications to be as necessary as the dogmatical articles of the apostles' creed, I know not how to answer all that may be objected against that; but the advantage that I shall gather from their not proceeding to new matters, is laid out ready for me in the words of Athanasius, saying of this creed, "This is the catholic faith;" and if his authority be good, or his saying true, or he the author, then no man can say of any other article, that it is a part of the catholic faith, or that the catholic faith can be enlarged beyond the contents of that symbol; and therefore it is a strange boldness in the church of Rome,* first to add twelve new articles, and then to add the appendix of Athanasius to the end of them, "This is the catholic faith, without which no man can be saved."

But so great an example of so excellent a man hath been either mistaken or followed with too much greediness; for we see all the world in factions, all damning one another; each party damned by all the rest; and there is no disagreeing in opinion from any man that is in love with his own opinion, but damnation presently to all that disagree. A ceremony and a rite hath caused several churches to excom-

* Bulla Pii quarti supra forma juramenti professionis fidei, in fin. Conc. Trident.

municate each other; as in the matter of the Saturday fast and keeping Easter. But what the spirits of men are when they are exasperated in a question and difference of religion, as they call it, though the thing itself may be most inconsiderable, is very evident in that request of Pope Innocent the Third, desiring of the Greeks, (but reasonably a man would think,) that they would not so much hate the Roman manner of consecrating in unleavened bread, as to wash and scrape, and pare the altars, after a Roman priest had consecrated. Nothing more furious than a mistaken zeal, and the actions of a scrupulous and abused conscience. When men think every thing to be their faith and their religion, commonly they are so busy in trifles and such impertinences in which the scene of their mistake lies, that they neglect the greater things of the law, charity, and compliances, and the gentleness of Christian communion; for this is the great principle of mischief, and yet is not more pernicious than unreasonable.

For, I demand, can any man say and justify that the apostles did deny communion to any man that believed the apostles' creed, and lived a good life? And dare any man tax that proceeding of remissness, and indifferency in religion? And since our blessed Saviour promised salvation to him that believeth, (and the apostles, when they gave this word the greatest extent, enlarged it not beyond the borders of the creed,) how can any man warrant the condemning of any man to the flames of hell, that is ready to die in attestation of this faith, so expounded and made explicit by the apostles, and lives accordingly? And to this purpose it was excellently said, by a wise and a pious prelate, St.

Hilary,* “It is not through thorny questions that God invites us to heaven: our way to eternal life is clear and easy:—to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God, to confess him to be the Lord,” &c. These are the articles which we must believe, which are the sufficient and adequate object of that faith which is required of us in order to salvation. And therefore it was, that when the bishops of Istria deserted the communion of Pope Pelagius, *in causâ trium capitulorum*,† he gives them an account of his faith by recitation of the creed, and by attesting the four general councils, and is confident upon this that no question or suspicion can arise respecting the validity of his faith: let the apostles’ creed, especially so explicated, be but secured, and all faith is secured; and yet that explication too, was less necessary than the articles themselves; for the explication was but accidental, but the articles, even before the explication, were accounted a sufficient inlet to the kingdom of heaven.

And that there was security enough, in the simple believing the first articles, is very certain amongst them, and by their principles who allow of an implicit faith to serve most persons to the greatest purposes; for if the creed did contain in it the whole faith, and that other articles were in it implicitly, (for such is the doctrine of the school, and particularly of Aquinas,) then he that explicitly believes all the creed, does implicitly believe all the articles contained in it; and then it is better the

* “Non per difficiles nos Deus ad beatam vitam quæstiones vocat, &c. In absoluto nobis et facili est æternitas; Jesum suscitatum à mortuis per Deum credere, et ipsum esse Dominum confiteri, &c.”—Lib. x. De Trin. ad finem.

† Concil. tom. iv. edit. Paris. p. 473.

implication should still continue, than that, by any explication, (which is simply unnecessary,) the church should be troubled with questions, and uncertain determinations, and factions enkindled, and animosities set on foot, and men's souls endangered, who before were secured by the explicit belief of all that the apostles required as necessary; which belief also did secure them for all the rest, because it implied the belief of whatsoever was virtually in the first articles, if such belief should by chance be necessary.

The sum of this discourse is this: if we take an estimate of the nature of faith from the dictates and promises evangelical, and from the practice apostolical, the nature of faith and its integrity consists in such propositions which make the foundation of hope and charity, that which is sufficient to make us to do honour to Christ and to obey him, and to encourage us in both; and this is completed in the apostles' creed. And since contraries are of the same extent, heresy is to be judged by its proportion and analogy to faith, and that is heresy only which is against faith. Now, because faith is not only a precept of doctrines, but of manners and holy life, whatsoever is either opposite to an article of creed, or teaches ill life, that is heresy; but all those propositions which are extrinsical to these two considerations, be they true or be they false, make not heresy, nor the man a heretic; and therefore, however he may be an erring person, yet he is to be used accordingly, pitied and instructed, not condemned or excommunicated: and this is the result of the first ground, the consideration of the nature of faith and heresy.

SECTION III.

Of the difficulty and uncertainty of Arguments from Scripture, in Questions not simply necessary, not literally determined.

GOD, who disposes of all things sweetly, and according to the nature and capacity of things and persons, had made those only necessary which he had taken care should be sufficiently propounded to all persons of whom he required the explicit belief. And therefore all the articles of faith are clearly and plainly set down in Scripture, and the Gospel is not hid, excepting to them that are lost, saith St. Paul; “for there we find the encouragement to every virtue, and the warning against every vice,” saith Damascen,* and that so manifestly, that no man can be ignorant of the foundation of faith without his own apparent fault. And this is acknowledged by all wise and good men; and is evident, besides the reasonableness of the thing, in the testimonies of Saints Austin,† Jerome,‡ Chrysostom,§ Fulgentius,|| Hugo de Sancto Victore,¶ Theodoret,* Lactantius,† Theophilus Antiochenus,‡ Aquinas,§ and the latter schoolmen. And God

* Πάσης γὰρ ἀρετῆς παράκλησιν, και κακίας ἀπάσης τροπήν ἐν ταύταις ἐυρίσκομεν.—Orthod. Fidei. lib. iv. c. 18.

† Super. Psal. 88, et de Util. Cred. c. 6.

‡ Super Isa. c. 19, and in Psal. 86.

§ Homil. 3, in Thess. Ep. ii.

¶ Miscel. ii. lib. i. tit. 46.

* In Gen. ap Struch. p. 87.

‡ Ad Antioch. lib. ii. p. 918.

|| Serm. de Confess.

† Cap. 6.

§ Par. i. q. i. art. 9.

hath done more; for many things which are only profitable, are also set down so plainly, that, as St. Austin says, "every one may partake, if he come in a devout and pious spirit:"* but of such things there is no question commenced in Christendom; and if there were, it cannot but be a crime and human interest that are the authors of such disputes; and therefore these cannot be simple errors, but always heresies, because the principle of them is a personal sin.

But besides these things, which are so plainly set down, some for doctrine, as St. Paul says, that is, for articles and foundation of faith, some for instruction, some for reproof, some for comfort, that is, in matters practical and speculative of several tempers and constitutions, there are innumerable places, containing in them great mysteries, but yet either so enwrapped with a cloud, or so darkened with umbrages, or heightened with expressions, or so covered with allegories and garments of rhetoric, so profound in the matter, or so altered or made intricate in the manner, in the clothing, and in the dressing, that God may seem to have left them as trials of our industry, and arguments of our imperfections, and incentives to the longings after heaven, and the clearest revelations of eternity, and as occasions and opportunities of our mutual charity and toleration to each other, and humility in ourselves, rather than the repositories of faith and furniture of creeds, and articles of belief.

For wherever the word of God is kept, whether in Scripture alone, or also in tradition, he that considers that the meaning of the one, and the truth

* "Nemo inde haurire non possit, si modò ad hauriendum devotè ac piè accedat."—Ubi supra de Util. Cred. c. 6.

or certainty of the other, are things of great question, will see a necessity in these things, (which are the subject matter of most of the questions in Christendom,) that men should hope to be excused by an implicit faith in God Almighty. For when there are, in the explications of Scripture, so many commentaries, so many senses and interpretations, so many volumes in all ages, and all, like men's faces, exactly none like another, either this difference and inconvenience is absolutely no fault at all, or, if it be, it is excusable, by a mind prepared to consent in that truth which God intended. And this I call an implicit faith in God, which is certainly of as great excellency as an implicit faith in any man or company of men. Because they who do require an implicit faith in the church for articles less necessary, and excuse the want of explicit faith by the implicit, do require an implicit faith in the church, because they believe that God hath required of them to have a mind prepared to believe whatever the church says; which, because it is a proposition of no absolute certainty, whosoever does, in readiness of mind, believe all that God spake, does also believe that sufficiently, if it be fitting to be believed; that is, if it be true, and if God hath said so; for he hath the same obedience of understanding in this as in the other. But, because it is not so certain God hath tied him in all things to believe that which is called the church, and that it is certain we must believe God in all things, and yet neither know all that either God hath revealed or the church taught, it is better to take the certain than the uncertain, to believe God rather than men; especially since, if God hath bound us to believe men, our absolute submission

to God does involve that, and there is no inconvenience in the world this way, but that we implicitly believe one article more, viz. the church's authority or infallibility, which may well be pardoned, because it secures our belief of all the rest, and we are sure if we believe all that God said explicitly or implicitly, we also believe the church implicitly, in case we are bound to it; but we are not certain, that if we believe any company of men, whom we call the church, that we therefore obey God, and believe what he hath said. But, however, if this will not help us, there is no help for us, but good fortune or absolute predestination; for by choice and industry no man can secure himself, that in all the mysteries of religion taught in Scripture he shall certainly understand and explicitly believe that sense that God intended. For to this purpose there are many considerations.

I. There are so many thousands of copies that were writ by persons of several interests and persuasions, such different understandings and tempers, such distinct abilities and weaknesses, that it is no wonder there is so great variety of readings both in the Old Testament and in the New. In the Old Testament, the Jews pretend that the Christians have corrupted many places, on purpose to make symphony between both the Testaments. On the other side, the Christians have had so much reason to suspect the Jews, that when Aquila had translated the Bible in their schools, and had been taught by them, they rejected the edition, many of them, and some of them called it heresy to follow it. And Justin Martyr justified it to Tryphon, that the Jews had defalked many sayings from the books of the old prophets, and amongst the rest he

instances in that of the Psalm, *Dicite in nationibus quia Dominus regnavit à ligno*. The last words they have cut off, and prevailed so far in it, that to this day none of our Bibles have it; but if they ought not to have it, then Justin Martyr's Bible had more in it than it should have, for there it was; so that a fault there was, either under or over. But, however, there are infinite readings in the New Testament; (for in that I will instance;) some whole verses in one that are not in another; and there was, in some copies of St. Mark's Gospel, in the last chapter, a whole verse, a chapter it was anciently called, that is not found in our Bibles, as St. Jerome ad Hedibiam, q. 3. notes. The words he repeats, Lib. ii. Contra Polygamos: "They confessed, saying, that it is the essence of iniquity and unbelief, which does not allow the true power of God to be apprehended by unclean spirits; therefore now display thy righteousness."* These words are thought by some to savour of Manicheism; and, for ought I can find, were therefore rejected out of many Greek copies, and at last out of the Latin. Now, suppose that a Manichee in disputation should urge this place, having found it in his Bible, if a catholic should answer him by saying, it is apocryphal, and not found in divers Greek copies, might not the Manichee ask, how it came in, if it was not the word of God, and if it was, how came it out? and at last take the same liberty of rejecting any other authority which shall be alleged against him, if he can find any copy that may favour him, however

* "Et illi satis faciebant dicentes, sæculum istud iniquitatis et incredulitatis substantia est, quæ non sinit per immundos spiritus veram Dei apprehendi virtutem, idcirco jam nunc revela justitiam tuam."

that favour be procured? And did not the Ebionites reject all the epistles of St. Paul, upon pretence he was an enemy to the law of Moses? Indeed, it was boldly and most unreasonably done; but if one title or one chapter of St. Mark be called apochryphal, for being suspected of Manicheism, it is a plea that will too much justify others in their taking and choosing what they list. But I will not urge it so far; but is not there as much reason for the fierce Lutherans to reject the epistle of St. James, for favouring justification by works, or the epistle to the Hebrews, upon pretence that the sixth and tenth chapters do favour Novatianism; especially, since it was by some famous churches at first not accepted; even by the church of Rome herself? The parable of the woman taken in adultery, which is now in *John* viii. Eusebius says, was not in any gospel, but the Gospel according to the Hebrews; and St. Jerome makes it doubtful, and so does St. Chrysostom and Euthimius, the first not vouchsafing to explicate it in his homilies upon St. John, the other affirming it not to be found in the exacter copies. I shall not need to urge, that there are some words so near in sound, that the scribes might easily mistake. There is one famous one of *serving the Lord*,* which yet some copies read *serving the time*; † the sense is very unlike, though the words be near, and there needs some little luxation to strain this latter reading to a good sense. That famous precept of St. Paul, that the women must pray with a covering on their head, *διὰ τοῦς ἀγγέλους*, ‘because of the angels,’ hath brought into the church an opinion that angels are present

* Κυρίῳ ἐσλεύοντες.

† Καίρῳ ἐσλεύοντες.

in churches, and are spectators of our devotion and deportment. Such an opinion, if it should meet with peevish opposites on one side, and confident hyperaspists on the other, might possibly make a sect: and here were a clear ground for the affirmative; and yet, who knows but that it might have been a mistake of the transcribers to double the γ ? for if we read, *διὰ τὸν ἀγέλας*, that the sense be, ‘Women in public assemblies must wear a veil, by reason of companies of the young men there present,’ it would be no ill exchange, for the loss of a letter, to make so probable, so clear a sense of the place. But the instances in this kind are too many, as appears in the variety of readings in several copies, proceeding from the negligence or ignorance of the transcribers, or the malicious endeavour of heretics,* or the inserting marginal notes into the text, or the nearness of several words. Indeed there is so much evidence of this particular, that it hath encouraged the servants of the vulgar translation (for so some are now-a-days) to prefer that translation before the original; for although they have attempted that proposition with very ill success, yet that they could think it possible to be proved, is an argument there is much variety and alterations in divers texts; for if they were not, it were impudence to pretend a translation, and that none of the best, should be better than the original. But so it is, that this variety of reading is not of slight consideration; for although it be demonstrably true, that all things necessary to faith

* Græci corruerunt Novum Testamentum ut testantur Tertul. lib. v. adv. Marcion. Euseb. lib. v. Hist. c. ult. Irenæ. lib. i. c. 29. Allu. Hæres. Basil. lib. ii. contr. Eunomium.

and good manners are preserved from alteration and corruption, because they are of things necessary; and they could not be necessary, unless they were delivered to us, God in his goodness and his justice having obliged himself to preserve that which he hath bound us to observe and keep; yet, in other things, which God hath not obliged himself so punctually to preserve,—in these things, since variety of reading is crept in, every reading takes away a degree of certainty from any proposition derivative from those places so read: and if some copies (especially if they be public and notable) omit a verse or title, every argument from such a title or verse loses much of its strength and reputation; and we find it in a great instance. For when in probation of the mystery of the glorious Unity in Trinity, we allege that saying of St. John, ‘There are three which bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one;’ the anti-trinitarians think they have answered the argument, by saying, the Syrian translation and divers Greek copies have not that verse in them, and therefore, being of doubtful authority, cannot conclude with certainty in a question of faith. And there is an instance on the catholic part: for when the Arians urge the saying of our Saviour, ‘No man knows that day and hour, (viz. of judgment,) no not the Son, but the Father only,’ to prove that the Son knows not all things, and therefore cannot be God, in the proper sense; St. Ambrose thinks he hath answered the argument by saying those words, ‘no not the Son,’ were thrust into the text by the fraud of the Arians. So that here we have one objection, which must first be cleared and made infallible, before we can be

ascertained in any such question as to call them heretics that dissent.

II. I consider that there are very many senses and designs of expounding Scripture, and when the grammatical sense is found out, we are many times never the nearer; it is not that which was intended; for there is, in very many Scriptures, a double sense, a literal and a spiritual; (for the Scripture is a book written within and without, Apoc. v.) and both these senses are subdivided. For the literal sense is either natural or figurative; and the spiritual is sometimes allegorical, sometimes anagogical; nay, sometimes there are divers literal senses in the same sentence, as St. Austin excellently proves in divers places;* and it appears in divers quotations in the New Testament, where the apostles and divine writers bring the same testimony to divers purposes; and particularly St. Paul's making that saying of the Psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,' to be an argument of Christ's resurrection, and a designation or ordination to his pontificate, is an instance very famous in his first and fifth chapter to the Hebrews. But now, there being such variety of senses in Scripture, and but few places so marked out, as not to be capable of divers senses, if men will write commentaries as Herod made orations, *κατα πολλῆς φαντασίας*, with a mind inflated with vanity, what infallible criterion will be left, whereby to judge of the certain dogmatical resolute sense of such places which have been the matter of question? For put case, a question were commenced

* Lib. xii. Confess. cap. 26. Lib. ii. de Civit. Dei. cap. 9. Lib. iii. de Doctrinâ Christ. cap. 26.

concerning the degrees of glory in heaven, as there is in the schools a noted one. To show an inequality of reward, Christ's parable is brought, of the reward of ten cities, and of five, according to the divers improvement of the talents; this sense is mystical, and yet very probable, and understood by men, for aught I know, to this very sense. And the result of the argument is made good by St. Paul: 'As one star differeth from another in glory, so shall it be in the resurrection of the dead.' Now, suppose another should take the same liberty of expounding another parable to a mystical sense and interpretation, as all parables must be expounded; then the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, and though differing in labour, yet having an equal reward, to any man's understanding, may seem very strongly to prove the contrary; and as if it were of purpose, and that it were the main design of the parable, the lord of the vineyard determined the point resolutely, upon the mutiny and repining of them that had borne the burthen and heat of the day, 'I will give unto this last even as to thee;' which, to my sense, seems to determine the question of degrees; they that work but little, and they that work long, shall not be distinguished in the reward, though accidentally they were in the work; and if this opinion could but answer St. Paul's words, it stands as fair, and perhaps fairer than the other. Now, if we look well upon the words of St. Paul, we shall find he speaks nothing at all of diversity of degrees of glory in beatified bodies, but the differences of glory in bodies heavenly and earthly: 'There are,' says he, 'bodies earthly, and there are heavenly bodies: and one is the glory of the earthly, another

the glory of the heavenly; one glory of the sun, another of the moon, &c. So shall it be in the resurrection; for it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.' Plainly thus, our bodies in the resurrection shall differ as much from our bodies here, in the state of corruption, as one star does from another. And now, suppose a sect should be commenced upon this question, (upon lighter and vainer many have been,) either side must resolve to answer the other's arguments, whether they can or no, and to deny to each other a liberty of expounding the parable to such a sense, and yet themselves must use it or want an argument. But men use to be unjust in their own cases; and were it not better to leave each other to their liberty, and seek to preserve their own charity? For when the words are capable of a mystical or a diverse sense, I know not why men's fancies or understandings should be more bound to be like one another than their faces: and either, in all such places of Scripture, a liberty must be indulged to every honest and peaceable wise man, or else all argument from such places must be wholly declined. Now, although I instanced in a question, which by good fortune never came to open defiance, yet there have been sects framed upon lighter grounds, more inconsiderable questions, which have been disputed on either side with arguments less material and less pertinent. St. Austin laughed at the Donatists, for bringing that saying of the spouse in the Canticles, to prove their schism, 'Tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.' For from thence they concluded, the residence of the church was only in the south part of the world, only in

Africa.* It was but a weak way of argument ; yet the fathers were free enough to use such mediums, to prove mysteries of great concernment ; but yet again, when they speak either against an adversary, or with consideration, they deny that such mystical senses can sufficiently confirm a question of faith. But I shall instance, in the great question of rebaptization of heretics, which many saints, and martyrs, and confessors, and divers councils, and almost all Asia and Africa did once believe and practise. Their grounds for the invalidity of the baptism by a heretic, were such mystical words as these : ‘ Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle,’ *Ps.* cxi. ; and, ‘ He that washeth himself, after the touching a dead body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing ?’ *Ecclus.* xxxiv. ; and, ‘ Drink waters out of thine own cistern,’ *Prov.* v. ; and, ‘ We know that God heareth not sinners,’ *John* ix. ; and, ‘ He that is not with me is against me,’ *Luke* xi. I am not sure the other part had arguments so good ; for the great one of ‘ one faith, one baptism,’ did not conclude it to their understandings who were of the other opinion, and men famous in their generations ; for it was no argument that they who had been baptized by John’s baptism should not be baptized in the name of Jesus, because ‘ one God, one baptism ;’ and as it is still one faith which a man confesseth several times, and one sacrament of the eucharist, though a man often communicates ; so it might be one baptism, though often ministered. And the unity of baptism might not be derived from the unity of the ministration, but from the unity of the religion

* Jerome, in *Matth.* xi.

into which they are baptized : though baptized a thousand times, yet, because it was still in the name of the holy Trinity, still into the death of Christ, it might be 'one baptism.' Whether St. Cyprian, Firmilian, and their colleagues, had this discourse or no, (I know not,) I am sure they might have had much better to have evacuated the force of that argument, although I believe they had the wrong cause in hand. But this is it that I say, that when a question is so undetermined in Scripture, that the arguments rely only upon such mystical places whence the best fancies can draw the greatest variety, and such which perhaps were never intended by the Holy Ghost, it were good the rivers did not swell higher than the fountain, and the confidence higher than the argument and evidence : for, in this case, there could not any thing be so certainly proved, as that the disagreeing party should deserve to be condemned, by a sentence of excommunication, for disbelieving it ; and yet they were ; which I wonder at so much the more, because they who (as it was since judged) had the right cause, had not any sufficient argument from Scripture, not so much as such mystical arguments, but did fly to the tradition of the church ; in which also I shall afterwards show, they had nothing that was absolutely certain.

III. I consider that there are divers places of Scripture, containing in them mysteries and questions of great concernment ; and yet the fabric and constitution is such, that there is no certain mark to determine whether the sense of them should be literal or figurative : I speak not here concerning extrinsical means of determination, as traditive interpretation, councils, fathers, popes, and the like ; I

shall consider them afterward, in their several places; but here the subject-matter being concerning Scripture in its own capacity, I say there is nothing in the nature of the thing to determine the sense and meaning, but it must be gotten out as it can; and that therefore it is unreasonable, that what of itself is ambiguous should be understood in its own prime sense and intention, under the pain of either a sin or an anathema: I instance, in that famous place from whence hath sprung that question of transubstantiation, 'This is my body.' The words are plain and clear, apt to be understood in the literal sense; and yet this sense is so hard as it does violence to reason; and therefore it is the question, whether or no it be not a figurative speech. But here, what shall we have to determine it? What mean soever we take, and to what sense soever you will expound it, you shall be put to give an account why you expound other places of Scripture, in the same case, to quite contrary senses. For if you expound it literally, then, besides that it seems to intrench upon the words of our blessed Saviour, 'The words that I speak, they are spirit, and they are life,' that is, to be spiritually understood; (and it is a miserable thing to see what wretched shifts are used to reconcile the literal sense to these words, and yet to distinguish it from the Capernaïtical fancy;) but besides this, why are not those other sayings of Christ expounded literally, 'I am a vine, I am the door, I am a rock?' Why do we fly to a figure in those parallel words, 'This is the covenant which I make between me and you?' and yet that covenant was but the sign of the covenant; and why do we fly to a figure in a precept, as well as in mystery and a proposition? 'If thy right hand

offend thee, cut it off:’ and yet we have figures enough to save a limb. If it be said, because reason tells us these are not to be expounded according to the letter; this will be no plea for them who retain the literal exposition of the other instance, against all reason, against all philosophy, against all sense, and against two or three sciences. But if you expound these words figuratively, besides that you are to contest against a world of prejudices, you give yourself the liberty, which if others will use when either they have a reason or a necessity so to do, they may perhaps turn all into allegory, and so may evacuate any precept, and elude any argument. Well, so it is that very wise men have expounded things allegorically, when they should have expounded them literally.* So did the famous Origen, who, as St. Jerome reports of him, turned paradise so into an allegory, that he took away quite the truth of the story, and not only Adam was turned out of the garden, but the garden itself out of paradise. Others expound things literally, when they should understand them in allegory; so did the ancient Papias understand Christ’s millenary reign upon earth (*Apocal.* xx. ;) and so depressed the hopes of Christianity, and their desires to the longing and expectation of temporal pleasures and satisfactions; and he was followed by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Lactantius, and indeed the whole church generally,

* Sic St. Hierom. “ In adolescentiâ provocatus ardore et studio Scripturarum allegoricè interpretatus sum Abdiam prophetam, cujus historiam nesciebam.” De Sensu Allegorico S. Script. dixit Basilius, ‘Ὡς κεκομψεύμενον μιν τόν λόγον ἀποδέχομεθα, ἀληθῆ δὲ εἶναι οὐ πάνυ δώσωμεν.—Lib. xxii. de Civit. Dei. c. 7. Præfat. lib. xix. in Isai. et in c. 36. Ezek. .

till St. Austin and St. Jerome's time; who, first of any whose works are extant, did reprove the error. If such great spirits be deceived, in finding out what kind of senses be to be given to Scriptures, it may well be endured that we, who sit at their feet, may also tread in the steps of them whose feet could not always tread aright.

IV. I consider that there are some places of Scripture that have the self-same expressions, the same preceptive words, the same reason and account, in all appearance, and yet either must be expounded to quite different senses, or else we must renounce the communion, and the charities of a great part of Christendom. And yet there is absolutely nothing in the thing, or in its circumstances, or in its adjuncts that can determine it to different purposes. I instance in those great exclusive negatives for the necessity of both sacraments: 'Except a man be born of water,' &c. 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Now, then, the first is urged for the absolute, indispensable necessity of baptism, even in infants; insomuch that infants go to part of hell if (inculpably both on their own and their parents' part) they miss of baptism; for that is the doctrine of the church of Rome, which they learnt from St. Austin: and others also do, from hence, baptize infants, though with a less opinion of its absolute necessity. And yet the same manner of precept, in the same form of words, in the same manner of threatening, by an exclusive negative, shall not enjoin us to communicate infants, though damnation (at least in form of words) be exactly, and in every particular, alike appendant to the neglect of holy baptism and the venerable eu-

'charist. If 'except ye be born again,' shall conclude against the anabaptist for necessity of baptizing infants, (as sure enough we say it does,) why shall not an equal, 'except ye eat,' bring infants to the holy communion? The primitive church, for some two whole ages, did follow their own principles, wherever they led them; and seeing that upon the same ground equal results must follow, they did communicate infants as soon as they had baptized them. And why the church of Rome should not do so too, being she expounds, 'except ye eat,' of oral manducation, I cannot yet learn a reason. And, for others that expound it of a spiritual manducation, why they shall not allow the disagreeing part the same liberty of expounding 'except a man be born again,' too, I by no means can understand. And in these cases no external determiner can be pretended in answer: for whatsoever is extrinsic to the words, as councils, tradition, church authority, and fathers, either have said nothing at all, or have concluded, by their practice, contrary to the present opinion; as is plain in their communicating infants by virtue of 'except ye eat.'

5. I shall not need to urge the mysteriousness of some points in Scripture, which, from the nature of the subject, are hard to be understood, though very plainly represented: for there are some mysteries in divinity,* which are only to be understood by persons very holy and spiritual, which are rather to be felt than discoursed of; and therefore, if peradventure they be offered to public consideration, they will therefore be opposed, because they run

* *Secreta Theologiæ.*

the same fortune with many other questions; that is, not to be understood; and so much the rather, because their understanding, that is, the feeling such secrets of the kingdom, are not the results of logic and philosophy, or yet of public revelation, but of the public spirit privately working, and in no man is a duty, but in all that have it, is a reward; and is not necessary for all, but given to some; producing its operations, not regularly, but upon occasions, personal necessities, and new emergencies. Of this nature are the spirit of obsigation, belief of particular salvation, special influences and comforts coming from a sense of the spirit of adoption, actual fervours and great complacencies in devotion, spiritual joys, which are little drawings aside of the curtains of peace and eternity, and antepasts of immortality. But the not understanding the perfect constitution and temper of these mysteries, (and it is hard for any man so to understand as to make others do so too that feel them not,) is cause that in many questions of secret theology, by being very apt and easy to be mistaken, there is a necessity in forbearing one another; and this consideration would have been of good use in the question between Soto and Catharinus, both for the preservation of their charity and explication of the mystery.

6. But here it will not be unseasonable to consider, that all systems and principles of science are expressed so, that either by reason of the universality of the terms and subject-matter, or the infinite variety of human understandings, and these peradventure swayed by interest, or determined by things accidental and extrinsical, they seem to divers men, nay to the same men upon divers occa-

sions, to speak things extremely disparate, and sometimes contrary, but very often of great variety. And this very thing happens also in Scripture, that if it were not in a sacred subject, it were excellent sport to observe, how the same place of Scripture serves several turns upon occasion, and they at that time believe the words sound nothing else; whereas, in the liberty of their judgment and abstracting from that occasion, their commentaries understand them wholly to a differing sense. It is a wonder of what excellent use to the church of Rome, is *tibi dabo claves*, 'I will give thee the keys.' It was spoken to Peter and none else, (sometimes,) and therefore it concerns him and his successors only; the rest are to derive from him. And yet, if you question them for their sacrament of penance, and priestly absolution, then 'I will give thee the keys' comes in, and that was spoken to St. Peter, and in him to the whole college of the apostles, and in them to the whole hierarchy. If you question why the pope pretends to free souls from purgatory, 'I will give thee the keys,' is his warrant; but if you tell him, the keys are only for binding and loosing on earth directly, and in heaven consequently; and that purgatory is a part of hell, or rather neither earth nor heaven nor hell, and so the keys seem to have nothing to do with it, then his commission is to be enlarged by a suppletory of reason and consequences, and his keys shall unlock this difficulty; for it is the key of knowledge, as well as of authority. And these keys shall enable him to expound Scriptures infallibly, to determine questions, to preside in councils, to dictate to all the world magisterially, to rule the church, to dispense with oaths, to abrogate laws: and if his key of

knowledge will not, the key of authority shall, and 'I will give thee the keys' shall answer for all. We have an instance in the single fancy of one man, what rare variety of matter is afforded from those plain words, 'I have prayed for thee, Peter,' *Luke*, xxii. ; for that place, says Bellarmine,* is otherwise to be understood of Peter, otherwise of the popes, and otherwise of the church of Rome : and 'for thee' signifies, that Christ prayed that Peter might neither err personally nor judicially ; and that Peter's successors, if they did err personally, might not err judicially ; and that the Roman church might not err personally. All this variety of senses is pretended, by the fancy of one man, to be in a few words which are as plain and simple as are any words in Scripture. And what then in those thousands that are intricate ? So is done with 'Feed my sheep,' which a man would think were a commission as innocent and guiltless of designs, as the sheep in the folds are. But if it be asked, why the bishop of Rome calls himself universal bishop, 'Feed my sheep' is his warrant. Why he pretends to a power of deposing princes, 'Feed my sheep,' said Christ to Peter, the second time. If it be demanded, why also he pretends to a power of authorising his subjects to kill him, 'Feed my lambs,' said Christ, the third time : and 'feed' (*pasce*) is *teach*, and 'feed' is *command*, and 'feed' is *kill*. Now if others should take the same (unreasonableness I will not say, but the same) liberty in expounding Scripture, or if it be not licence taken, but that the Scripture itself is so full and redundant in senses quite contrary, what man soever, or

* Bellar. lib. iv. de Pontif. c. 3. § Respondeo primò.

what company of men soever shall use this principle, will certainly find such rare productions from several places, that either the unreasonableness of the thing will discover the error of the proceeding, or else there will be a necessity of permitting a great liberty of judgment, where is so infinite variety without limit or mark of necessary determination. If the first, then, because an error is so obvious and ready to ourselves, it will be great imprudence or tyranny to be hasty in judging others; but if the latter, it is it that I contend for: for it is most unreasonable, when either the thing itself ministers variety, or that we take licence to ourselves in variety of interpretations, or proclaim to all the world our great weakness, by our actually being deceived, that we should either prescribe to others magisterially, when we are in error, or limit their understandings, when the thing itself affords liberty and variety.

SECTION IV.

Of the Difficulty of Expounding Scripture.

THESE considerations are taken from the nature of Scripture itself; but then, if we consider that we have no certain ways of determining places of difficulty and question, infallibly and certainly; but that we must hope to be saved in the belief of things plain, necessary, and fundamental, and our pious endeavour to find out God's meaning in such

places, which he hath left under a cloud, for other great ends reserved to his own knowledge, we shall see a very great necessity in allowing a liberty in prophesying, without prescribing authoritatively to other men's consciences, and becoming lords and masters of their faith. Now the means of expounding Scripture are either external, or internal. For the external, as church-authority, tradition, fathers, councils, and decrees of bishops, they are of a distinct consideration, and follow after in their order. But here we will first consider the invalidity and uncertainty of all those means of expounding Scripture, which are more proper and internal to the nature of the thing. The great masters of commentaries, some whereof have undertaken to know all mysteries, have propounded many ways to expound Scripture; which indeed are excellent helps, but not infallible assistances, both because themselves are but moral instruments, which force not truth from concealment, as also because they are not infallibly used and applied.

1. Sometime the sense is drawn forth by the context and connexion of parts: it is well when it can be so. But when there is two or three antecedents, and subjects spoken of, what man or what rule shall ascertain me, that I make my reference true, by drawing the relation to such an antecedent, to which I have a mind to apply it, another hath not? For in a contexture where one part does not always depend upon another, where things of differing natures intervene and interrupt the first intentions, there it is not always very probable to expound Scripture, to take its meaning by its proportion to the neighbouring words. But who desires satisfaction in this, may read the observation

verified in S. Gregory's *Morals upon Job*, lib. v. c. 29. and the instances he there brings are excellent proof, that this way of interpretation does not warrant any man to impose his expositions upon the belief and understanding of other men too confidently and magisterially.

2. Another great pretence of medium is the conference of places, which Illyricus calls "a mighty remedy, and a very happy exposition of holy Scripture;"* and indeed so it is, if well and temperately used; but then we are beholding to them that do so, for there is no rule that can constrain them to it; for comparing of places is of so indefinite capacity, that if there be ambiguity of words, variety of sense, alteration of circumstances, or difference of style amongst divine writers, then there is nothing that may be more abused by wilful people, or may more easily deceive the unwary, or that may amuse the most intelligent observer. The anabaptists take advantage enough in this proceeding, (and indeed so may any one that list,) and when we pretend against them the necessity of baptizing all, by authority of 'unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit,' they have a parallel for it, and tell us, that Christ will 'baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire,' and that one place expounds the other; and because by fire is not meant an element, or any thing that is natural, but an allegory and figurative expression of the same thing, so also by water may be meant the figure signifying the effect or manner of operation of the Holy Spirit. Fire in one place, and water in the

* "Ingens remedium et fœlicissimam expositionem sanctæ Scripturæ."

other, do but represent to us, that Christ's baptism is nothing else but the cleansing and purifying us by the Holy Ghost. But that which I here note as of greatest concernment, and which, in all reason, ought to be an utter overthrow to this topic, is an universal abuse of it among those that use it most; and when two places seem to have the same expression, or if a word have a double signification, because in this place it may have such a sense, therefore it must; because in one of the places the sense is to their purpose, they conclude that therefore it must be so in the other too. An instance I give in the great question between the Socinians and the Catholics. If any place be urged, in which our blessed Saviour is called God, they show you two or three where the word God is taken in a depressed sense, for one like God; as when God said to Moses, 'I have made thee a god to Pharaoh;' and hence they argue, because I can show the word is used for a false god, therefore no argument is sufficient to prove Christ to be true God, from the appellative of God. And might not another argue to the exact contrary, and as well urge that Moses is the true God; because in some places the word God is used for the eternal God? Both ways the argument concludes impiously and unreasonably. It is a fallacy to conclude affirmatively from a possibility to a reality; because breaking of bread is sometimes used for an eucharistical manducation in Scripture, therefore I shall not, from any testimony of Scripture affirming the first Christians to have broken bread together, conclude that they lived hospitably and in common society. Because it may possibly be eluded, therefore it does not signify any thing.

And this is the great way of answering all the arguments that can be brought against any thing that any man hath a mind to defend; and any man that reads any controversies of any side, shall find as many instances of this vanity, almost, as he finds arguments from Scripture: this fault was of old noted by St. Austin, for then they had got the trick, and he is angry at it:* “We ought not,” says he, “to take it for granted, that because, in a particular place, a thing has a certain signification, it always signifies the same.”

3. Oftentimes Scriptures are pretended to be expounded by a proportion and analogy of reason; and this is as the other, if it be well it is well. But unless there were some universal intellect, furnished with infallible propositions, by referring to which every man might argue infallibly, this logic may deceive as well as any of the rest. For it is with reason as with men’s tastes; although there are some general principles which are reasonable to all men, yet every man is not able to draw out all its consequences, nor to understand them when they are drawn forth, nor to believe when he does understand them. There is a precept of St. Paul, directed to the Thessalonians, before they were gathered into a body of a church, 2 *Thes.* iii. 6, ‘To withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly:’ but if this precept were now observed, I would fain know whether we should not fall into that inconvenience which St. Paul sought to avoid, in giving the same commandment to the church of

* “Neque enim putare debemus esse præscriptum, ut quod in aliquo loco res aliqua per similitudinem significaverit, hoc etiam semper significare credamus.”—*De Doctri. Christian.* lib. iii.

Corinth, 1 *Cor.* v. 9: 'I wrote to you, that ye should not company with fornicators;' and, 'yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, for then ye must go out of the world:' and therefore he restrains it to a quitting the society of Christians living ill lives. But now that all the world hath been Christians, if we should sin in keeping company with vicious Christians, must we not also go out of this world? Is not the precept made null, because the reason is altered, and things are come about, and that the 'many,' *οἱ πολλοί*, are the brethren, *ἀδελφοὶ ὀνομαζόμενοι*, 'called brethren,' as St. Paul's phrase is? And yet either this never was considered, or not yet believed; for it is generally taken to be obligatory, though (I think) seldom practised. But when we come to expound Scriptures to a certain sense, by arguments drawn from prudential motives, then we are in a vast plain without any sufficient guide, and we shall have so many senses as there are human prudences. But that which goes further than this is a parity of reason, from a plain place of Scripture to an obscure, from that which is plainly set down in a text to another that is more remote from it. And thus is that place in St. Matthew forced: 'If thy brother refuse to be amended, tell it to the church.' Hence some of the Roman doctors argue, if Christ commands to tell the church, in case of adultery or private injury, then much more in case of heresy. Well, suppose this to be a good interpretation, why must I stay here? Why may not I also add, by a parity of reason, if the church must be told of heresy, much more of treason: and why may not I reduce all sins to the cognizance of a church tribunal, as some men do indirectly, and *Sæcanus*

does heartily and plainly? If a man's principles be good, and his deductions certain, he need not care whither they carry him. But when an authority is entrusted to a person, and the extent of his power expressed in his commission, it will not be safety to meddle beyond his commission upon confidence of a parity of reason. To instance once more: when Christ, in 'feed my sheep,' and 'thou art Peter,' gave power to the pope to govern the church, (for to that sense the church of Rome expounds those authorities,) by a certain consequence of reason, say they, he gave all things necessary for exercise of this jurisdiction; and therefore, in 'feed my sheep,' he gave him an indirect power over temporals, for that is necessary that he may do his duty. Well, having gone thus far, we will go further upon the parity of reason; therefore he hath given the pope the gift of tongues, and he hath given him power to give it; for how else shall Xavier convert the Indians? He hath given him also power to command the seas and the winds, that they should obey him, for this also is very necessary in some cases:—and so 'feed my sheep' is, 'receive the gift of tongues, command the seas and the winds, dispose of the diadems of princes, and the possessions of the people, and the influences of heaven too,' and whatsoever the parity of reason will judge equally necessary in order to feed Christ's sheep. When a man does speak reason, it is but reason he should be heard; but though he may have the good fortune, or the great abilities to do it, yet he hath not a certainty, no regular infallible assistance, no inspiration of arguments and deductions; and if he had, yet because it must be reason that must judge of reason, unless

other men's understandings were of the same area, the same constitution and ability, they cannot be prescribed unto by another man's reason; especially because such reasonings as usually are in explication of particular places of Scripture depend upon minute circumstances and particularities, in which it is so easy to be deceived, and so hard to speak reason regularly and always, that it is the greater wonder if we be not deceived.

4. Others pretend to expound Scripture by the analogy of faith, and that is the most sure and infallible way, (as it is thought:) but upon stricter survey, it is but a chimera, a thing in *nubibus*, in the clouds, which varies like the right hand and left hand of a pillar; and, at the best, is but like the coast of a country to a traveller out of his way; it may bring him to his journey's end, though twenty miles about; it may keep him from running into the sea, and from mistaking a river for dry land; but whether this little path or the other be the right way, it tells not. So is the analogy of faith; that is, if I understand it right, the rule of faith; that is, the creed. Now, were it not a fine device to go to expound all the Scripture by the creed, there being in it so many thousand places which have no more relation to any article in the creed than they have to Virgil's Eclogues? Indeed, if a man resolves to keep the analogy of faith, that is, to expound Scripture so as not to do any violence to any fundamental article, he shall be sure, however he errs, yet not to destroy faith, he shall not perish in his exposition. And that was the precept given by St. Paul, that all prophesyings should be estimated according to the analogy of faith. *Rom. xii. 6.* And to this very purpose St. Austin,

in his Exposition of Genesis, by way of preface, sets down the articles of faith, with this design and protestation of it, that if he says nothing against those articles, though he miss the particular sense of the place, there is no danger or sin in his exposition: but how that analogy of faith should have any other influence in expounding such places in which those articles of faith are neither expressed nor involved, I understand not. But then, if you extend the analogy of faith further than that which is proper to the rule or symbol of faith, then every man expounds Scripture according to the analogy of faith: but what? his own faith: which faith, if it be questioned, I am no more bound to expound according to the analogy of another man's faith, than he to expound according to the analogy of mine. And this is it that is complained on of all sides that overvalue their own opinions. Scripture seems so clearly to speak what they believe, that they wonder all the world does not see it as clear as they do; but they satisfy themselves with saying, that it is because they come with prejudice; whereas, if they had the true belief, that is, theirs, they would easily see what they see. And this is very true; for if they did believe as others believe, they would expound Scriptures to their sense; but if this be expounding according to the analogy of faith, it signifies no more than this: be you of my mind, and then my arguments will seem concluding, and my authorities and allegations pressing and pertinent: and this will serve on all sides, and therefore will do but little service to the determination of questions, or prescribing to other men's consciences, on any side.

Lastly: Consulting the originals is thought a great matter to interpretation of Scriptures. But this is to small purpose: for indeed it will expound the Hebrew and the Greek, and rectify translations: but I know no man that says that the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek are easy and certain to be understood, and that they are hard in Latin and English: the difficulty is in the thing, however it be expressed, the least is in the language. If the original languages were our mother tongue, Scripture is not much the easier to us; and a natural Greek or a Jew can, with no more reason, nor authority, obtrude his interpretation upon other men's consciences, than a man of another nation. Add to this, that the inspection of the original is no more certain way of interpretation of Scripture now, than it was to the fathers and primitive ages of the church; and yet he that observes what infinite variety of translations of the Bible were in the first ages of the church, (as St. Jerome observes,) and never a one like another, will think that we shall differ as much in our interpretations as they did, and that the medium is as uncertain to us as it was to them: and so it is; witness the great number of late translations, and the infinite number of commentaries, which are too pregnant an argument, that we neither agree in the understanding of the words, nor of the sense.

The truth is, all these ways of interpreting of Scripture, which of themselves are good helps, are made, either by design or by our infirmities, ways of intricating and involving Scriptures in greater difficulty; because men do not learn their doctrines from Scripture, but come to the understanding of Scripture with preconceptions and ideas of doc-

trines of their own ; and then no wonder that Scriptures look like pictures, wherein every man in the room believes they look on him only, and that wheresoever he stands, or how often soever he changes his station. So that now what was intended for a remedy becomes the promoter of our disease, and our meat becomes the matter of sicknesses : and the mischief is, the wit of man cannot find a remedy for it, for there is no rule, no limit, no certain principle, by which all men may be guided to a certain and so infallible an interpretation, that he can, with any equity, prescribe to others to believe his interpretations in places of controversy or ambiguity. A man would think that the memorable prophecy of Jacob, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh come, should have been so clear a determination of the time of the Messiah, that a Jew should never have doubted it to have been verified in Jesus of Nazareth ; and yet, for this so clear vaticination, they have no less than twenty-six answers. St. Paul and St. James seem to speak a little diversely concerning justification by faith and works, and yet to my understanding it is very easy to reconcile them ; but all men are not of my mind, for Osiander, in his confutation of the book which Melancthon wrote against him, observes, that there are twenty several opinions concerning justification, all drawn from the Scriptures, by the men only of the Augustan confession. There are sixteen several opinions concerning original sin ; and as many definitions of the sacraments as there are sects of men that disagree about them.

And now what help is there for us in the midst of these uncertainties ? If we follow any one

translation, or any one man's commentary, what rule shall we have to choose the right by? Or is there any one man that hath translated perfectly, or expounded infallibly? No translation challenges such a prerogative as to be authentic, but the vulgar Latin: and yet see with what good success; for when it was declared authentic by the council of Trent, Sixtus put forth a copy much mended of what it was, and tied all men to follow that; but that did not satisfy, for Pope Clement reviews and corrects it in many places, and still the decree remains in a changed subject. And, secondly, that translation will be very unapt to satisfy, in which one of their own men, Isidore Clarius, a monk of Brescia, found and mended eight thousand faults, besides innumerable others, which he says he pretermitted. And then, thirdly, to show how little themselves were satisfied with it, divers learned men amongst them did new translate the Bible, and thought they did God and the church good service in it. So that, if you take this for your precedent, you are sure to be mistaken infinitely; if you take any other, the authors themselves do not promise you any security. If you resolve to follow any one as far only as you see cause, then you only do wrong or right by chance; for you have certainty just proportionable to your own skill, to your own infallibility. If you resolve to follow any one, whithersoever he leads, we shall oftentimes come thither, where we shall see ourselves become ridiculous, as it happened in the case of Spiridion, bishop of Cyprus, who so resolved to follow his old book, that when an eloquent bishop, who was desired to preach, read his text, 'Take up thy bed and walk,' Spiri-

dion was very angry with him, because in his book it was 'take up thy couch,' and thought it arrogance in the preacher to speak better Latin than his translator had done: and if it be thus in translations, it is far worse in expositions, "because, in truth, all do not receive the Holy Scriptures, on account of their profundity, in the same sense, for there are as many expositors as there are sentences in it,"* said Vincent Lirinensis; in which every man knows what innumerable ways there are of being mistaken, God having, in things not simply necessary, left such a difficulty upon those parts of Scripture which are the subject matters of controversy, (as St. Austin gives a reason,†) that all that err honestly are therefore to be pitied and tolerated; because it may be the condition of every man, at one time or other.

The sum is this: Since Holy Scripture is the repository of divine truths, and the great rule of faith, to which all sects of Christians do appeal for probation of their several opinions; and since all agree in the articles of the creed, as things clearly and plainly set down, and as containing all that which is of simple and prime necessity; and since, on the other side, there are in Scripture many other mysteries, and matters of question upon which there is a veil; since there are so many copies, with infinite varieties of reading; since a various interpunction, a parenthesis, a letter, an accent, may much alter the sense; since some places have divers literal

* "Quia scil. Scripturam Sacram pro ipsa sui altitudine non uno eodemque sensu omnes accipiunt, ut penè quot homines tot illic sententiæ erui posse videantur."—In Commonit.

† "Ad edomandum labore superbiam, et intellectum à fastidio revocandum."—Lib. ii. De Doctr. Christian. c. 6.

senses, many have spiritual, mystical, and allegorical meanings; since there are so many tropes, metonymies, ironies, hyperboles, proprieties, and improprieties of language, whose understanding depends upon such circumstances that it is almost impossible to know its proper interpretation, now that the knowledge of such circumstances and particular stories is irrevocably lost; since there are some mysteries which, at the best advantage of expression, are not easy to be apprehended, and whose explication, by reason of our imperfections, must needs be dark, sometimes weak, sometimes unintelligible; and lastly, since those ordinary means of expounding Scripture, as searching the originals, conference of places, parity of reason, and analogy of faith, are all dubious, uncertain, and very fallible,—he that is the wisest, and by consequence the likeliest to expound truest in all probability of reason, will be very far from confidence; because every one of these, and many more, are like so many degrees of improbability and uncertainty, all depressing our certainty of finding out truth in such mysteries, and amidst so many difficulties. And, therefore, a wise man that considers this, would not willingly be prescribed to by others; and, therefore, if he also be a just man, he will not impose upon others; for it is best every man should be left in that liberty from which no man can justly take him, unless he could secure him from error: so that here also there is a necessity to conserve the liberty of prophesying and interpreting Scripture; a necessity derived from the consideration of the difficulty of Scripture in questions controverted, and the uncertainty of any internal medium of interpretation.

SECTION V.

Of the insufficiency and uncertainty of Tradition to expound Scripture, or determine Questions.

IN the next place, we must consider those extrin-
sical means of interpreting Scripture, and deter-
mining questions, which they most of all confide
in, that restrain prophesying with the greatest
tyranny. The first and principal is Tradition,
which is pretended not only to expound Scrip-
ture, “for it is requisite, on account of the various
turns and windings of error, that the drift of pro-
phetic and apostolic interpretation be regulated
according to the concurrent opinion of the uni-
versal church;”* but also to propound articles upon
a distinct stock, such articles whereof there is no
mention and proposition in Scripture. And in
this topic, not only the distinct articles are clear
and plain, like as the fundamentals of faith ex-
pressed in Scripture, but also it pretends to ex-
pound Scripture, and to determine questions with
so much clarity and certainty, as there shall nei-
ther be error nor doubt remaining; and therefore no
disagreeing is here to be endured. And indeed it
is most true, if tradition can perform these preten-
sions, and teach us plainly, and assure us infallibly

* “Necesse enim est propter tantos tam varii erroris anfrac-
tus, ut propheticae et apostolicae interpretationis linea secundum
ecclesiastici et catholici sensus normam dirigatur.”—Vincent.
Lirinens. in Commonitor.

of all truths which they require us to believe, we can, in this case, have no reason to disbelieve them, and therefore are certainly heretics if we do; because, without a crime, without some human interest or collateral design, we cannot disbelieve traditive doctrine or traditive interpretation, if it be infallibly proved to us that tradition is an infallible guide.

But here I first consider that tradition is no repository of articles of faith, and therefore the not following it is no argument of heresy; for, besides that I have showed Scripture in its plain expresses to be an abundant rule of faith and manners, tradition is a topic as fallible as any other; so fallible, that it cannot be sufficient evidence to any man in a matter of faith or question of heresy.

For, first, I find that the fathers were infinitely deceived in their account and enumeration of traditions; sometimes they did call some traditions such, not which they knew to be so, but by arguments and presumptions they concluded them so. Such as was that of St. Austin: "What is held by the universal church, and not known to have been decreed by councils, is to be considered as derived from apostolical tradition."* Now, suppose this rule probable, that is the most, yet it is not certain; it might come by custom, whose original was not known, but yet could not derive from an apostolical principle. Now, when they conclude of particular traditions by a general rule, and that general rule not certain, but at the most probable in any thing, and certainly false in some things, it is no wonder

* "Ea quæ universalis tenet ecclesia nec à conciliis instituta reperiuntur, credibile est ab apostolorum traditione descendisse." —Epist. cxviii. ad Sunar. de Bapt. Contr. Donat. lib. iv. c. 24.

if the productions, that is, their judgments and pretence fail so often. And if I should but instance in all the particulars, in which tradition was pretended, falsely or uncertainly, in the first ages, I should multiply them to a troublesome variety; for it was then accounted so glorious a thing to have spoken with the persons of the apostles, that if any man could, with any colour, pretend to it, he might abuse the whole church, and obtrude what he listed, under the specious title of apostolical tradition; and it is very notorious to every man that will but read and observe the recognitions or *Stromata* of Clemens Alexandrinus, where there is enough of such false wares showed in every book, and pretended to be no less than from the apostles. In the first age after the apostles, Papias pretended he received a tradition from the apostles, that Christ, before the day of judgment, should reign a thousand years upon earth, and his saints with him, in temporal felicities; and this thing, proceeding from so great an authority as the testimony of Papias, drew after it all, or most, of the Christians in the first three hundred years. For, besides that the millenary opinion is expressly taught by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Lactantius, Severus, Victorinus, Apollinaris, Nepos, and divers others, famous in their time, Justin Martyr, in his dialogue against Tryphon, says, it was the belief of all Christians exactly orthodox; and yet there was no such tradition, but a mistake in Papias; but I find it nowhere spoke against, till Dionysius of Alexandria, confuted Nepos's book, and converted Coracion, the Egyptain, from the opinion. Now, if a tradition, whose beginning of being called so began with a scholar of the apostles, (for so was

Papias,) and then continued, for some ages, upon the mere authority of so famous a man, did yet deceive the church, much more fallible is the pretence, when, two or three hundred years after, it but commences, and then, by some learned man, is first called a tradition apostolical. And so it happened in the case of the Arian heresy, which the Nicene fathers did confute by objecting a contrary tradition apostolical, as Theodoret reports;* and yet if they had not had better arguments from Scripture than from tradition, they would have failed much in so good a cause; for this very pretence the Arians themselves made, and desired to be tried by the fathers of the first three hundred years;† which was a confutation sufficient to them who pretended a clear tradition, because it was unimaginable that the tradition should leap so as not to come from the first to the last by the middle. But that this trial was sometime declined by that excellent man St. Athanasius, although at other times confidently and truly pretended, it was an argument the tradition was not so clear, but both sides might with some fairness pretend to it. And, therefore, one of the prime founders of their heresy, the heretic, Artemon,§ having observed the advantage might be taken by any sect that would pretend tradition, because the medium was plausible, and consisting of so many particulars that it was hard to be redargued, pretended a tradition from the apostles, that Christ was a mere man, and that the tradition did descend by a constant succession, in the church of Rome, to pope Victor's

* Lib. i. Hist. c. 8.

† Vide Petav. in Epiph. Hær. 69.

‡ Euseb. lib. v. c. ult.

time inclusively, and till Zepherinus had interrupted the series, and corrupted the doctrine; which pretence, if it had not had some appearance of truth, so as possibly to abuse the church, had not been worthy of confutation, which yet was with care undertaken by an old writer, out of whom Eusebius transcribes a large passage, to reprove the vanity of the pretender. But I observe from hence, that it was usual to pretend to tradition, and that it was easier pretended than confuted; and I doubt not but oftener done than discovered. A great question arose in Africa, concerning the baptism of heretics, whether it were valid or no. St. Cyprian and his party appealed to Scripture; Stephen, bishop of Rome, and his party, would be judged by custom, and tradition ecclesiastical. See how much the nearer the question was to a determination: either that probation was not accounted by St. Cyprian, and the bishops, both of Asia and Africk, to be a good argument, and sufficient to determine them, or there was no certain tradition against them; for, unless one of these two do it, nothing could excuse them from opposing a known truth; unless, peradventure, St. Cyprian, Firmilian, the bishops of Galatia, Cappadocia, and almost two parts of the world, were ignorant of such a tradition, for they knew of none such, and some of them expressly denied it. And the sixth general synod approves of the canon made in the council of Carthage, under Cyprian, upon this very ground, because "the tradition was preserved only in the dioceses of those bishops, and according to a custom handed down among them."* They had a parti-

* "In prædictorum præsulum locis, et solum secundum traditam eis consuetudinem, servatus est."

cular tradition for rebaptization; and therefore, there could be no tradition universal against it, or, if there were, they knew not of it, but much for the contrary; and then, it would be remembered, that a concealed tradition was like a silent thunder, or a law not promulgated; it neither was known, nor was obligatory. And I shall observe this too, that this very tradition was so obscure, and was so obscurely delivered, so silently proclaimed, that St. Austin,† who disputed against the Donatists upon this very question, was not able to prove it, but by a consequence which he thought probable and credible, as appears in his discourse against the Donatists. “The apostles,” saith St. Austin, “prescribed nothing in this particular: but this custom, which is contrary to Cyprian, ought to be believed to have come from their tradition, as many other things which the catholic church observes.” That is all the ground and all the reason; nay, the church did waver concerning that question, and before the decision of a council, Cyprian‡ and others might dissent without breach of charity. It was plain, then, there was no clear tradition in the question; possibly there might be a custom in some churches postnate to the times of the apostles, but nothing that was obligatory, no tradition apostolical. But this was a suppletory device, ready at hand whenever they needed it; and St. Austin§ confuted the Pelagians, in the question of original sin, by the custom of exorcism and insufflation, which, St. Austin said, came from the apostles by tradition, which yet was then, and

* Lib. v. De Baptism. Contr. Donat. c. 23.

† Lib. i. De Baptism. c. 18.

‡ De Peccat. Original. lib. ii. c. 40. contra. Pelag. et Cælest.

is now, so impossible to be proved, that he that shall affirm it, shall gain only the reputation of a bold man and a confident.

2. I consider, if the report of traditions in the primitive times, so near the ages apostolical, was so uncertain, that they were fain to aim at them by conjectures, and grope as in the dark, the uncertainty is much increased since; because there are many famous writers whose works are lost, which yet, if they had continued, they might have been good records to us, as Clemens Romanus, Egesippus, Nepos, Coracion, Dionysius Areopagite, of Alexandria, of Corinth, Firmilian, and many more: and since we see pretences have been made, without reason, in those ages where they might better have been confuted than now they can, it is greater prudence to suspect any later pretences, since so many sects have been, so many wars, so many corruptions in authors, so many authors lost, so much ignorance hath intervened, and so many interests have been served, that now the rule is to be altered: and whereas it was of old time credible, that that was apostolical whose beginning they knew not; now, quite contrary, we cannot safely believe them to be apostolical, unless we do know their beginning to have been from the apostles. For this consisting of probabilities and particulars, which, put together, make up a moral demonstration, the argument which I now urge hath been growing these fifteen hundred years; and if anciently there was so much as to evacuate the authority of tradition, much more is there now absolutely to destroy it, when all the particulars, which time and infinite variety of human accidents have been amassing together, are now centered, and are united by

way of constipation. Because every age, and every great change, and every heresy, and every interest, hath increased the difficulty of finding out true traditions.

3. There are very many traditions which are lost; and yet they are concerning matters of as great consequence as most of those questions, for the determination whereof traditions are pretended: it is more than probable, that as in baptism and the eucharist the very forms of ministration are transmitted to us, so also in confirmation and ordination, and that there were special directions for visitation of the sick, and explicit interpretations of those difficult places of St. Paul, which St. Peter affirmed to be so difficult, that the ignorant do wrest them to their own damnation; and yet no church hath conserved these, or those many more which St. Basil affirms to be so many, that the day would fail him in the very simple enumeration of all traditions ecclesiastical.* And if the church hath failed in keeping the great variety of traditions, it will hardly be thought a fault in a private person to neglect tradition, which either the whole church hath very much neglected inculpably, or else the whole church is very much to blame. And who can ascertain us that she hath not entertained some which are no traditions, as well as lost thousands that are? That she did entertain some false traditions, I have already proved; but it is also as probable that some of those which these ages did propound for traditions are not so, as it is certain that some, which the first ages called traditions, were nothing less.

* *Ἐπιλείψῃ ἡμέρα τὰ ἄγραφα τῆς ἐκκλησίας μυσήρια διηγούμενον.*—Cap. 29. De Spir. Sancto.

4. There are some opinions, which when they began to be publicly received, began to be accounted prime traditions; and so became such, not by a native title, but by adoption; and nothing is more usual than for the fathers to colour their popular opinion with so great an appellative. St. Austin called the communicating of infants an apostolical tradition; and yet we do not practise it, because we disbelieve the allegation. And that every custom, which at first introduction was but a private fancy or singular practice, grew afterwards into a public rite, and went for a tradition after a while continuance, appears by Tertullian, who seems to justify it: "You do not think it lawful for any Christian to appoint, for discipline and salvation, whatever he may deem well-pleasing to God." And again, "Whoever tradition be introduced by, you should regard, not the author, but the authority."* And St. Jerome most plainly: "The decisions of the fathers are to be esteemed by all as apostolical traditions."† And when Irenæus had observed that great variety in the keeping of Lent, which yet to be a forty days' fast is pretended to descend from tradition apostolical, some fasting but one day before Easter, some two, some forty, and this even long before Irenæus's time, he gives this reason: "That variety of fasting originated with our fathers, who did not carefully observe their custom, who either from simplicity or per-

* "Non enim existimas tu licitum esse cuicumque fidei constituere quod Deo placere illi visum fuerit, ad disciplinam et salutem."—*Contra Marcion*. "A quocumque traditore censetur, nec authorem respicias sed autoritatem."—*De Coron. milit.* c. 3 et 4.

† "Præcepta majorum apostolicas traditiones quisque existimat."—*Apud Euseb. lib. v. c. 24.*

sonal authority, were for ordaining rites for their posterity.* And there are yet some points of good concernment, which if any man should question in a high manner, they would prove indeterminate by Scripture, or sufficient reason; and yet I doubt not their confident defenders would say, they are opinions of the church, and quickly pretend a tradition from the very apostles, and believe themselves so secure, that they could not be discovered; because the question never having been disputed, gives them occasion to say, that which had no beginning known was certainly from the apostles. For why should not divines do in the question of reconfirmation as in that of rebaptization? Are not the grounds equal from an indelible character in one as in the other? And if it happen such a question as this, after contestation, should be determined, not by any positive decree, but by the cession of one part, and the authority and reputation of the other, does not the next age stand fair to be abused with a pretence of tradition in the matter of reconfirmation, which never yet came to a serious question? for so it was in the question of rebaptization; for which there was then no more evident tradition than there is now in the question of reconfirmation, as I proved formerly, but yet it was carried upon that title.

5. There is great variety in the probation of tradition; so that whatever is proved to be tradition, is not equally and alike credible; for nothing but universal tradition is of itself credible; other tra-

* “*Varietas illa jejunii cœpit apud majores nostros, qui non accuratè consuetudinem eorum qui vel simplicitate quâdam vel privatâ autoritate in posterum aliquid statuissent, observant.*”—*Ex translatione Christophersoni.*

ditions in their just proportion, as they partake of the degrees of universality. Now, that a tradition be universal, or, which is all one, that it be a credible testimony, St. Irenæus* requires that tradition should derive from all the churches apostolical; and, therefore, according to this rule, there was no sufficient medium to determine the question about Easter, because the eastern and western churches had several traditions respectively, and both pretended from the apostles. Clemens Alexandrinus† says, it was a secret tradition from the apostles, that Christ preached but one year: but Irenæus‡ says, it did derive from heretics; and says, that he, by tradition, first from St. John, and then from his disciples, received another tradition, that Christ was almost fifty years old when he died; and so, by consequence, preached almost twenty years: both of them were deceived, and so had all that had believed the report of either, pretending tradition apostolical. Thus, the custom in the Latin church of fasting on Saturday, was against that tradition which the Greeks had from the apostles; and therefore, by this division, and want of consent, which was the true tradition was so absolutely indeterminate, that both must needs lose much of their reputation. But how then, when not only particular churches, but single persons, are all the proof we have for a tradition? and this often happened: I think St. Austin is the chief argument and authority we have for the assumption of the Virgin Mary; the baptism of infants is called a tradition by Origen alone, at first, and from him by others. The procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son, which is an article the Greek church disavows,

* Lib. iii. c. 4. † Lib. i. Stromat. ‡ Lib. ii. c. 39.

derives from the tradition apostolical, as it is pretended; and yet, before St. Austin, we hear nothing of it very clearly or certainly, forasmuch as that whole mystery, concerning the blessed Spirit, was so little explicated in Scripture, and so little derived to them by tradition, that, till the council of Nice, you shall hardly find any form of worship, or personal address of devotion to the Holy Spirit, as Erasmus observes; and I think the contrary will very hardly be verified. And for this particular, in which I instance, whatsoever is in Scripture concerning it, is against that which the church of Rome calls tradition; which makes the Greeks so confident as they are of the point, and is an argument of the vanity of some things which for no greater reason are called traditions, but because one man hath said so, and that they can be proved by no better argument to be true. Now, in this case, wherein tradition descends upon us with unequal certainty, it would be very unequal to require of us an absolute belief of every thing not written, for fear we be accounted to slight tradition apostolical. And since nothing can require our supreme assent, but that which is truly catholic and apostolic, and to such a tradition is required, as Irenæus says, the consent of all those churches which the apostles planted, and where they did preside, this topic will be of so little use in judging heresies, that (besides what is deposited in Scripture) it cannot be proved in any thing but in the canon of Scripture itself; and, as it is now received, even in that there is some variety.

And therefore there is wholly a mistake in this business; for when the fathers appeal to tradition, and with much earnestness and some clamour they

call upon heretics to conform to, or to be tried by tradition, it is such a tradition as delivers the fundamental points of Christianity, which were also recorded in Scripture. But because the canon was not yet perfectly consigned, they called to that testimony they had, which was the testimony of the churches apostolical, whose bishops and priests, being the chief authorities in religion, did believe and preach Christian religion, and conserve all its great mysteries according as they had been taught. Irenæus calls this a tradition apostolical, "that Christ took the cup, and said it was his own blood, and taught the new oblation of the New Testament, which the church, receiving from the apostles, presents throughout the whole world."* And the fathers in these ages confute heretics by ecclesiastical tradition; that is, they confront against their impious and blasphemous doctrines that religion which the apostles having taught to the churches where they did preside, their successors did still preach; and for a long while together suffered not the enemy to sow tares amongst their wheat. And yet these doctrines, which they called traditions, were nothing but such fundamental truths which were in Scripture, all coincident with holy writ, as Irenæus† in Eusebius observes, in the instance of Polycarpus; and it is manifest, by considering what heresies they fought against, the heresies of Ebion, Cerinthus, Nicolaitans, Valentinians, Carpocratians,‡ persons that denied the Son of God, the unity of the Godhead, that preached impurity, that practised sorcery

* "Christum accepisse calicem, et dixisse sanguinem suum esse, et docuisse novam oblationem Novi Testamenti, quam ecclesia per apostolos accipiens offert per totum mundum."

† Lib. v. cap. 20. ‡ Vide Irenæ. lib. iii. et iv. Cont. Heres.

and witchcraft. And now, that they did rather urge tradition against them than Scripture, was, because the public doctrine of all the apostolical churches was at first more known and famous than many parts of Scripture; and because some heretics denied St. Luke's Gospel, some received none but St. Matthew's, some rejected all St. Paul's Epistles; and it was a long time before the whole canon was consigned by universal testimony; some churches having one part, some another: Rome herself had not all: so that, in this case, the argument from tradition was the most famous, the most certain, and the most prudent. And now, according to this rule, they had more traditions than we have; and traditions did by degrees lessen as they came to be written, and their necessity was less as the knowledge of them was ascertained to us by a better keeper of divine truths. All that great mysteriousness of Christ's priesthood, the unity of his sacrifice, Christ's advocacy and intercession for us in heaven, and many other excellent doctrines, might very well be accounted traditions, before St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews was published to all the world; but now they are written truths; and if they had not, possibly we might either have lost them quite, or doubted of them, as we do of many other traditions, by reason of the insufficiency of the propounder. And therefore it was that St. Peter* took order that the Gospel should be writ; for he had promised that he would do something which, after his decease, should have these things in remembrance. He knew it was not safe trusting the report of men, where the fountain might quickly run dry, or be corrupted so

* 2 Pet. i. 13.

insensibly that no cure could be found for it, nor any just notice taken of it till it were incurable. And, indeed, there is scarce any thing but what is written in Scripture, that can, with any confidence of argument, pretend to derive from the apostles, except rituals and manners of ministration; but no doctrines or speculative mysteries are so transmitted to us by so clear a current, that we may see a visible channel, and trace it to the primitive fountains. It is said to be a tradition apostolical, that no priest should baptize without chrism and the command of the bishop: suppose it were, yet we cannot be obliged to believe it with much confidence, because we have but little proof for it, scarce any thing but the single testimony of St. Jerome.* And yet, if it were, this is but a ritual, of which, in passing by, I shall give that account, that, suppose this and many more rituals did derive clearly from tradition apostolical, (which yet but very few do,) yet it is hard that any church should be charged with a crime for not observing such rituals, because we see some of them, which certainly did derive from the apostles, are expired and gone out in a desuetude; such as are abstinence from blood and from things strangled, the cœnobitic life of secular persons, the college of widows, to worship standing upon the Lord's-day, to give milk and honey to the newly baptized, and many more of the like nature. Now, there having been no mark to distinguish the necessity of one from the indifferency of the other, they are all alike necessary, or alike indifferent; if the former, why does no church observe them? if the latter, why does the church of Rome charge upon others the shame of novelty, for leaving of

* Dialog. adv. Lucifer.

some rites and ceremonies which, by her own practice, we are taught to have no obligation in them, but to be adiaphorous? St. Paul gave order, that a bishop should be the husband of one wife; the church of Rome will not allow so much; other churches allow more: the apostles commanded Christians to fast on Wednesday and Friday, as appears in their canons; the church of Rome fasts Friday and Saturday, and not on Wednesday: the apostles had their agapæ or love-feasts; we should believe them scandalous: they used a kiss of charity in ordinary addresses; the church of Rome keeps it only in their mass, other churches quite omit it: the apostles permitted priests and deacons to live in conjugal society, as appears in the fifth canon of the apostles, (which to them is an argument who believe them such;) and yet the church of Rome by no means will endure it: nay more, Michael Medina* gives testimony, that of eighty-four canons apostolical which Clemens collected, scarce six or eight are observed by the Latin church; and Peresius gives this account of it: "Among these there are many which, owing to the corruption of the times, are not fully observed; others are rejected, on account either of the times or the nature of them, or by the authority of the church."† Now it were good that they which take a liberty themselves, should also allow the same to others. So that, for one thing or other, all traditions, excepting those very few that are absolutely uni-

* De Sacr. Hom. Continent. lib. v. cap. 105.

† "In illis contineri multa quæ temporum corruptione non plenè observantur, aliis pro temporis et materiæ qualitate aut obliteratis, aut totius ecclesiæ magisterio abrogatis."—De Tradit. part. iii. c. De Author. Can. Apost.

versal, will lose all their obligation, and become no competent medium to confine men's practices, or limit their faiths, or determine their persuasions. Either for the difficulty of their being proved, the incompetency of the testimony that transmits them, or the indifferency of the thing transmitted, all traditions, both ritual and doctrinal, are disabled from determining our consciences either to a necessary believing or obeying.

6. To which I add, by way of confirmation, that there are some things called traditions, and are offered to be proved to us by a testimony, which is either false or not extant. Clemens of Alexandria pretended it a tradition, that the apostles preached to them that died in infidelity, even after their death, and then raised them to life; but he proved it only by the testimony of the book of Hermes. He affirmed it to be a tradition apostolical, that the Greeks were saved by their philosophy; but he had no other authority for it but the apocryphal books of Peter and Paul. Tertullian and St. Basil pretend it an apostolical tradition, to sign in the air with the sign of the cross; but this was only consigned to them in the Gospel of Nicodemus. But to instance once for all, in the epistle of Marcellus to the bishop of Antioch, where he affirms that it is the canon of the apostles, "that councils cannot be held without the consent of the Roman pontiff:" and yet there is no such canon extant, nor ever was, for aught appears in any record we have; and yet the collection of the canons is so entire, that though it hath something more than what was apostolical, yet it hath nothing less. And now that I am casually fallen upon an instance from the canons of the apostles, I consider that there

cannot, in the world, a greater instance be given how easy it is to be abused in the believing of traditions: for first, to the first fifty, which many did admit for apostolical, thirty-five more were added, which most men now count spurious, all men call dubious, and some of them universally condemned by peremptory sentence, even by them who are greatest admirers of that collection; as the sixty-fifth, sixty-seventh, and eighty-fourth and eighty-fifth canons. For the first fifty, it is evident that there are some things so mixed with them, and no mark of difference left, that the credit of all is much impaired, insomuch that Isidore of Seville* says, "they were apocryphal, made by heretics, and published under the title apostolical; but neither the fathers nor the church of Rome did give assent to them." And yet they have prevailed so far amongst some, that Damascen† is of opinion they should be received equally with the canonical writings of the apostles. One thing only I observe, (and we shall find it true in most writings whose authority is urged in questions of theology,) that the authority of the tradition is not it which moves the assent, but the nature of the thing; and because such a canon is delivered, they do not therefore believe the sanction or proposition so delivered, but disbelieve the tradition, if they do not like the matter; and so do not judge of the matter by the tradition, but of the tradition by the matter. And thus the church of Rome rejects the eighty-fourth or eighty-fifth canon of the apostles, not because it is delivered with less authority than the last thirty-five are, but because it reckons the canon

* Apud Gratian. Dist. xvi. c. Canones.

† Lib. i. c. 18, De Orthod. Fide.

of Scripture otherwise than it is at Rome. Thus also the fifth canon amongst the first fifty, because it approves the marriage of priests and deacons, does not persuade them to approve of it too, but itself becomes suspected for approving it: so that either they accuse themselves of palpable contempt of the apostolical authority, or else that the reputation of such traditions is kept up to serve their own ends; and therefore, when they encounter them, they are more to be upheld; which what else is it, but to teach all the world to condemn such pretences, and undervalue traditions, and to supply to others a reason why they should do that which, to them that give the occasion, is most unreasonable?

7. The testimony of the ancient church being the only means of proving tradition, and sometimes their dictates and doctrine being the tradition pretended of necessity to be imitated, it is considerable that men, in their estimate of it, take their rise from several ages and differing testimonies, and are not agreed about the competency of their testimony: and the reasons that on each side make them differ, are such as make the authority itself the less authentic, and more repudiable. Some will allow only of the three first ages, as being most pure, most persecuted, and therefore most holy; least interested, serving fewer designs, having fewest factions, and therefore more likely to speak the truth for God's sake and its own, as best complying with their great end of acquiring heaven in recompense of losing their lives: others say, that those ages being persecuted, minded the present doctrines proportionable to their purposes and constitution of the ages, and make little or nothing of

those questions which at this day vex Christendom.* And both speak true: the first ages speak greatest truth, but least pertinently. The next ages, the ages of the four general councils, spake some things not much more pertinently to the present questions, but were not so likely to speak true, by reason of their dispositions, contrary to the capacity and circumstance of the first ages; and if they speak wisely as doctors, yet not certainly as witnesses of such propositions, which the first ages noted not; and yet, unless they had noted, could not possibly be traditions. And therefore either of them will be less useful as to our present affairs. For, indeed, the questions which now are the public trouble, were not considered or thought upon for many hundred years; and, therefore, prime tradition there is none as to our purpose; and it will be an insufficient medium to be used or pretended in the determination: and to dispute concerning the truth or necessity of traditions, in the questions of our times, is as if historians, disputing about a question in the English story, should fall on wrangling whether Livy or Plutarch were the best writers: and the earnest disputes about traditions are to no better purpose. For no church, at this day, admits the one half of those things, which certainly by the fathers were called traditions apostolical; and no testimony of ancient writers does consign the one half of the present questions, to be or not to be traditions. So that they who admit only the doctrine and testimony of the first ages, cannot be determined in most of their doubts which now trouble us, because their writings are of matters

* Vid. Card. Perron, Letre au Sieur Casaubon.

wholly differing from the present disputes; and they which would bring in after ages to the authority of a competent judge or witness, say the same thing; for they plainly confess, that the first ages spake little or nothing to the present question, or at least nothing to their sense of them: for therefore they call in aid from the following ages, and make them suppletory and auxiliary to their designs; and therefore there are no traditions to our purposes. And they who would willingly have it otherwise, yet have taken no course it should be otherwise; for they, when they had opportunity, in the councils of the last ages, to determine what they had a mind to, yet they never named the number, nor expressed the particular traditions which they would fain have the world believe to be apostolical; but they have kept the bridle in their own hands, and made a reserve of their own power, that if need be, they may make new pretensions, or not be put to it to justify the old, by the engagement of a conciliary declaration.

Lastly: We are acquitted, by the testimony of the primitive fathers, from any other necessity of believing, than of such articles as are recorded in Scripture: and this is done by them whose authority is pretended the greatest argument for tradition, as appears largely in Irenæus,* who disputes professedly for the sufficiency of Scripture against certain heretics, who affirm some necessary truths not to be written. It was an excellent saying of St. Basil, and will never be wiped out with all the eloquence of Perron, in his sermon *de Fide*: “It is a manifest departure from the faith, and mere su-

perciliousness, either to reject what is taught in Scripture, or to introduce any thing that is not written.”* And it is but a poor device to say, that every particular tradition is consigned in Scripture, by those places which give authority to tradition; and so the introducing of tradition is not a super-inducing any thing over or besides Scripture, because tradition is like a messenger, and the Scripture is like his letters of credence, and therefore authorises whatsoever tradition speaketh. For supposing Scripture does consign the authority of tradition, (which it might do before all the whole instrument of Scripture itself was consigned, and then afterwards there might be no need of tradition,) yet supposing it, it will follow that all those traditions which are truly prime and apostolical, are to be entertained according to the intention of the deliverers; which, indeed, is so reasonable of itself, that we need not Scripture to persuade us to it: itself is authentic as Scripture is, if it derives from the same fountain; and the word is never the more the Word of God for being written; nor the less for not being written: but it will not follow that whatsoever is pretended to be tradition, is so; neither in the credit of the particular instances consigned in Scripture, *et dolosus versatur in generalibus*;† but that this craft is too palpable. And if a general and indefinite consignment of tradition be sufficient to warrant every particular that pretends to be tradition, then St. Basil had spoken to no purpose, by saying it

* “Manifestus est fidei lapsus, et liquidum superbiæ vitium, vel respere aliquid eorum quæ Scriptura habet, vel inducere quicquam quod Scriptum non est.”

† “He who wishes to deceive, occupies himself in generalities.”

is pride and apostacy from the faith, to bring in what is not written : for if either any man brings in what is written, or what he says is delivered, then the first being express Scripture, and the second being consigned in Scripture, no man can be charged with superinducing what is not written ; he hath his answer ready ; and then these are zealous words absolutely to no purpose ; but if such general consignment does not warrant every thing that pretends to tradition, but only such as are truly proved to be apostolical, then Scripture is useless as to this particular ; for such tradition gives testimony to Scripture, and therefore is of itself first, and more credible, for it is credible of itself ; and therefore, unless St. Basil thought that all the will of God in matters of faith and doctrine were written, I see not what end nor what sense he could have in these words : for no man in the world, except enthusiasts and madmen, ever obtruded a doctrine upon the church but he pretended Scripture for it, or tradition ; and therefore no man could be pressed by these words, no man confuted, no man instructed, no not enthusiasts or Montanists. For suppose either of them should say, that since in Scripture the Holy Ghost is promised to abide with the church for ever, to teach whatever they pretend the Spirit in any age hath taught them is not to superinduce any thing beyond what is written, because the truth of the Spirit, his veracity, and his perpetual teaching being promised and attested in Scripture, Scripture hath just so consigned all such revelations, as Perron saith it hath all such traditions. But I will trouble myself no more with arguments from any human authorities : but he that is sur-

prised with the belief of such authorities, and will but consider the very many testimonies of antiquity to this purpose, as of Constantine,* St. Jerome,† St. Austin,‡ St. Athanasius,§ St. Hilary,|| St. Epiphanius,¶ and divers others, all speaking words to the same sense with that saying of St. Paul,* ‘Let no man be wise above what is written,’ will see that there is reason, that since no man is materially a heretic, but he that errs in a point of faith, and all faith is sufficiently recorded in Scripture, the judgment of faith and heresy is to be derived from thence, and no man is to be condemned for dissenting in an article for whose probation tradition only is pretended; only, according to the degree of its evidence, let every one determine himself: but of this evidence we must not judge for others; for unless it be in things of faith, and absolute certainties, evidence is a word of relation, and so supposes two terms, the object and the faculty; and it is an imperfect speech, to say a thing is evident in itself, (unless we speak of first principles, or clearest revelations,) for that may be evident to one that is not so to another, by reason of the pregnancy of some apprehensions, and the immaturity of others.

This discourse hath its intention in traditions, doctrinal and ritual; that is, such traditions which propose articles essentially new; but, now, if Scripture be the repository of all divine truths sufficient for us, tradition must be considered as its instru-

* Orat. ad Nicen. PP. apud. Theodor. lib. i. c. 7.

† In Matth. lib. iv. c. 23, et in Aggæum.

‡ De Bono Viduil. c. i. § Orat. contr. Gent.

|| In Psal. cxxxii.

¶ Lib. ii. Contra Hæres. tom. i. Hæc. 61. * 1. Cor. 4.

ment, to convey its great mysteriousness to our understandings. It is said, there are traditive interpretations, as well as traditive propositions; but these have not much distinct consideration in them, both because their uncertainty is as great as the other, upon the former considerations; as also, because, in very deed, there are no such things as traditive interpretations universal: for as for particulars, they signify no more but that they are not sufficient determinations of questions theological; therefore, because they are particular, contingent, and of infinite variety, and they are no more argument than the particular authority of those men whose commentaries they are, and, therefore, must be considered with them.

The sum is this: since the fathers, who are the best witnesses of traditions, yet were infinitely deceived in their account; since sometimes they guessed at them, and conjectured, by way of rule and discourse, and not of their knowledge, not by evidence of the thing; since many are called traditions which were not so, many are uncertain whether they were or no, yet confidently pretended; and this uncertainty, which at first was great enough, is increased by infinite causes and accidents, in the succession of sixteen hundred years; since the church hath been either so careless or so abused, that she could not, or would not, preserve traditions with carefulness and truth; since it was ordinary for the old writers to set out their own fancies, and the rites of their church, which had been ancient, under the specious title of apostolical traditions; since some traditions rely but upon single testimony at first, and yet descending upon others, come to be attested by many, whose testi-

mony, though conjunct, yet in value is but single, because it relies upon the first single relater, and so can have no greater authority, or certainty, than they derive from the single person; since the first ages, who were most competent to consign tradition, yet did consign such traditions as be of a nature wholly discrepant from the present questions, and speak nothing at all, or very imperfectly, to our purposes, and the following ages are no fit witnesses of that which was not transmitted to them, because they could not know it at all, but by such transmission and prior consignation; since what at first was a tradition, came afterwards to be written, and so ceased its being a tradition, yet the credit of traditions commenced upon the certainty and reputation of those truths first delivered by word, afterward consigned by writing; since, what was certainly tradition apostolical, as many rituals were, is rejected by the church, in several ages, and is gone out into a desuetude; and lastly, since, beside the no necessity of traditions, there being abundantly enough in Scripture, there are many things called traditions by the fathers, which they themselves either proved by no authors, or by apocryphal and spurious, and heretical,—the matter of tradition will, in very much, be so uncertain, so false, so suspicious, so contradictory, so improbable, so unproved, that if a question be contested, and be offered to be proved only by tradition, it will be very hard to impose such a proposition to the belief of all men, with any imperiousness or resolved determination; but it will be necessary men should preserve the liberty of believing and prophesying, and not part with it, upon a worse merchandize and exchange than Esau made for his birth-right.

SECTION VI.

*Of the uncertainty and insufficiency of Councils
Ecclesiastical to the same purpose.*

BUT since we are all this while in uncertainty, it is necessary that we should address ourselves somewhere, where we may rest the sole of our foot: and nature, Scripture, and experience, teach the world, in matters of question, to submit to some final sentence. For it is not reason, that controversies should continue till the erring person shall be willing to condemn himself; and the Spirit of God hath directed us, by that great precedent at Jerusalem, to address ourselves to the church, that in a plenary council and assembly she may synodically determine controversies. So that, if a general council have determined a question, or expounded Scripture, we may no more disbelieve the decree than the Spirit of God himself who speaks in them. And, indeed, if all assemblies of bishops were like that first, and all bishops were of the same spirit of which the apostles were, I should obey their decree with the same religion as I do them whose preface was, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us:" and I doubt not but our blessed Saviour intended that the assemblies of the church should be judges of controversies, and guides of our persuasions, in matters of difficulty. But he also intended they should proceed according to his will, which he had revealed, and those precedents which he

had made authentic by the immediate assistance of the Holy Spirit : he hath done his part, but we do not do ours ; and if any private person, in the simplicity and purity of his soul, desires to find out a truth, of which he is in search and inquisition, if he prays for wisdom, we have a promise he shall be heard and answered liberally ; and therefore much more when the representatives of the catholic church do meet, because every person there hath, as an individual, a title to the promise, and another title, as he is a governor and a guide of souls, and all of them together have another title in their united capacity, especially, if in that union they pray, and proceed with simplicity and purity. So that there is no disputing against the pretence, and promises, and authority of general councils : for if any one man can hope to be guided by God's Spirit in the search, the pious, and impartial, and unprejudicate search of truth, then much more may a general council. If no private man can hope for it, then truth is not necessary to be found, nor we are not obliged to search for it, or else we are saved by chance ; but if private men can, by virtue of a promise, upon certain conditions, be assured of finding out sufficient truth, much more shall a general council. So that I consider thus :—there are many promises pretended to belong to general assemblies in the church ; but I know not any ground, nor any pretence, that they shall be absolutely assisted, without any condition on their own parts, and whether they will or no : faith is a virtue as well as charity, and therefore consists in liberty and choice, and hath nothing in it of necessity. There is no question but that they are obliged to proceed according to

some rule; for they expect no assistance, by way of enthusiasm: if they should, I know no warrant for that; neither did any general council ever offer a decree which they did not think sufficiently proved by Scripture, reason, or tradition, as appears in the acts of the councils. Now, then, if they be tied to conditions, it is their duty to observe them; but whether it be certain that they will observe them, that they will do all their duty, that they will not sin, even in this particular, in the neglect of their duty, that is the consideration. So that if any man questions the title and authority of general councils, and whether or no great promises appertain to them, I suppose him to be much mistaken; but he also that thinks all of them have proceeded according to rule and reason, and that none of them were deceived, because, possibly, they might have been truly directed, is a stranger to the history of the church, and to the perpetual instances and experiments of the faults and failings of humanity. It is a famous saying of St. Gregory, that he had the four first councils in esteem and veneration, next to the four evangelists: I suppose it was because he did believe them to have proceeded according to rule, and to have judged righteous judgment; but why had not he the same opinion of other councils too, which were celebrated before his death, for he lived after the fifth general? not because they had not the same authority; for that which is warrant for one is warrant for all; but because he was not so confident that they did their duty, nor proceeded so without interest, as the first four had done; and the following councils did never get that reputation which all the catholic church acknowledged due to the first

four. And in the next order were the three following generals; for the Greeks and Latins did never jointly acknowledge but seven generals to have been authentic in any sense, because they were in no sense agreed that any more than seven had proceeded regularly and done their duty: so that now, the question is not whether general councils have a promise that the Holy Ghost will assist them; for every private man hath that promise, that if he does his duty, he shall be assisted sufficiently, in order to that end to which he needs assistance; and, therefore, much more shall general councils, in order to that end for which they convene, and to which they need assistance; that is, in order to the conservation of the faith, for the doctrinal rules of good life, and all that concerns the essential duty of a Christian, but not in deciding questions to satisfy contentious, or curious, or presumptuous spirits. But, now, can the bishops so convened be factious, can they be abused with prejudice, or transported with interests, can they resist the Holy Ghost, can they extinguish the Spirit, can they stop their ears, and serve themselves upon the holy Spirit and the pretence of his assistances, and cease to serve him upon themselves, by captivating their understandings to his dictates, and their wills to his precepts? Is it necessary they should perform any condition? Is there any one duty for them to perform in these assemblies, a duty which they have power to do or not do? If so, then they may fail of it, and not do their duty. And if the assistance of the Holy Spirit be conditional, then we have no more assurance that they are assisted, than that they do their duty and do not sin.

Now, let us suppose what this duty is. Cer-

tainly, if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; and all that come to the knowledge of the truth, must come to it by such means which are spiritual and holy dispositions, in order to a holy and spiritual end. They must be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; that is, they must have peaceable and docible dispositions, nothing with them that is violent, and resolute to encounter those gentle and sweet assistances. And the rule they are to follow, is the rule which the Holy Spirit hath consigned to the catholic church; that is, the Holy Scripture, either entirely, or, at least, for the greater part of the rule:* so that, now, if the bishops be factious and prepossessed with persuasions depending upon interest, it is certain they may judge amiss; and if they recede from the rule, it is certain they do judge amiss. And this I say upon their grounds who most advance the authority of general councils; for if a general council may err, if a pope confirm it not, then, most certainly, if in any thing it recede from Scripture, it does also err; because, that they are to expect the pope's confirmation they offer to prove from Scripture. Now, if the pope's confirmation be required by authority of Scripture, and that therefore the defailance of it does evacuate the authority of the council, then also are the council's decree invalid, if they recede from any other part of Scripture: so that Scripture is the rule they are to follow; and a man would have thought it had been needless to have proved it, but that we are fallen into ages in which no truth is certain, no reason concluding, nor is there any thing that can convince

* Vid. Optat. Milev. lib. v. adv. Parm. Baldwin in eundem. et St. August. in Ps. xxi. Expos. 2.

some men. For Stapleton,* with extreme boldness, against the piety of Christendom, against the public sense of the ancient church, and the practice of all pious assemblies of bishops, affirms the decrees of a council to be binding, "though not yet confirmed by the probable testimony of the Scriptures;"† nay, though it be quite unauthorized by the Scriptures; but all wise and good men have ever said that sense which St. Hilary expressed in these words: "I will never defend what is not in the Gospel."‡ This was it which the good emperor Constantine propounded to the fathers met at Nice: "The Gospels, the writings of the apostles and ancient prophets, plainly teach us what we ought to believe in religion."§ And this is confessed by a sober man of the Roman church itself, the cardinal of Cusa: "Whatever we are bound to follow, ought to be found in the authorized books of Scripture."|| Now, then, all the advantage I shall take from hence, is this, that if the apostles commended them who examined their sermons by their conformity to the law and the prophets, and the men of Berea were accounted noble for searching the Scriptures whether those things which they taught were so or no, I suppose it will not be denied, but the council's decrees may also be tried

* Relect. Controv. iv. q. 1. a. 3.

† "Etiam si non confirmetur ne probabili testimonio Scripturarum."

‡ "Quæ extra evangelium sunt non defendam."—Lib. ii. ad Constant.

§ "Libri evangelici, oracula apostorum, et veterum prophetarum clarè nos instruunt quid sentiendum in divinis."—Apud Theodor. lib. i. c. 7.

|| "Oportet quod omnia talia quæ legere debent, continentur in autoritatibus sacrarum Scripturarum."—Concord. Cathol. lib. ii. c. 10.

whether they be conform to Scripture, yea or no; and although no man can take cognizance and judge the decrees of a council, as by public authority, (*pro auctoritate publicâ,*) yet, for private and individual information, (*pro informatione privatâ,*) they may; the authority of a council is not greater than the authority of the apostles, nor their dictates more sacred or authentic. Now, then, put case, a council should recede from Scripture; whether or no, were we bound to believe its decrees? I only ask the question; for it were hard to be bound to believe what to our understandings seems contrary to that which we know to be the Word of God; but if we may lawfully recede from the council's decrees, in case they be contrariant to Scripture, it is all that I require in this question: for if they be tied to a rule; then they are to be examined and understood according to the rule, and then we are to give ourselves that liberty of judgment which is requisite to distinguish us from beasts, and to put us into a capacity of reasonable people, following reasonable guides. But, however, if it be certain that the councils are to follow Scripture, then, if it be notorious that they do recede from Scripture, we are sure we must obey God rather than men; and then we are well enough. For, unless we are bound to shut our eyes, and not to look upon the sun, if we may give ourselves liberty to believe what seems most plain, and unless the authority of a council be so great a prejudice as to make us to do violence to our understanding, so as not to disbelieve the decree because it seems contrary to Scripture, but to believe it agrees with Scripture, though we know not how, therefore, because the council hath decreed it,—unless, I say, we be bound

in duty to be so obediently blind and sottish, we are sure that there are some councils which are pretended general, that have retired from the public notorious words and sense of Scripture. For what wit of man can reconcile the decree of the thirteenth session of the council of Constance with Scripture, in which session the half-communion was decreed, in defiance of Scripture, and with a *non obstante*, (notwithstanding,) to Christ's institution? It is certain, Christ's institution, and the council's sanction are as contrary as light and darkness. Is it possible for any man to contrive a way to make the decree of the council of Trent, commanding the public offices of the church to be in Latin, friends with the fourteenth chapter of the Corinthians? It is not amiss to observe how the hyperaspists of that council sweat to answer the allegations of St. Paul, and the wisest of them do it so extremely poor, that it proclaims to all the world, that the strongest man that is cannot eat iron, or swallow a rock. Now, then, would it not be an unspeakable tyranny to all wise persons, (who as much hate to have their souls enslaved as their bodies imprisoned,) to command them to believe that these decrees are agreeable to the Word of God? Upon whose understanding soever these are imposed, they may, at the next session, reconcile them to a crime, and make any sin sacred, or persuade him to believe propositions contradictory to a mathematical demonstration. All the arguments in the world, that can be brought to prove the infallibility of councils, cannot make it so certain that they are infallible, as these two instances do prove infallibly that these were deceived; and if ever we may safely make use of our reason, and

consider whether councils have erred or no, we cannot by any reason be more assured, that they have or have not, than we have in these particulars: so that, either our reason is of no manner of use in the discussion of this question, and the thing itself is not at all to be disputed, or if it be, we are certain that these actually were deceived, and we must never hope for a clearer evidence in any dispute. And if these be, others might have been, if they did as these did; that is, depart from their rule. And it was wisely said of Cusanus, "The experience of it is notorious, that councils may err:"* and all the arguments against experience are but plain sophistry.

And, therefore, I make no scruple to slight the decrees of such councils, wherein the proceedings were as prejudicate and unreasonable as in the council wherein Abailardus was condemned, where the presidents having pronounced *Damnamus*, they at the lower end, being awaked at the noise, heard the latter part of it, and concurred as far as *namus* went; and that was as good as *damnamus*; for if they had been awake at the pronouncing the whole word, they would have given sentence accordingly. But, by this means, St. Bernard numbered the major part of voices against his adversary, Abailardus:† and as far as these men did do their duty, the duty of priests and judges, and wise men, so we may presume them to be assisted, but no further. But I am content this (because but a private assembly) shall pass for no instance. But what shall we say of all

* "Notandum est experimento rerum universale concilium posse deficere."—Lib. ii. c. 14, Concord. Cathol.

† Epist. Abailardi ad Heliss. Conjugem.

the Arian councils, celebrated with so great fancy, and such numerous assemblies? We all say that they erred. And it will not be sufficient to say they were not lawful councils; for they were convened by that authority which all the world knows did, at that time, convocate councils, and by which (as it is confessed and is notorious*) the first eight generals did meet; that is, by the authority of the emperor, all were called, and as many and more did come to them, than came to the most famous council of Nice: so that the councils were lawful, and if they did not proceed lawfully, and therefore did err, this is to say, that councils are then not deceived, when they do their duty, when they judge impartially, when they decline interest, when they follow their rule; but this says, also, that it is not infallibly certain that they will do so; for these did not, and therefore the others may be deceived as well as these were. But another thing is in the wind; for councils not confirmed by the pope, have no warrant that they shall not err; and they, not being confirmed, therefore failed. But whether is the pope's confirmation after the decree, or before? It cannot be supposed before; for there is nothing to be confirmed till the decree be made, and the article composed. But if it be after, then, possibly, the pope's decree may be requisite, in solemnity of law, and to make the authority popular, public, and human; but the decree is true or false before the pope's confirmation, and is not at all altered by the supervening decree, which being postnate to the decree, alters not what went before. "Our opinion of a previous as fact is not to be determined by a

* Cusanus, lib. ii. cap. 25, Concord.

subsequent decree,"* is the voice both of law and reason. So that it cannot make it divine, and necessary to be heartily believed. It may make it lawful, not make it true: that is, it may possibly by such means become a law, but not a truth. I speak now upon supposition the pope's confirmation were necessary, and required to the making of conciliary and necessary sanctions. But if it were, the case were very hard: for suppose a heresy should invade, and possess the chair of Rome, what remedy can the church have in that case, if a general council be of no authority without the pope confirm it? Will the pope confirm a council against himself? Will he condemn his own heresy? That the pope may be a heretic appears in the canon law,† which says he may, for heresy, be deposed; and therefore, by a council, which, in this case, hath plenary authority without the pope. And, therefore, in the synod at Rome, held under pope Adrian II. the censure of the sixth synod against Honorius, who was convict of heresy, is approved, with this appendix, that in this case, the case of heresy, "inferiors may judge of their superiors," (*minores possint de majoribus judicare*;) and, therefore, if a pope were above a council, yet when the question is concerning heresy, the case is altered; the pope may be judged by his inferiors, who, in this case, which is the main case of all, become his superiors. And it is little better than impudence to pretend that all councils were confirmed by the pope, or that there is a necessity in respect of divine obligation, that any should be

* "Nunquam enim crescit ex post facto præteriti æstimatio."

† Dist. xl. Can. si Papa.

confirmed by him, more than by another of the patriarchs. For the council of Chalcedon itself, one of those four which St. Gregory did revere next to the four Evangelists, is rejected by pope Leo, who, in his fifty-third epistle to Anatolius, and in his fifty-fourth to Martian, and in his fifty-fifth to Pulcheria, accuses it of ambition and inconsiderate temerity; and, therefore, no fit assembly for the habitation of the Holy Spirit. And Gelasius, in his tome, *De Vinculo Anathematis*, affirms, that the council is in part to be received, in part to be rejected; and compares it to heretical books of a mixed matter, and proves his assertion by the place of St. Paul: ‘Prove all things: hold fast that which is good;’* and Bellarmine says the same: “In the council of Chalcedon some things are good, some bad; some are to be received, and some rejected; as is the case in regard to the books of heretics;”† and if any thing be false, then all is questionable, and judicable, and discernable, and not infallible antecedently. And however that council hath, *ex post facto*, and by the voluntary consenting of after ages, obtained great reputation; yet they that lived immediately after it, that observed all the circumstances of the thing, and the disabilities of the persons, and the uncertainty of the truth of its decrees, by reason of the unconcludingness of the arguments brought to attest it, were of another mind. “As to the council of Chalcedon, it was neither openly acknowledged by the churches, nor rejected by all; for the authorities, in every

* De Laicis, lib. iii. c. 20. § ad. hoc ult.

† “In concilio Chalcedonensi quædam sunt bona, quædam mala, quædam recipienda, quædam rejicienda; ita et in libris hæreticorum.”

church, were guided by their own judgment;”* and so did all men in the world, that were not mastered with prejudices, and undone in their understanding with accidental impertinences; they judged upon those grounds which they had and saw, and suffered not themselves to be bound to the imperious dictates of other men, who are as uncertain in their determinations as others in their questions. And it is an evidence that there is some deception and notable error, either in the thing or in the manner of their proceeding, when the decrees of a council shall have no authority from the compilers, nor no strength from the reasonableness of the decision, but from the accidental approbation of posterity: and if posterity had pleased, Origen had believed well, and been an orthodox person. And it was pretty sport to see that Papias was right for two ages together, and wrong ever since: and just so it was in councils, particularly in this of Chalcedon, that had a fate alterable according to the age, and according to the climate: which, to my understanding, is nothing else but an argument that the business of infallibility is a later device, and commenced to serve such ends as cannot be justified by true and substantial grounds; and that the pope should confirm it as of necessity, is a fit cover for the same dish.

In the sixth general council, Honorius, pope of Rome, was condemned; did that council stay for

* “Quod autem ad concilium Chalcedonense attinet, illud id temporis (viz. Anastasii Imp.) neque palam in ecclesiis sanctissimis prædicatum fuit, neque ab omnibus rejectum, nam singuli ecclesiarum præsides pro suo arbitratu in ea re egerunt.”—Evag. lib. iii. c. 30.

the pope's confirmation, before they set forth their decree? Certainly they did not think it so needful, as that they would have suspended or cassated the decree, in case the pope had then disavowed it: for besides the condemnation of pope Honorius for heresy, the thirteenth and fifty-fifth canons of that council are expressly against the custom of the church of Rome. But this particular is involved in that new question, whether the pope be above a council. Now, since the contestation of this question, there was never any free or lawful council that determined for the pope; it is not likely any should; and is it likely that any pope will confirm a council that does not? For the council of Basil is therefore condemned by the last Lateran,* which was an assembly in the pope's own palace; and the council of Constance is of no value in this question, and slighted in a just proportion, as that article is disbelieved. But I will not much trouble the question with a long consideration of this particular; the pretence is senseless and illiterate, against reason and experience, and already determined by St. Austin sufficiently, as to this particular: "We may be allowed to think the bishops, who gave their judgment at Rome, were not good judges: there still remained the full council of the whole church, where the cause might yet be discussed with those judges themselves, and their decree annulled, if they were convicted of pronouncing a wrong judgment."† For since popes may be parties, may be

* Vid. postea de Concil. Sinuessiano. § 6. N. 9.

† "Ecce putemus illos episcopos qui Romæ judicaverunt, non bonos judices fuisse: restabat adhuc plenarium ecclesiæ universæ concilium, ubi etiam cum ipsis iudicibus causa possit agitari, ut si male judicasse convicti essent eorum sententiæ solverentur."—Epist. xvi. ad Glorium.

Simoniacs, schismatics, heretics, it is against reason that in their own causes they should be judges, or that in any causes they should be superior to their judges. And as it is against reason, so is it against all experience too ; for the council Sinuessanum (as it said) was convened to take cognizance of pope Marcellinus ; and divers councils were held at Rome to give judgment in the causes of Damasus, Sixtus III. Symmachus, and Leo III. and IV. ; as is to be seen in Platina, and the tomes of the councils. And it is no answer to this and the like allegations, to say, in matters of fact and human constitution the pope may be judged by a council, but in matters of faith all the world must stand to the pope's determination and authoritative decision ; for if the pope can, by any colour, pretend to any thing, it is to a supreme judicature in matters ecclesiastical, positive and of fact ; and if he fails in this pretence, he will hardly hold up his head for any thing else ; for the ancient bishops derived their faith from the fountain, and held that in the highest tenure, even from Christ their head ; but, by reason of the imperial city,* it became the principal seat ; and he surprised the highest judicature, partly by the concession of others, partly by his own accidental advantages ; and yet, even in these things, although he was *major singulis*, "superior to each singly," yet he was *minor universis*, "inferior to all of them together."† And this is no more than what was decreed of the eighth general synod ; which, if it be sense, is pertinent to this question ; for general councils are appointed to take cognizance of questions and differences about

* Vide Concil. Chalced. act. 15. † Act. ult. Can. xxi.

the bishop of Rome; "not, however, to give sentence against him audaciously."* By audaciously, as is supposed, is meant hastily and unreasonably; but, if to give sentence against him be wholly forbidden, it is nonsense; for to what purpose is an authority of taking cognizance, if they have no power of giving sentence, unless it were to defer it to a superior judge, which in this case cannot be supposed? for either the pope himself is to judge his own cause after their examination of him, or the general council is to judge him: so that, although the council is, by that decree, enjoined to proceed modestly and warily, yet they may proceed to sentence, or else the decree is ridiculous and impertinent.

But, to clear all, I will instance in matters of question and opinion: for not only some councils have made their decrees without or against the pope, but some councils have had the pope's confirmation, and yet have not been the more legitimate or obligatory, but are known to be heretical. For the canons of the sixth synod, although some of them were made against the popes and the custom of the church of Rome, a pope, awhile after, did confirm the council; and yet the canons are impious and heretical, and so esteemed by the church of Rome herself. I instance in the second canon, which approves of that synod of Carthage, under Cyprian, for rebaptization of heretics; and the seventy-second canon, that dissolves marriage between persons of differing persuasion in matters of Christian religion; and yet these canons were approved by pope Adrian I. who, in his epistle to

* "Non tamen audacter in eum ferre sententiam."

Tharasius, which is in the second act of the seventh synod, calls them *canones divinè et legalitèr prædicatos*, “canons divinely and legally ordained.” And these canons were used by pope Nicholas I. in his epistle *ad Michaelem*, and by Innocent III. So that now (that we may apply this) there are seven general councils which by the church of Rome are condemned of error:—the council of Antioch,* A. D. 345, in which St. Athanasius was condemned; the council of Millain, A. D. 354, of above three hundred bishops; the council of Ariminum, consisting of six hundred bishops; the second council of Ephesus, A. D. 449, in which the Eutychian heresy was confirmed, and the patriarch Flavianus killed by the faction of Dioscorus; the council of Constantinople under Leo Isaurus, A. D. 730; another at Constantinople, thirty-five years after; and lastly, the council at Pisa, one hundred and thirty-four years since.† Now that these general councils are condemned, is a sufficient argument that councils may err; and it is no answer to say, they were not confirmed by the pope; for the pope’s confirmation I have shown not to be necessary; or if it were, yet even that also is an argument that general councils may become invalid, either by their own fault, or by some extrinsical supervening accident, either of which evacuates their authority; and whether all that is required to the legitimation of a council, was actually observed in any council, is so hard to determine, that no man

* Vid. Socra. lib. ii. c. 5, et Sozomen. lib. iii. c. 5.

† Gregor. in Regist. lib. iii. caus. 7. ait, Concilium Numidiæ errasse. Concilium Aquisgrani erravit. De raptore et raptâ dist. xx. can. de Libellis, in glossâ.

can be infallibly sure that such a council is authentic and sufficient probation.

2. And that is the second thing I shall observe: There are so many questions concerning the efficient, the form, the matter of general councils, and their manner of proceeding, and their final sanction, that after a question is determined by a conciliary assembly, there are, perhaps, twenty more questions to be disputed, before we can, with confidence, either believe the council upon its mere authority, or obtrude it upon others. And upon this ground, how easy it is to elude the pressure of an argument drawn from the authority of a general council, is very remarkable in the question about the pope's or the council's superiority, which question, although it be defined for the council against the pope by five general councils, the council of Florence, of Constance, of Basil, of Pisa, and one of the Laterans, yet the Jesuits, to this day, account this question undetermined, and have rare pretences for their escape. As, first; it is true a council is above a pope, in case there be no pope, or he uncertain; which is Bellarmine's answer, never considering whether he spake sense or no, nor yet remembering that the council of Basil deposed Eugenius, who was a true pope, and so acknowledged. Secondly, sometimes the pope did not confirm these councils; that is their answer: and although it was an exception that the fathers never thought of, when they were pressed with the authority of the council of Ariminum, or Syrmium, or any other Arian convention; yet the council of Basil was convened by pope Martin V. then, in its sixteenth session, declared by Eugenius IV. to be lawfully continued, and confirmed expressly in

some of its decrees by pope Nicholas, and so stood till it was at last rejected by Leo X. very many years after. But that came too late, and with too visible an interest; and this council did decree, "that a council is to be considered as superior to a pope."* But if one pope confirms it and another rejects it, as it happened in this case, and in many more, does it not destroy the competency of the authority? And we see it by this instance, that it so serves the turns of men, that it is good in some cases; that is, when it makes for them, and invalid when it makes against them. Thirdly; but it is a little more ridiculous in the case of the council of Constance, whose decrees were confirmed by Martin V. But that this may be no argument against them, Bellarmine tells you, he only confirmed those things *quæ facta fuerant conciliariter, re diligenter examinâtâ*, "which were done with his concurrence, after his diligent examination;" of which there being no mark, nor any certain rule to judge it, it is a device that may evacuate any thing we have a mind to; it was not done *conciliariter*, that is, not according to our mind; for *conciliariter* is a fine new nothing, that may signify what you please. Fourthly: but other devices yet more pretty they have; as whether the council of Lateran was a general council or no, they know not, (no, nor will not know); which is a wise and plain reservation of their own advantages, to make it general or not general, as shall serve their turns. Fifthly: as for the council of Florence, they are not sure whether it hath defined the question "openly enough," *satis apertè*; *apertè* they will

* "Fide Catholicâ tenendum concilium esse suprà papam."

grant, if you will allow them not *satis apertè*. Sixthly and lastly: the council of Pisa is “neither approved nor disallowed;”* which is the greatest folly of all, and most prodigious vanity; so that, by something or other, either they were not convened lawfully, or they did not proceed *conciliariter*, or it is not certain that the council was general or no, or whether the council were *approbatum*, or *reprobatum*; or else it is *partim confirmatum*, *partim reprobatum*; † or else it is *neque approbatum*, *neque reprobatum*; ‡ by one of these ways, or a device like to these, all councils and all decrees shall be made to signify nothing, and to have no authority.

3. There is no general council that hath determined that a general council is infallible: no Scripture hath recorded it; no tradition universal hath transmitted to us any such proposition; so that we must receive the authority at a lower rate, and upon a less probability than the things consigned by that authority. And it is strange that the decrees of councils should be esteemed authentic and infallible, and yet it is not infallibly certain, that the councils themselves are infallible, because the belief of the councils’ infallibility is not proved to us by any medium but such as may deceive us.

4. But the best instance that councils are some, and may all be deceived, is the contradiction of one council to another; for in that case both cannot be true, and which of them is true, must

* “*Neque approbatum neque reprobatum.*”—Bellar. De Conc. lib. i. c. 8.

† “Partly confirmed and partly disallowed.”

‡ “Neither approved nor yet disallowed.”

belong to another judgment, which is less than the solemnity of a general council; and the determination of this matter can be of no greater certainty after it is concluded than when it was propounded as a question; being it is to be determined by the same authority, or by a less than itself. But for this allegation we cannot want instances: the council of Trent* allows picturing of God the Father; the council of Nice altogether disallows it: the same Nicene council,† which was the seventh general, allows of picturing Christ in the form of a lamb; but the sixth synod by no means will endure it, as Caranza affirms. The council of Neocasarea,‡ confirmed by Leo IV., dist. xx. *de Libellis*, and approved by the first Nicene council, as it is said in the seventh session of the council of Florence, forbids second marriages, and imposes penances on them that are married the second time, forbidding priests to be present at such marriage feasts; besides that this is expressly against the doctrine of St. Paul, it is also against the doctrine of the council of Laodicea,§ which took off such penances, and pronounced second marriages to be free and lawful. Nothing is more discrepant than the third council of Carthage and the council of Laodicea, about assignation of the canon of Scripture; and yet the sixth general synod approves both: and I would fain know, if all general councils are of the same mind with the fathers of the council of Carthage, who reckon into the canon five books of Solomon. I am sure St. Austin|| reckoned but three, and I think all

* Sess. xxv.

§ Cap. 1.

† Act. ii.

|| Lib. xvii. De Cul. Dei. c. 20.

‡ Can. lxxxii.

Christendom beside are of the same opinion. And if we look into the title of the law *de conciliis*, called *Concordantia discordantiarum*, we shall find instances enough to confirm, that the decrees of some councils are contradictory to others, and that no wit can reconcile them : and whether they did or no, that they might disagree, and former councils be corrected by later, was the belief of the doctors in those ages in which the best and most famous councils were convened ; as appears in that famous saying of St. Austin, speaking concerning the rebaptizing of heretics ; and how much the Africans were deceived in that question, he answers the allegation of the bishops' letters, and those national councils which confirmed St. Cyprian's opinion, by saying, that they were no final determination. Not only the occasion of the question, being a matter not of fact but of faith, as being instanced in the question of rebaptization, but also the very fabric and economy of the words, put by all the answers of those men who think themselves pressed with the authority of St. Austin. " For, as national councils may correct the bishops' letters, and general councils may correct national, so the later general may correct the former ;"* that is, have contrary and better decrees of manners, and better determinations in matters of faith. And from hence hath risen a question, whether is to be received the former or the later councils, in case they contradict each other. The former are nearer the fountains apostolical, the later are of greater consideration ; the first have more authority, the later more reason ;

* " *Episcoporum literæ emendari possunt à conciliis nationalibus, concilia nationalia à plenariis, ipsaque plenaria priora à posterioribus emendari.*"—*Lib. ii. De Bap. Donat. c. 3.*

the first are more venerable, the later more inquisitive and seeing. And, now, what rule shall we have to determine our beliefs, whether to authority or reason; the reason and the authority both of them not being the highest in their kind, both of them being repudiable, and at most but probable? And here it is that this great uncertainty is such as not to determine any body, but fit to serve every body: and it is sport to see that Bellarmine* will, by all means, have the council of Carthage preferred before the council of Laodicea, because it is later; and yet he prefers the second Nicene council † before the council of Frankfort, because it is elder. St. Austin would have the former generals to be mended by the later; but Isidore, in Gratian, says, “When councils do differ, the elder must carry it:” ‡ and indeed these probables are buskins to serve every foot; and they are like *magnum et parvum*, they have nothing of their own, all that they have is in comparison of others: so these topics have nothing of resolute and dogmatical truth, but in relation to such ends as an interested person hath a mind to serve upon them.

5. There are many councils corrupted, and many pretended and alleged, when there were no such things; both which make the topic of the authority of councils to be little and inconsiderable. There is a council brought to light, in the edition of Councils, by Binius, viz. Sinuessanum, pretended to be kept in the year 303; but it was so private till then, that we find no mention of it in any ancient record;

* Lib. ii. De Conc. c. 8, § Respondeo in primis.

† Ibid. § De Concilio autem.

‡ Dist. xx. Can. Domino Sancto.

neither Eusebius, nor Ruffinus, St. Jerome, nor Socrates, Sozomen, nor Theodoret, nor Eutropius, nor Bede, knew any thing of it; and the eldest allegation of it is by pope Nicholas I. in the ninth century. And he that shall consider, that three hundred bishops, in the midst of horrid persecutions, (for so then they were,) are pretended to have convened, will need no greater argument to suspect the imposture: besides, he that was the framer of the engine did not lay his ends together handsomely; for it is said, that the deposition of Marcellinus, by the synod, was told to Diocletian when he was in the Persian war; whereas it is known, before that time he had returned to Rome, and triumphed for his Persian conquest, as Eusebius in his chronicle reports: and this is so plain that Binius and Baronius pretend the text to be corrupted, and so go to mend it by such an emendation as is a plain contradiction to the sense, and that so unclerklike, viz. by putting in two words and leaving out one;* which, whether it may be allowed them by any licence less than poetical, let critics judge. St. Gregory saith,† that the Constantinopolitans had corrupted the synod of Chalcedon, and that he suspected the same concerning the Ephesine council: and, in the fifth synod, there was a notorious prevarication, for there were false epistles of pope Vigilius and Menna, the patriarch of Constantinople, inserted; and so they passed for authentic till they were discovered in the sixth general synod, Actions xii. and xiv. And

* Pro, Cum esset in bello Persarum, legi volunt, Cum reversus esset à bello Persarum.—Euseb. Chronicon. vide Binium in Notis ad Concil. Sinuessanum. tom. i. Concil. et Baron. Anal. tom. iii. A. D. 303. num. 107.

† Lib. v. Ep. 14, ad Narsem.

not only false decrees and actions may creep into the codes of councils, but sometimes the authority of a learned man may abuse the church with pretended decrees, of which there is no copy or shadow in the code itself: and thus Thomas Aquinas says,* that the Epistle to the Hebrews was reckoned in the canon by the Nicene council; no shadow of which appears in those copies we now have of it; and this pretence and the reputation of the man prevailed so far with Melchior Canus, the learned bishop of the Canaries, that he believed it upon this ground, “that so holy a man would not have asserted such a thing, if he had not been fully assured of it:” † and there are many things which have prevailed upon less reason and a more slight authority. And that very council of Nice hath not only been pretended by Aquinas, but very much abused by others; and its authority and great reputation hath made it more liable to the fraud and pretences of idle people: for whereas the Nicene fathers made but twenty canons, for so many and no more were received by Cecilian ‡ of Carthage, that was at Nice in the council; by St. Austin, § and two hundred African bishops with him; by St. Cyril || of Alexandria: ¶ by Atticus of Constantinople; * by Ruffinus, Isidore, and Theodoret, as Baronius † witnesses; yet there are fourscore lately found out, in an Arabian manuscript, and published in Latin by Turrian and Alfonsus of Pisa, jesuits surely,

* Comment. in Hebr.

† “Vir sanctus rem adeo gravem non astrueret, nisi comper-
tum habuisset”

‡ Con. Carthag. vi. c. 9.

§ Con. African.

|| Ibid. c. 102, et c. 133.

¶ Lib. i. Eccl. Hist. c. 6.

• In Princ. Con. de Synod. Princ.

† Baronius, tom. iii. A.D. 325. n. 156. tom. iii. ad A.D. 325.
n. 62, 63.

and like to be masters of the mint. And not only the canons, but the very acts of the Nicene council are false and spurious, and are so confessed by Baronius; though how he and Lindanus* will be reconciled upon the point, I neither know well nor much care. Now, if one council be corrupted, we see, by the instance of St. Gregory, that another may be suspected, and so all: because he found the council of Chalcedon corrupted, he suspected also the Ephesine; and another might have suspected more, for the Nicene was tampered foully with; and so three of the four generals were sullied and made suspicious, and therefore we could not be secure of any. If false acts be inserted in one council, who can trust the actions of any, unless he had the keeping the records himself, or durst swear for the register? And if a very learned man (as Thomas Aquinas was) did either wilfully deceive us, or was himself ignorantly abused, in allegation of a canon which was not, it is but a very fallible topic at the best, and the most holy man that is may be abused himself, and the wisest may deceive others.

6. And, lastly: To all this and to the former instances, by way of corollary, I add some more particulars, in which it is notorious that councils general and national, that is, such as were either general by original, or by adoption into the canon of the catholic church, did err, and were actually deceived. The first council of Toledo admits to the communion him that hath a concubine, so he have no wife besides; and this council is approved by pope Leo, in the ninety-second epistle to Rusticus, bishop of Narbona: Gratian says, † that the council means

* Pampl. lib. ii. c. 6.

† Dist. xxxiv. Can. omnibus.

by a concubine, a wife married “without a portion and due solemnity,” *sine dote et solemnitate*: but this is daubing with untempered mortar. For, though it was a custom amongst the Jews to distinguish wives from their concubines by dowry and legal solemnities, yet the Christian distinguished them no otherwise than as lawful and unlawful, than as chastity and fornication, And, besides, if by a concubine is meant a lawful wife without a dowry, to what purpose should the council make a law that such a one might be admitted to the communion? for I suppose it was never thought to be a law of Christianity, that a man should have a portion with his wife, nor he that married a poor virgin should deserve to be excommunicate. So that Gratian and his followers are pressed so with this canon, that, to avoid the impiety of it, they expound it to a signification without sense or purpose. But the business then was, that adultery was so public and notorious a practice, that the council did choose rather to endure simple fornication, than by such permission of a less, they might slacken the public custom of a greater; just as at Rome they permit stews, to prevent unnatural sins: but that, by a public sanction, fornicators, habitually and notoriously such, should be admitted to the holy communion, was an act of priests so unfit for priests that no excuse can make it white or clean. The council of Wormes* does authorise a superstitious custom, at that time too much used, of discovering stolen goods by the holy sacrament, which Aquinas† justly condemns for superstition. The sixth synod‡ separates persons lawfully married, upon an accusation and crime of

* Cap. 3.

† Part iii. q. 80, a. 6, ad 3 m.

‡ Can. lxxii.

heresy. The Roman council, under Pope Nicholas II. * defined, that not only the sacrament of Christ's body, but the very body itself of our blessed Saviour is handled and broke by the hands of the priest, and chewed by the teeth of the communicants; which is a manifest error, derogatory from the truth of Christ's beatifical resurrection, and glorification in the heavens, and disavowed by the church of Rome itself: but Bellarmine, † that answers all the arguments in the world, whether it be possible or not possible, would fain make the matter fair, and the decree tolerable; for, says he, the decree means, that the body is broken not in itself but in sign; and yet the decree says, that not only the sacrament (which, if any thing be, is certainly the sign) but the very body itself is broken and champed, with hands and teeth respectively; which indeed was nothing but a plain overacting the article, in contradiction to Berengarius. And the answer of Bellarmine is not sense, for he denies that the body itself is broken in itself, (that was the error we charged upon the Roman synod,) and the sign abstracting from the body is not broken, (for that was the opinion that council condemned in Berengarius,) but, says Bellarmine, the body in the sign: What is that? for neither the sign, nor the body, nor both together are broken: for, if either of them distinctly, they either rush upon the error which the Roman synod condemned in Berengarius, or upon that which they would fain excuse in pope Nicholas. But if both are broken, then it is true to affirm it of either; and then the council is blasphemous in saying, that Christ's glorified body is passible and

* Can. ego Berengar. de Consecrat. dist. ii.

† Lib. ii. c. 8, De Concil.

frangible by natural manducation: so that it is and it is not; it is not this way, and yet it is no way else: but it is some way, and they know not how; and the council spoke blasphemy, but it must be made innocent, and therefore it was requisite a cloud of a distinction should be raised, that the unwary reader might be amused, and the decree scape untouched: but the truth is, they that undertake to justify all that other men say, must be more subtle than they that said it, and must use such distinctions which possibly the first authors did not understand. But I will multiply no more instances; for what instance soever I shall bring, some or other will be answering it; which thing is so far from satisfying me in the particulars, that it increases the difficulty in the general, and satisfies me in my first belief: for, if no decrees of councils can make against them,* though they seem never so plain against them, then let others be allowed the same liberty, (and there is all the reason in the world they should,) and no decree shall conclude against any doctrine, that they have already entertained; and by this means the church is no fitter instrument to decree controversies than the Scripture itself, there being as much obscurity and disputing in the sense, and the manner, and the degree, and the competency, and the obligation of the decree of a council, as of a place of Scripture. And what are we the nearer for a decree, if any sophister shall think his illusion enough to contest against the authority of a council? Yet this they do that pre-

* *Illa demùm eis videntur edicta et concilia quæ in rem suam faciunt; reliqua non pluris æstimant quam conventum muliercularum in textrinâ vel thermis.*—Lud. Vives in Scholiiis, lib. xx. Aug. de Civit. Dei. c. 26.

tend highest for their authority; which consideration, or some like it, might possibly make Gratian* prefer St. Jerome's single testimony before a whole council, because he had Scripture of his side; which says, that the authority of councils is not *αὐτόπιτος*, (deserving of credit and confidence on its own account,) and that councils may possibly recede from their rule, from Scripture; and, in that case, a single person, proceeding according to rule, is a better argument; which indeed was the saying of Panormitan: "In matters of faith, the opinion of a single individual is preferable to the dictate of a pope, or of a whole council, if he be guided in his decision by better arguments."†

I end this discourse with representing the words of Gregory Nazianzen, in his epistle to Procopius: "To say the truth, such is my feeling, that I would shun all the episcopal councils, for I have never known one of them come to any good and prosperous issue, or which did not tend rather to the growth than the diminution of evils."‡ But I will not be so severe and dogmatical against them: for I believe many councils to have been called with sufficient authority, to have been managed with singular piety and prudence, and to

* 36. q. 2. c. placuit.

† "In concernentibus fidem etiam dictum unius privati esset dicto papæ aut totius concilii præferendum, si ille moveretur melioribus argumentis."—Part I. De Election. et Elect. potest. cap. significasti.

‡ "Ego si vera scribere oportet ita animo affectus sum, ut omnia episcoporum concilia fugiam, quoniam nullius concilii finem lætum faustumque vidi, nec quod depulsionem malorum potius quam accessionem et incrementum habuerit."—Athanas. lib. De Synod. Frustra igitur circumcursitantes prætexunt ob fidem se Synodos postulare, cum sit Divina Scriptura omnibus potentior.

have been finished with admirable success and truth; and where we find such councils, he that will not, with all veneration, believe their decrees, and receive their sanctions, understands not that great duty he owes to them who have the care of our souls, whose 'faith we are bound to follow,' saith St. Paul;* that is, so long as they follow Christ, and certainly many councils have done so: but this was then, when the public interest of Christendom was better conserved in determining a true article than in finding a discreet temper, or a wise expedient, to satisfy disagreeing persons; (as the fathers at Trent did, and the Lutherans and Calvinists did at Sandomir, in Polonia; and the Sublapsarians and Supralapsarians did at Dort.) It was in ages when the sum of religion did not consist in maintaining the dignity of the papacy; where there was no order of men, with a fourth vow upon them, to advance St. Peter's chair; when there was no man, or any company of men, that esteemed themselves infallible; and, therefore, they searched for truth as if they meant to find it, and would believe it if they could see it proved; not resolved to prove it, because they had, upon chance or interest, believed it; then they had rather have spoken a truth than upheld their reputation, but only in order to truth. This was done sometimes, and when it was done, God's Spirit never failed them, but gave them such assistances as were sufficient to that good end for which they were assembled, and did implore his aid: and therefore it is, that the four general councils, so called by way of eminency, have gained so great a reputation above

* Heb. xiii. 7.

all others; not because they had a better promise, or more special assistances, but because they proceeded better, according to the rule, with less faction, without ambition and temporal ends.

And yet those very assemblies of bishops had no authority, by their decrees, to make a divine faith, or to constitute new objects of necessary credence; they made nothing true that was not so before; and, therefore, they are to be apprehended in the nature of excellent guides, and whose decrees are most certainly to determine all those who have no argument to the contrary, of greater force and efficacy than the authority or reasons of the council. And there is a duty owing to every parish priest, and to every diocesan bishop; these are appointed over us, and to answer for our souls, and are, therefore, morally to guide us, as reasonable creatures are to be guided; that is, by reason and discourse: for in things of judgment and understanding, they are but in form next above beasts, that are to be ruled by the imperiousness and absoluteness of authority, unless the authority be divine; that is, infallible. Now, then, in a juster height, but still in its true proportion, assemblies of bishops are to guide us with a higher authority; because, in reason, it is supposed they will do it better, with more argument and certainty, and with decrees, which have the advantage, by being the results of many discourses of very wise and good men: but that the authority of general councils was never esteemed absolute, infallible, and unlimited, appears in this, that before they were obliging, it was necessary that each particular church, respectively, should accept them: *concurrente universali totius ecclesie consensu, &c. in declaratione veritatum quæ credendæ*

*sunt, &c.** That is the way of making the decrees of councils become authentic, and be turned into a law, as Gerson observes; and till they did, their decrees were but a dead letter; (and therefore it is, that these later popes have so laboured that the council of Trent should be received in France: and Carolus Molineus, a great lawyer, and of the Roman communion, disputed against the reception;†) and this is a known condition in the canon law; but it proves plainly that the decrees of councils have their authority from the voluntary submission of the particular churches, not from the prime sanction and constitution of the council. And there is great reason it should; for as the representative body of the church derives all power from the diffusive body which is represented, so it resolves into it; and though it may have all the legal power, yet it hath not all the natural; for more able men may be unsent than sent; and they who are sent may be wrought upon by stratagem, which cannot happen to the whole diffusive church: it is, therefore, most fit, that since the legal power, that is, the external, was passed over to the body representative, yet the efficacy of it, and the internal, should so still remain in the diffusive, as to have power to consider whether their representatives did their duty, yea or no; and so to proceed accordingly, for, unless it be in matters of justice, in which the interest of a third person is concerned, no man will or can be supposed to pass away all power from himself, of doing himself right in mat-

* Vid. St. August. lib. i. c. 18, de Bapt. Contr. Donat.

† So did the third estate of France, in the convention of the three estates, under Lewis XIII., earnestly contend against it.

ters personal, proper, and of so high concernment : it is most unnatural and unreasonable. But, besides that they are excellent instruments of peace, the best human judicatories in the world, rare sermons for the determining a point in controversy, and the greatest probability from human authority ; besides these advantages, I say, I know nothing greater that general councils can pretend to, with reason and argument, sufficient to satisfy any wise man : and as there was never any council so general but it might have been more general ; for, in respect of the whole church, even Nice itself was but a small assembly ; so there is no decree so well constituted but it may be proved by an argument higher than the authority of the council. And, therefore, general councils, and national, and provincial, and diocesan, in their several decrees, are excellent guides for the prophets, and directions and instructions for their prophesyings ; but not of weight and authority to restrain their liberty so wholly but that they may dissent, when they see a reason strong enough so to persuade them as to be willing, upon the confidence of that reason, and their own sincerity, to answer to God for such their modesty, and peaceable, but (as they believe) their necessary disagreeing.

SECTION VII.

Of the fallibility of the Pope, and the uncertainty of his expounding Scripture, and resolving Questions.

BUT since the question between the council and the pope grew high, they have not wanted abettors so confident on the pope's behalf, as to believe general councils to be nothing but pomps and solemnities of the catholic church, and that all the authority of determining controversies is formally and effectually in the pope; and, therefore, to appeal from the pope to a future council is a heresy; yea, and treason too, said pope Pius II.;* and, therefore, it concerns us now to be wise and wary, But before I proceed, I must needs remember, that pope Pius II.,† while he was the wise and learned Æneas Sylvius, was very confident for the pre-eminence of a council, and gave a merry reason why more clerks were for the popes than the council, though the truth was on the other side; even because the pope gives bishoprics and abbeys, but councils give none; and yet, as soon as he was made pope, as if he had been inspired, his eyes were opened to see the great privileges of St. Peter's chair, which before he could not see, being amused with the truth, or else with the reputation of a general council. But, however, there are many that hope

* Epist. ad Norimberg.

† "Patrum et avorum nostrorum tempore pauci audebant dicere papam esse supra concil."—Lib. i. de Gestis Concil. Basil.

to make it good, that the pope is the universal and the infallible doctor, that he breathes decrees as oracles, that to dissent from any of his cathedral determinations, is absolute heresy, the rule of faith being nothing else but conformity to the chair of Peter. So that here we have met a restraint of prophesy indeed ; but yet, to make amends, I hope we shall have an infallible guide ; and when a man is in heaven, he will never complain that his choice is taken from him, and he is confined to love and to admire, since his love and his admiration is fixed upon that which makes him happy, even upon God himself. And in the church of Rome, there is, in a lower degree, but in a true proportion, as little cause to be troubled, that we are confined to believe just so, and no choice left us for our understandings to discover, or our wills to choose ; because, though we be limited, yet we are pointed out where we ought to rest ; we are confined to our centre, and there where our understandings will be satisfied, and therefore will be quiet, and where, after all our strivings, studies, and endeavours, we desire to come ; that is, to truth, for there we are secured to find it, because we have a guide that is infallible : if this prove true, we are well enough ; but if it be false, or uncertain, it were better we had still kept our liberty, than be cozened out of it with gay pretences. This, then, we must consider.

And here we shall be oppressed with a cloud of witnesses : for what more plain than the commission given to Peter ? ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church ;’ and ‘to thee will I give the keys.’ And again : ‘For thee have I prayed, that thy faith fail not ; but thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren.’ And again :

‘ If thou lovest me, feed my sheep.’ Now, nothing of this being spoken to any of the other apostles, by one of these places St. Peter must needs be appointed foundation, or head of the church ; and, by consequence, he is to rule and govern all. By some other of these places he is made the supreme pastor, and he is to teach and determine all, and enabled, with an infallible power so to do : and, in a right understanding of these authorities, the fathers spake great things of the chair of Peter ; for we are as much bound to believe that all this was spoken to Peter’s successors, as to his person ; that must, by all means, be supposed ; and so did the old doctors, who had as much certainty of it as we have, and no more ; but yet let us hear what they have said : “ To this church, by reason of its more powerful principality, it is necessary all churches round about should convene.”* “ In this, tradition apostolical always was observed ; and, therefore, to communicate with this bishop, with this church, was to be in communion with the church catholic.” † “ To this church error or perfidiousness cannot have access.” ‡ “ Against this see gates of hell cannot prevail.” § “ For we know this church to be built upon a rock : and whoever eats the lamb, not within this house, is prophane ; he that is not in the ark of Noah perishes in the inundation of waters. He that gathers not with this bishop, he scatters ; and he that belongeth not to Christ, must needs belong to antichrist :” || and that is his final

* Irenæ. Contr. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 3.

† Ambr. de Obitu Salyri. et lib. i. Ep. iv. ad Imp. Cypr. Ep. lii.

‡ Cypr. Ep. lv. ad Cornel.

§ St. Austin. in Psal. contra part. Donat.

|| Hieron. Ep. lvii. ad Damasum.

sentence. But if you would have all this proved by an infallible argument, Optatus,* of Milevis in Africa, supplies it to us from the very name of Peter: for therefore Christ gave him the cognomination of Cephas, ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς, to show that St. Peter was the visible head of the catholic church. A cover this, truly worthy of the dish! † This long harangue must needs be full of tragedy to all them that take liberty to themselves to follow Scripture and their best guides, if it happens, in that liberty, that they depart from the persuasions or the communion of Rome: but, indeed, if with the peace of the bishops of Rome I may say it, this scene is the most unhandsomely laid, and the worst carried of any of those pretences that have lately abused Christendom.

I. Against the allegations of Scripture, I shall lay no greater prejudice than this, that if a person disinterested should see them, and consider what the products of them might possibly be, the last thing that he would think of would be, how that any of these places should serve the ends or pretences of the church of Rome. For, to instance in one of the particulars, that man had need have a strong fancy, who imagines, that because Christ prayed for St. Peter, (being he had designed him to be one of those upon whose preaching and doctrine he did mean to constitute a church,) ‘that his faith might not fail,’ (for it was necessary that no bitterness, or stopping, should be in one of the first springs, lest the current be either spoiled or obstructed,) that therefore the faith of pope Alex-

* Lib. ii. Contra Parmenian.

† “Dignum patellâ operculum !”

ander VI., or Gregory, or Clement, fifteen hundred years after, should be preserved by virtue of that prayer, which the form of words, the time, the occasion, the manner of the address, the effect itself, and all the circumstances of the action and person, did determine to be personal: and when it was more than personal, St. Peter did not represent his successors at Rome, but the whole catholic church, says Aquinas,* and the divines of the university of Paris. "They explain the prayer as referring to the church alone,"† says Bellarmine of them; and the gloss upon the canon law plainly denies the effect of this prayer at all to appertain to the pope: "The question is, respecting what church we are to understand it said, that it is infallible: is it of the pope himself, who is called the church? But it is certain that the pope may err.—I answer, the congregation of the faithful is here called the church; and it cannot be otherwise than such, for our Lord himself prays for the church; and will not be disappointed of the request of his lips."‡ But there is a little danger in this argument, when we well consider it; but it is likely to redound on the head of those whose turns it should serve: for it may be remembered, that for all this prayer of Christ for St. Peter, the good man fell foully, and denied his master shamefully: and shall Christ's

* 22. æ. q. 2. a. 6. ar. 6 ad. 3 m.

† "Volunt enim pro solâ ecclesiâ esse oratum."—Lib. iv. de Rom. Pont. c. 3, §. 1.

‡ "Quære de quâ ecclesia intelligas quod hoc dicitur, quod non possit errare, si de ipso papâ qui ecclesia dicitur? sed certum est, quod papa errare potest. Respondeo ipsa congregatio fidelium hic dicitur ecclesia; et talis ecclesia non potest non esse, nam ipse Dominus orat pro ecclesiâ, et voluntate labiorum suorum non fraudabitur."—Caus. xxi. cap. à recta. q. 1. xxix. Dist. Anastatius, 60, di. si Papa.

prayer be of greater efficacy for his successors, for whom it was made but indirectly and by consequence, than himself, for whom it was directly and in the first intention? And if not, then, for all this argument, the popes may deny Christ, as well as their chief and decessor, Peter. But, it should not be forgotten, how the Roman doctors will by no means allow that St. Peter was then the chief bishop, or pope, when he denied his master. But, then, much less was he chosen chief bishop when the prayer was made for him, because the prayer was made before his fall; that is, before that time in which it is confessed he was not as yet made pope: and how, then, the whole succession of the papacy should be entitled to it, passes the length of my hand to span. But, then, also, if it be supposed and allowed, that these words shall entail infallibility upon the chair of Rome, why shall not also all the apostolical sees be infallible, as well as Rome? why shall not Constantinople, or Byzantium, where St. Andrew sat? why shall not Ephesus, where St. John sat; or Jerusalem, where St. James sat? for Christ prayed for them all, 'that the Father should sanctify them by his truth.' *John*, xvii.

2. For was it personal or not? If it were, then the bishops of Rome have nothing to do with it: if it were not, then by what argument will it be made evident that St. Peter, in the promise, represented only his successors, and not the whole college of apostles, and the whole hierarchy? For, if St. Peter was chief of the apostles and head of the church, he might, fair enough, be the representative of the whole college, and receive it in their right as well as his own; which also is certain that it was so, for the same promise of binding and loosing, (which

certainly was all that the keys were given for,) was made afterward to all the apostles, *Matt.* xviii; and the power of remitting and retaining, which, in reason and according to the style of the church, is the same thing in other words, was actually given to all the apostles. And unless that was the performing the first and second promise, we find it not recorded in Scripture how, or when, or whether yet or no, the promise be performed: that promise, I say, which did not pertain to Peter principally and by origination, and to the rest by communication, society, and adherence; but that promise which was made to Peter first, but not for himself, but for all the college, and for all their successors, and then made the second time to them all, without representation, but in diffusion, and performed to all alike in presence, except St. Thomas. And if he went to St. Peter to derive it from him, I know not; I find no record for that; but that Christ conveyed the promise to him by the same commission, the church yet never doubted, nor had she any reason. But this matter is too notorious: I say no more to it, but repeat the words and argument of St. Austin.* “If the keys were only given and so promised to St. Peter, that the church hath not the keys, then the church can neither bind nor loose, remit nor retain; which God forbid.” If any man should endeavour to answer this argument, I leave him and St. Austin to contest it.

3. For ‘Feed my sheep,’ there is little in that allegation, besides the boldness of the objectors; for were not all the apostles bound to feed Christ’s

* “Si hoc Petro tantum dictum est, non facit hoc ecclesia.”—*Tra.* 1. in Joann.

sheep? Had they not all the commission from Christ, and Christ's Spirit immediately? St. Paul had certainly. Did not St. Peter himself say to all the bishops of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithinia, that they should feed the flock of God, and the great Bishop and Shepherd should give them an immarcescible crown; plainly implying, that from whence they derived their authority, from him they were sure of a reward? In pursuance of which, St. Cyprian laid his argument upon this basis.* Did not St. Paul call to the bishops of Ephesus to feed the flock of God, of which the Holy Ghost hath made them bishops or overseers? And that this very commission was spoken to Peter not in a personal, but a public capacity, and in him spoke to all the apostles, we see attested by St. Austin and St. Ambrose,† and generally by all antiquity; and it so concerned even every priest, that Damasus was willing enough to have St. Jerome explicate many questions for him. And Liberius writes an epistle to Athanasius, with much modesty requiring his advice in a question of faith: "That I also may be persuaded, without all doubting, of those things which you shall be pleased to command me."‡ Now, Liberius needed not to have troubled himself to have writ into the east to Athanasius; for, if he had but seated himself in his chair, and made the dictate, the result of his pen and ink would certainly have taught him and all the church;

* "Nam cum statutum sit omnibus nobis, &c. et singulis pastoribus portio gregis, &c."—Lib. i. Ep. 3.

† De Agone Christi, c. 30.

‡ "Ἰνα καὶ γὼν πεποιθὼς ὃ ἀδιακρίτως, περὶ ὧν ἀξιοῦς κελεύειν μοί.— Epist. ad Athanas. apud Athanas. tom. i. page 42. Paris.

but that the good pope was ignorant that either 'Feed my sheep' was his own charter and prerogative, or that any other words of Scripture had made him to be infallible; or if he was not ignorant of it, he did very ill to compliment himself out of it. So did all those bishops of Rome that, in that troublesome and unprofitable question of Easter, being unsatisfied in the supputation of the Egyptians, and the definitions of the mathematical bishops of Alexandria, did yet require and entreat St. Ambrose* to tell them his opinion, as he himself witnesses. If 'Feed my sheep' belongs only to the pope by primary title, in these cases the sheep came to feed the shepherd; which, though it was well enough in the thing, is very ill for the pretensions of the Roman bishops; and if we consider how little many of the popes have done toward feeding the sheep of Christ, we shall hardly determine which is the greater prevarication, that the pope should claim the whole commission to be granted to him, or that the execution of the commission should be wholly passed over to others: and it may be, there is a mystery in it, that since St. Peter sent a bishop with his staff to raise up a disciple of his from the dead, who was afterwards bishop of Triers, the popes of Rome never wear a pastoral staff, except it be in that diocess, (says Aquinas,)[†] for great reason, that he who does not do the office should, not bear the symbol; but a man would think that the pope's master of the ceremonies was ill advised, not to assign a pastoral staff to him who pretends the commission of 'Feed my sheep' to belong to him by prime right and origination. But this is not a business to be merry in.

* Lib. x. Ep. 83.

† M. iv. Sent. Dist. 24.

But the great support is expected from, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,' &c. Now, there being so great difference in the exposition of these words, by persons disinterested, who, if any, might be allowed to judge in this question, it is certain that neither one sense nor other can be obtruded for an article of faith; much less as a catholicon instead of all, by constituting an authority which should guide us in all faith, and determine us in all questions; for if the church was not built upon the person of Peter, then his successors can challenge nothing from this instance. Now, that it was the confession of Peter upon which the church was to rely for ever, we have witnesses very credible; St. Ignatius,* St. Basil,† St. Hilary,‡ St. Gregory Nyssen,§ St. Gregory the Great,|| St. Austin,¶ St. Cyril of Alexandria*, Isidore Pelusiot,† and very many more. And, although all these witnesses concurring cannot make a proposition to be true, yet they are sufficient witnesses, that it was not the universal belief of Christendom that the church was built upon St. Peter's person. Cardinal Perron hath a fine fancy to elude this variety of exposition, and the consequents of it; for (saith he) these expositions are not contrary or exclusive of each other, but inclusive and consequent to each other: for the church is founded causally upon the confession of St. Peter, formally upon the ministry of his person; and this was a reward or a consequent of the former. So that these expositions are both true, but they are conjoined as mediate and

* Ad Philadelph.

‡ Lib. vi. De Trin.

|| Lib. iii. Ep. 33.

* De Trin. lib. iv.

† Seleuc. Orat. xxv.

§ De Trin. advers. Judæos.

¶ In 1 Eph. Joann. tr. 10.

† Lib. i. Ep. 235.

immediate, direct and collateral, literal and moral, original and perpetual, accessory and temporal; the one consigned at the beginning, the other introduced upon occasion: for before the spring of the Arian heresy, the fathers expounded these words of the person of Peter; but after the Arians troubled them, the fathers, finding great authority and energy in this confession of Peter, for the establishment of the natural filiation of the Son of God, to advance the reputation of these words and the force of the argument, gave themselves licence to expound these words to the present advantage, and to make the confession of Peter to be the foundation of the church; that, if the Arians should encounter this authority, they might, with more prejudice to their persons, declaim against their cause, by saying they overthrew the foundation of the church. Besides that this answer does much dishonour the reputation of the fathers' integrity, and makes their interpretations less credible, as being made not of knowledge or reason, but of necessity and to serve a present turn, it is also false; for Ignatius* expounds it in a spiritual sense, which also the liturgy attributed to St. James calls ἐπὶ πέτρῳ τῆς πίστεως, "upon the rock of the faith:" and Origen expounds it mystically to a third purpose, but exclusively to this: and all these were before the Arian controversy. But if it be lawful to make such unproved observations, it would have been to better purpose, and more reason, to have observed it thus: the fathers, so long as the bishop of Rome kept himself to the limits prescribed him by Christ, and indulged to him by the constitution or concession of the church, were unwary and apt to expound this

* Epist. ad Philadelph. in c. 16. Mat. Tract. 1.

place of the person of Peter ; but when the church began to enlarge her phylacteries, by the favour of princes and the sunshine of a prosperous fortune, and the pope, by the advantage of the imperial seat, and other accidents, began to invade upon the other bishops and patriarchs, then, that he might have no colour from Scripture for such new pretensions, they did, most generally, turn the stream of their expositions from the person to the confession of Peter, and declared that to be the foundation of the church. And thus I have requited fancy with fancy : but, for the main point, that these two expositions are inclusive of each other, I find no warrant ; for though they may consist together well enough, if Christ had so intended them, yet, unless it could be shown by some circumstance of the text, or some other extrinsical argument, that they must be so, and that both senses were actually intended, it is but *gratis dictum*, and a begging of the question, to say that they are so ; and the fancy so new, that when St. Austin had expounded this place of the person of Peter, he reviews it again, and, in his retractations, leaves every man to his liberty which to take ; as having nothing certain in this article : which had been altogether needless, if he had believed them to be inclusively in each other, neither of them had need to have been retracted ; both were alike true, both of them might have been believed. But I said the fancy was new, and I had reason ; for it was so unknown till yesterday, that even the late writers, of his own side, expound the words of the confession of St. Peter, exclusively to his person, or any thing else, as is to be seen in *Marsilius*,* *Petrus de Aliaco*,†

* Defens. Pacis, part. ii. c. 28. † Recommend. Sacr. Script.

and the gloss upon *Dist. xix. Can. ita Dominus*, § *ut supra*, which also was the interpretation of *Phavorinus Camers*, their own bishop, from whom they learnt the resemblance of the word Πέτρος, (Peter,) and πέτρα, (a rock,) of which they made so many gay discourses.

5. But, upon condition I may have leave, at another time, to recede from so great and numerous testimony of fathers, I am willing to believe that it was not the confession of St. Peter, but his person upon which Christ said he would build his church; or that these expositions are consistent with and consequent to each other; that this confession was the objective foundation of faith, and Christ and his apostles the subjective—Christ principally, and St. Peter instrumentally; and yet I understand not any advantage will hence accrue to the see of Rome; for upon St. Peter it was built, but not alone, for it “was upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone;” and when St. Paul reckoned the economy of hierarchy, he reckons not Peter first and then the apostles, but first apostles, secondarily prophets, &c. And whatsoever is first, either is before all things else, or at least nothing is before it: so that, at least, St. Peter is not before all the rest of the apostles; which also St. Paul expressly avers: ‘I am in nothing inferior to the very chiefest of the apostles;’ no, not in the very being a rock and a foundation: and it was of the church of Ephesus that St. Paul said, in particular, it was ‘the pillar and ground (or foundation) of the truth;’ that church was, not excluding others, for they also were as much as she: for so we keep close and be united to the corner-stone, although some be master

builders, yet all may build; and we have known whole nations converted by laymen and women, who have been builders so far as to bring them to the corner-stone. *

6. But suppose all these things concern St. Peter, in all the capacities that can be with any colour pretended, yet what have the bishops of Rome to do with this? For how will it appear that these promises and commissions did relate to him as a particular bishop, and not as a public apostle? since this latter is so much the more likely, because the great pretence of all seems in reason more proportionable to the founding of a church than its continuance: and, yet, if they did relate to him as a particular bishop, (which yet is a further degree of improbability, removed further from certainty,) yet why shall St. Clement, or Linus, rather succeed in this great office of headship than St. John, or any of the apostles that survived Peter? It is no way likely a private person should skip over the head of an apostle. Or why shall his successors at Rome more enjoy the benefit of it than his successors at Antioch, since that he was at Antioch and preached there, we have a divine authority; but that he did so at Rome at most we have but a human. And if it be replied, that because he died at Rome, it was argument enough that there his successors were to inherit his privilege, this, besides that at most it is but one little degree of probability, and so not of strength sufficient to support an article of faith, it makes that the great divine right of Rome, and the apostolical presidency was so contingent and

* Vid. Socrat. lib. i. c. 19, 20. Sozom. lib. ii. c. 14. Niceph. lib. xiv. c. 42.

fallible as to depend upon the decree of Nero ; and if he had sent him to Antioch, there to have suffered martyrdom, the bishops of that town had been heads of the catholic church. And this thing presses the harder, because it is held by no mean persons in the church of Rome, that the bishopric of Rome and the papacy are things separable ; and the pope may quit that see and sit in another : which, to my understanding, is an argument, that he that succeeded Peter at Antioch, is as much supreme by divine right, as he that sits at Rome ;* both alike ; that is, neither by divine ordinance : for, if the Roman bishops, by Christ's intention, were to be head of the church, then, by the same intention, the succession must be continued in that see ; and then, let the pope go whither he will, the bishop of Rome must be the head ; which they themselves deny, and the pope himself did not believe, when in a schism he sat at Avignon ; and that it was to be continued in the see of Rome, it is but offered to us upon conjecture, upon an act of providence, as they fancy it, so ordering it by vision, and this proved by an author which themselves call fabulous and apochryphal. † A goodly building which relies upon an event that was accidental, whose purpose was but insinuated, the meaning of it but conjectured at, and this conjecture so uncertain, that it was an imperfect aim at the purpose of an event, which, whether it was true or no, was so uncertain that it is ten to one there was no such matter. And yet, again, another degree of uncertainty is, to whom

* Vid. Cameracens. Qu. vespert.

† Under the name of Linus, in Biblioth. P. P. de Passione Petri et Pauli.

the bishops of Rome do succeed; for St. Paul was as much bishop of Rome as St. Peter was: there he presided, there he preached, and he it was that was the doctor of the uncircumcision and of the gentiles; St. Peter, of the circumcision and of the Jews only; and, therefore, the converted Jews at Rome might, with better reason, claim the privilege of St. Peter, than the Romans and the churches in her communion, who do not derive from Jewish parents.

7. If the words were never so appropriate to Peter, or also communicated to his successors, yet of what value will the consequent be? what prerogative is entailed upon the chair of Rome? For, that St. Peter was the ministerial head of the church is the most that is desired to be proved by those and all other words brought for the same purposes and interests of that see. Now let the ministerial head have what dignity can be imagined, let him be the first; (and in all communities that are regular and orderly, there must be something that is first, upon certain occasions where an equal power cannot be exercised, and made pompous or ceremonial;) but will this ministerial headship infer an infallibility? will it infer more than the headship of the Jewish synagogue, where clearly the high-priest was supreme in many senses, yet in no sense infallible? will it infer more to us than it did amongst the apostles? amongst whom, if for order's sake St. Peter was the first, yet he had no compulsory power over the apostles; there was no such thing spoke of, nor any such thing put in practice. And, that the other apostles were, by a personal privilege, as infallible as himself, is no reason to hinder the exercise of jurisdiction, or any

compulsory power over them : for, though in faith they were infallible, yet in manners and matter of fact as likely to err as St. Peter himself was ; and certainly there might have something happened in the whole college that might have been a record of his authority, by transmitting an example of the exercise of some judicial power over some one of them :—if he had but withstood any of them to their faces, as St. Paul did him, it had been more than yet is said in his behalf. Will the ministerial headship infer any more than, when the church, in a community or a public capacity, should do any act of ministry ecclesiastical, he shall be first in order ? Suppose this to be a dignity to preside in councils, which yet was not always granted him ; suppose it to be a power of taking cognizance of the major causes of bishops, when councils cannot be called ; suppose it a double voice, or the last decisive, or the negative in the causes exterior ; suppose it to be what you will of dignity or external regimen, which, when all churches were united in communion, and neither the interest of states, nor the engagement of opinions had made disunion, might better have been acted than now it can ; yet this will fall infinitely short of a power to determine controversies infallibly, and to prescribe to all mens' faith and consciences. A ministerial headship, or the prime minister, cannot, in any capacity, become the foundation of the church to any such purpose. And, therefore, men are causelessly amused with such premises, and are afraid of such conclusions which will never follow from the admission of any sense of these words that can with any probability be pretended.

8. I consider that these arguments from Scrip-

ture are too weak to support such an authority, which pretends to give oracles, and to answer infallibly in questions of faith; because there is greater reason to believe the popes of Rome have erred, and greater certainty of demonstration, than these places can be that they are infallible, as will appear by the instances and perpetual experiment of their being deceived, of which there is no question, but of the sense of these places there is: and, indeed, if I had as clear Scripture for their infallibility as I have against their half-communion, against their service in an unknown tongue, worshipping of images, and divers other articles, I would make no scruple of believing, but limit and conform my understanding to all their dictates, and believe it reasonable all prophesying should be restrained. But till then I have leave to discourse, and to use my reason; and, to my reason, it seems not likely that neither Christ nor any of his apostles, St. Peter himself, nor St. Paul, writing to the church of Rome, should speak the least word, or tittle of the infallibility of their bishops; for it was certainly as convenient to tell us of a remedy, as to foretell, that certainly there must needs be heresies, and need of a remedy. And it had been a certain determination of the question, if when so rare an opportunity was ministered in the question about circumcision, that they should have sent to Peter, who, for his infallibility in ordinary and his power of headship, would, not only with reason enough, as being infallibly assisted, but also for his authority, have best determined the question, if at least the first Christians had known so profitable and so excellent a secret; and, although we have but little record, that the first council at Jerusalem did much observe the solem-

nities of law, and the forms of conciliary proceedings, and the ceremonials, yet so much of it as is recorded, is against them; St. James, and not St. Peter, gave the final sentence; and, although St. Peter determined the question in favour of liberty, yet St. James made the decree and the *assumentum* too, and gave sentence they should abstain from some things there mentioned, which by way of temper he judged most expedient, and so it passed. And St. Peter showed no sign of a superior authority, nothing of superior jurisdiction, “but entreated him, that every thing might be determined by public decision, and nothing by any person’s mere authority and command.”*

So that if this question be to be determined by Scripture, it must either be ended by plain places, or by obscure: plain places there are none, and those that are with greatest fancy pretended, are expounded by antiquity to contrary purposes. But if obscure places be all the *ἀνθεντία*, (authority,) by what means shall we infallibly find the sense of them? The pope’s interpretation, though in all other cases it might be pretended, in this cannot; for it is the thing in question, and therefore cannot determine for itself: either, therefore, we have also another infallible guide besides the pope, and so we have two foundations and two heads, (for this, as well as the other, upon the same reason;) or else (which is indeed the truth) there is no infallible way to be infallibly assured that the pope is infallible. Now, it being against the common condition of men, above the pretences of all other gover-

* Ὅρα δὲ αὐτὸν μετὰ κοινῆς πάντα ποιῶντα γνώμης, οὐδὲν ἀνθεντικῶς οὔδ’ ἀρχικῶς.—S. Chrysost. Hom. iii. in Act. Apost.

nors ecclesiastical, against the analogy of Scripture, and the deportment of the other apostles, against the economy of the church, and St. Peter's own entertainment, the presumption lies against him; and these places are to be left to their prime intentions, and not put upon the rack, to force them to confess what they never thought.

But now, for antiquity, if that be deposed in this question, there are so many circumstances to be considered, to reconcile their words and their actions, that the process is more troublesome than the argument can be concluding, or the matter considerable: but I shall a little consider it, so far, at least, as to show either that antiquity said no such thing as is pretended, or if they did, it is but little considerable, because they did not believe themselves; their practice was the greatest evidence in the world against the pretence of their words. But I am much eased of a long disquisition in this particular, (for I love not to prove a question by arguments whose authority is in itself as fallible, and by circumstances made as uncertain as the question,) by the saying of Æneas Sylvius, that before the Nicene council every man lived to himself, and small respect was had to the church of Rome; which practice could not well consist with the doctrine of their bishop's infallibility, and, by consequence, supreme judgment and last resolution, in matters of faith; but especially by the insinuation, and consequent acknowledgment, of Bellarmine,* that for one thousand years together, the fathers knew not of the doctrine of the pope's infallibility; for Nilus, Gerson, Almain, the

* De Rom. Pont. lib. iv. c. 2, § Secunda Sententia.

divines of Paris, Alphonsus de Castro, and pope Adrian VI., persons who lived fourteen hundred years after Christ, affirm that infallibility is not seated in the pope's person, that he may err, and sometimes actually hath; which is a clear demonstration that the church knew no such doctrine as this: there had been no decree, nor tradition, nor general opinion of the fathers, or of any age before them; and therefore this opinion, which Bellarmine would fain blast if he could, yet in his conclusion he says, it is not properly heretical. A device and an expression of his own, without sense or precedent. But if the fathers had spoken of it and believed it, why may not a disagreeing person as well reject their authority when it is in behalf of Rome, as they of Rome, without scruple, cast them off when they speak against it? as Bellarmine, being pressed with the authority of Nilus, bishop of Thessalonica, and other fathers, says, that the pope acknowledges no fathers, but they are all his children, and, therefore, they cannot depose against him; and if that be true, why shall we take their testimonies for him? for if sons depose in their father's behalf, it is twenty to one but the adverse party will be cast; and therefore, at the best, it is but suspicious evidence. But, indeed, this discourse signifies nothing but a perpetual uncertainty in such topics, and that where a violent prejudice, or a concerning interest is engaged, men, by not regarding what any man says, proclaim to all the world, that nothing is certain but Divine authority.

But I will not take advantage of what Bellarmine says, nor what Stapleton, or any one of them all say; for that will be but to press upon personal persuasions, or to urge a general question with a

particular defailance, and the question is never the nearer to an end; for if Bellarmine says any thing that is not to another man's purpose or persuasion, that man will be tried by his own argument, not by another's. And so would every man do that loves his liberty, as all wise men do, and therefore retain it by open violence, or private evasions: but to return.

An authority from Irenæus in this question, and on behalf of the pope's infallibility, or the authority of the see of Rome, or of the necessity of communicating with them, is very fallible; for, besides that there are almost a dozen answers to the words of the allegation, as is to be seen in those that trouble themselves in this question with the allegation, and answering such authorities, yet, if they should make for the affirmative of this question, it is an affirmation contrary to fact.* For Irenæus had no such great opinion of pope Victor's infallibility, that he believed things in the same degree of necessity that the pope did; for therefore he chides him for excommunicating the Asian bishops ἀπόρως, all at a blow, in the question concerning Easter day; and in a question of faith, he expressly disagreed from the doctrine of Rome; for Irenæus was of the millenary opinion, and believed it to be a tradition apostolical: now, if the church of Rome was of that opinion, then why is she not now? where is the succession of her doctrine? But if she was not of that opinion then, and Irenæus was, where was his belief of that church's infallibility? The same I urge concerning St. Cyprian, who was the head of a sect in

* *Protestatio contra factum.*

opposition to the church of Rome, in the question of rebaptization; and he and the abettors, Firmilian, and the other bishops of Cappadocia, and the vicinage, spoke harsh words of Stephen, and such as became them not to speak to an infallible doctor, and the supreme head of the church. I will urge none of them to the disadvantage of that see, but only note the satires of Firmilian against him, because it is of good use to show that it is possible for them, in their ill carriage, to blast the reputation and efficacy of a great authority: for he says that the church did pretend the authority of the apostles, "when, in many of its religious ordinances, it departed from the apostolic rule, and from the practice of the church of Jerusalem, and even defamed Peter and Paul as authorities."* And a little after, says he, "I disdain the open and manifest folly of Stephanus, by which the verity of the Christian rock is annulled."† Which words say plainly, that for all the goodly pretence of apostolical authority, the church of Rome did then, in many things of religion, disagree from divine institution; (and from the church of Jerusalem, which they had as great esteem of, for religion sake, as of Rome for its principality;) and that still, in pretending to St. Peter and St. Paul, they dishonoured those blessed apostles, and destroyed the honour of the pretence, by their untoward prevarication; which words, I confess, pass my skill to reconcile them to an opinion of infallibility;

* "Cum in multis sacramentis divinæ rei, à principio discrepet, et ab ecclesia Hierosolymitanâ, et defamet Petrum et Paulum tanquam authores."—Epist. Firmiliani, contr. Steph. ad Cyprian. Vid. etiam Ep. Cypriani ad Pompeium.

† "Justè dedignor apertam et manifestam stultitiam Stephani, per quam veritas Christianæ petræ aboletur."

and although they were spoken by an angry person, yet they declare, that in Africa they were not then persuaded as now they were at Rome: "For Peter, who was chosen by the Lord, did not vainly and proudly arrogate to himself a claim to pre-eminence."* That was their belief then, and how the contrary hath grown up to that height where now it is, all the world is witness. And now I shall not need to note concerning St. Jerome, that he gave a compliment to Damasus that he would not have given to Liberius: *Qui tecum non colligit spargit*; "He who gathereth not with you, scattereth." For it might be true enough of Damasus, who was a good bishop, and a right believer; but if Liberius's name had been put instead of Damasus, the case had been altered with the name; for St. Jerome did believe, and write it so, that Liberius had subscribed to Arianism.† And if either he, or any of the rest, had believed the pope could not be a heretic, nor his faith fail, but be so good and of so competent authority as to be a rule to Christendom, why did they not appeal to the pope in the Arian controversy? Why was the bishop of Rome made a party and a concurrent, as other good bishops were, and not a judge and an arbitrator in the question? Why did the fathers prescribe so many rules, and cautions, and provisos, for the discovery of heresy? Why were the emperors at so much charge, and the church at so much trouble, as to call and convene in councils respectively, to dispute so frequently, to write so sedulously, to

* "Nam nec Petrus, quem primum Dominus elegit, vendicavit sibi aliquid insolentèr, aut arrogantèr assumpsit, ut diceret se primatum tenere."—Cyprian. Epist. ad Quintum Fratrem.

† De Script. Eccles. in Fortunatiano.

observe all advantages against their adversaries, and for the truth, and never offered to call for the pope to determine the question in his chair? Certainly no way could have been so expedite, none so concluding and peremptory, none could have convinced so certainly, none could have triumphed so openly over all discrepant as this, if they had known of any such thing as his being infallible, or that he had been appointed by Christ to be the judge of controversies. And, therefore, I will not trouble this discourse, to excuse any more words, either pretended or really said to this purpose of the pope; for they would but make books swell, and the question endless. I shall only to this purpose observe, that the old writers were so far from believing the infallibility of the Roman church or bishop, that many bishops, and many churches, did actually live and continue out of the Roman communion; particularly St. Austin,* who, with two hundred and seventeen bishops, and their successors, for one hundred years together, stood separate from that church, if we may believe their own records: so did Ignatius of Constantinople, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyprian, Firmilian, those bishops of Asia that separated in the question of Easter, and those of Africa in the question of rebaptization: but, besides this, most of them had opinions which the church of Rome disavows now, and, therefore, did so then, or else she hath innovated in her doctrine; which, though it be most true and notorious, I am

* “Ubi illa Augustini et reliquorum prudentia? quis jam ferat crassissimæ ignorantiae illam vocem in tot et tantis Patribus?”—Alan. Cop. Dialog. p. 76, 77. Vide etiam Bonifac. II. Epist. ad Eulalium Alexandrinum. Lindanum Panopl. lib. iv. c. 89. in fine Salmeron. tom. xii. Tract. 68, § ad Canonem. Sander. de visibili Monarchia, lib. vii. n. 411. Baron. tom. x. A.D. 878.

sure she will never confess. But no excuse can be made for St. Austin's disagreeing, and contesting, in the question of appeals to Rome, the necessity of communicating infants, the absolute damnation of infants to the pains of hell, if they die before baptism, and divers other particulars. It was a famous act of the bishops of Liguria and Istria, who, seeing the pope of Rome consenting to the fifth synod, in disparagement of the famous council of Chalcedon, which, for their own interests, they did not like of, they renounced subjection to his patriarchate, and erected a patriarch at Acquileia, who was afterwards translated to Venice, where his name remains to this day. It is also notorious, that most of the fathers were of opinion that the souls of the faithful did not enjoy the beatific vision before doomsday: whether Rome was then of that opinion or no, I know not; I am sure now they are not; witness the councils of Florence and Trent; but of this I shall give a more full account afterwards. But if to all this which is already noted, we add that great variety of opinions amongst the fathers and councils, in assignation of the canon, they not consulting with the bishop of Rome, or any of them thinking themselves bound to follow his rule in enumeration of the books of Scripture, I think no more need to be said as to this particular.

8. But now, if after all this, there be some popes which were notorious heretics, and preachers of false doctrine, some that made impious decrees, both in faith and manners; some that have determined questions with egregious ignorance and stupidity, some with apparent sophistry, and many to serve their own ends most openly; I suppose then the infallibility will disband, and we may do to him

as to other good bishops, believe him when there is cause; but if there be none, then to use our consciences. “For it cannot be sufficient for a Christian, that the pope constantly affirms the propriety of his own command; he must examine for himself, and form his opinion by the Divine law.”* I would not instance and repeat the errors of dead bishops, if the extreme boldness of the pretence did not make it necessary: but if we may believe Tertullian, † pope Zepherinus approved the prophecies of Montanus, and upon that approbation granted peace to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, till Praxeas persuaded him to revoke his act: but let this rest upon the credit of Tertullian, whether Zepherinus were a Montanist or no; some such thing there was for certain. ‡ Pope Vigilius § denied two natures in Christ; and in his epistle to Theodora, the empress, anathematized all them that said he had two natures in one person: St. Gregory himself permitted priests to give confirmation; which is all one as if he should permit deacons to consecrate, they being, by divine ordinance, annexed to the higher orders; and, upon this very ground, Adrianus affirms, that the pope may err in his definition of the articles of faith. || And that we may not fear we shall want instances, we may, to secure it, take their own confession: “For there are many heretical decretals,” says Occham, as he is cited by Almain, “which,” says he, for his

* “Non enim salvat Christianum quod pontifex constantèr affirmat præceptum suum esse justum, sed oportet illud examinari, et se juxta regulam superius datam dirigere.”—Tract. de Interdict. Compos. à Theol. Venet. prop. 13.

† Lib. adver. Praxeam.

‡ Vid. Liberal. in Breviario, c. 22.

§ Durand. iv. dist. 7. q. 4. || Quæ. de Confirm. art. ult.

own particular, "I firmly believe; but we must not affirm contrary to what is decreed." * So that we may as well see that it is certain that popes may be heretics, as that it is dangerous to say so; and therefore there are so few that teach it. All the patriarchs, and the bishop of Rome himself, subscribed to Arianism, (as Baronius confesses; †) and Gratian affirms that pope Anastasius II. was stricken of God for communicating with the heretic Photinus. ‡ I know it will be made light of, that Gregory VII. saith, the very exorcists of the Roman church are superior to princes. But what shall we think of that decretal of Gregory III. who wrote to Boniface, his legate in Germany, "That they whose wives refused them conjugal rights, on account of some bodily infirmity, might marry others?" § Was this a doctrine fit for the head of the church, and infallible doctor? It was plainly, if any thing ever was, "the doctrine of devils," and is noted for such by Gratian, *caus. xxxii. q. 7. can. Quod proposuisti*; where the gloss also intimates, that the same privilege was granted to the Englishmen by Gregory, "on the ground of their being but newly converted." And sometimes we had little reason to expect much better; for, not to instance in that learned discourse in the canon law, *de majoritate et obedientiâ*, || where the pope's supremacy over kings is proved from the first chapter

* "Nam multæ sunt decretales hæreticæ, et firmiter hoc credo; sed non licet dogmatizare oppositum, quoniam sunt determinatæ."—3 Dist. 24. q. unica.

† A. D. 357. n. 41. ‡ Dist. xix. c. 9. lib. iv. Ep. 2.

§ "Quod illi quorum uxores infirmitate aliquâ morbidæ debitem reddere noluerunt, aliis poterant nubere?"—Vid. Corranz. Sum. Concil. fol. 218. Edit. Antwerp.

|| Cap. per venerabilem—qui filii sint legitimi.

of Genesis; and the pope is the sun, and the emperor is the moon, for that was the fancy of one pope perhaps, though made authentic and doctrinal by him; it was (if it be possible) more ridiculous, that pope Innocent III. urges, that the Mosaical law was still to be observed, and that upon this argument saith he, "That by the very word Deuteronomy, or second law, it is shewn, that what is there determined ought to be observed in the New Testament."* Worse yet; for when there was a corruption crept into the decree, called *Sancta Romana*, † where, instead of these words, *Sedulii opus heroicis versibus descriptum*, "The work of Sedulius, written in heroic verses," all the old copies, till of late, read *hæreticis versibus descriptum*, "written in heretical verses;" this very mistake made many wise men, (as Pierius says, ‡) yea, pope Adrian VI., no worse man, believe that all poetry was heretical, because (forsooth) pope Gelasius, whose decree that was, although he believed Sedulius to be a good catholic, yet, as they thought, he concluded his verses to be heretical. But these were ignorances; it hath been worse amongst some others, whose errors have been more malicious. Pope Honorius was condemned by the sixth general synod, and his epistles burnt; and in the seventh action of the eighth synod, the acts of the Roman council under Adrian II. are recited, in which it is said, that Honorius was justly anathematised, because he was convict of heresy. Bellarmine says, it is probable that pope Adrian and

* "Sanè cum Deuteronomium secunda lex interpretetur, ex vi vocabuli comprobatur, ut quod ibi decernitur in Testamento Novo debeat observari."

† Dist. xv. apud Gratian.

‡ De Sacerd. barb.

the Roman council were deceived with false copies of the sixth synod, and that Honorius was no heretic. To this I say, that although the Roman synod, and the eighth general synod, and pope Adrian, altogether, are better witnesses for the thing than Bellarmine's conjecture is against it, yet, if we allow his conjecture, we shall lose nothing in the whole; for either the pope is no infallible doctor, but may be a heretic, as Honorius was; or else a council is to us no infallible determiner; I say, as to us, for if Adrian, and the whole Roman council, and the eighth general, were all cozened with false copies of the sixth synod, which was so little a while before them, and whose acts were transacted and kept in the theatre and records of the catholic church, he is a bold man that will be confident that he hath true copies now. So that let which they please stand or fall, let the pope be a heretic, or the councils be deceived and palpably abused, (for the other, we will dispute it upon other instances and arguments, when we shall know which part they will choose,) in the mean time, we shall get in the general what we lose in the particular. This only, this device of saying the copies of the councils were false, was the stratagem of Albertus Pighius, * nine hundred years after the thing was done; of which invention, Pighius was presently admonished, blamed, and wished to recant. Pope Nicholas explicated the mystery of the sacrament with so much ignorance and zeal, that, in condemning Berengarius, he taught a worse impiety. But what need I any more instances? It is a confessed

* Vid. Diatrib. de act. vi. et vii. Synod. Præfatione ad Lectorem et Dominicum Bannes, xxii. q. 1. a. 10. dub. 2.

case by Baronius, by Biel, by Stella, Almain, Occham, and Canus, and generally by the best scholars in the church of Rome,* that a pope may be a heretic, and that some of them actually were so; and no less than three general councils did believe the same thing, viz., the sixth, seventh, and eighth, as Bellarmine is pleased to acknowledge; † and the canon *si Papa, dist. 40*, affirms it in express terms, that a pope is judicable and punishable in that case. But there is no wound but some empiric or other will pretend to cure it; and there is a cure for this too. For, though it be true that if a pope were a heretic, the church might depose him; yet no pope can be a heretic,—not but that the man may, but the pope cannot, for he is *ipso facto* no pope, for he is no Christian: so Bellarmine; ‡ and so when you think you have him fast, he is gone, and nothing of the pope left. But, who sees not the extreme folly of this evasion? for, besides that out of fear and caution he grants more than he needs, more than was sought for in the question, the pope hath no more privilege than the abbot of Cluny; for he cannot be a heretic, nor be deposed by a council; for, if he be manifestly a heretic, he is *ipso facto* no abbot, for he is no Christian; and, if the pope be a heretic privately and occultly, for that he may be accused and judged, said the gloss upon the canon *si Papa, dist. 40*. And the abbot of Cluny and one of his meanest monks can be no more, therefore the case is all one. But this is fitter to make sport with than to interrupt a

* Picus Mirand. in Exposit. theorem. 4.

† De Pontifice Romano, lib. iv. c. 11. Resp. ad Arg. 4.

‡ Lib. ii. c. 30, ubi supra, § est ergo.

serious discourse.* And, therefore, although the canon *Sancta Romana* approves all the decretals of popes, yet that very decretal hath not decreed it firm enough, but that they are so warily received by them, that when they list they are pleased to dissent from them; and it is evident, in the Extravagant of Sixtus IV. *Com. de Reliquiis*;† who appointed a feast of the immaculate conception, a special office for the day, and indulgences enough to the observers of it: and yet the Dominicans were so far from believing the pope to be infallible and his decree authentic, that they declaimed against it in their pulpits so furiously and so long, till they were prohibited, under pain of excommunication, to say the Virgin Mary was conceived in original sin. Now, what solemnity can be more required for the pope to make a cathedral determination of an article? The article was so concluded, that a feast was instituted for its celebration, and pain of excommunication threatened to them which should preach the contrary. Nothing more solemn, nothing more confident and severe: and yet, after all this, to show that whatsoever those people would have us to believe, they will believe what they list themselves; this thing was not determined *de fide*, saith Victorellus. Nay, the author of the gloss of the canon law hath these express words: “With regard to the feast of the conception, nothing is said, because it is not kept, as it is in many places, and especially in England; and the reason is, that the Virgin was conceived in sin, as were the other

* Vide Alphons. à Castr. lib. i. adv. Hæres. c. 4.

† Vid. etiam Innocentium, Serm. 2. de Consecrat. Pontif. act. vii. viii. Synodi. et Concil. 5. sub Symmadio. Collat. viii. can. 12.

saints.* And the commissaries of Sixtus V. and Gregory XIII. did not expunge these words, but left them upon record, not only against a received and more approved opinion of the Jesuits and Franciscans, but also in plain defiance of a decree made by their visible head of the church, who (if ever any thing was decreed by a pope with an intent to oblige all Christendom) decreed this to that purpose.†

So that without taking particular notice of it, that egregious sophistry and flattery of the late writers of the Roman church is in this instance, besides divers others before mentioned, clearly made invalid. For, here the bishop of Rome, not as a private doctor, but as pope, not by declaring his own opinion, but with an intent to oblige the church, gave sentence in a question which the Dominicans still account undetermined. And every decretal recorded in the canon law, if it be false in the matter, is just such another instance. And Alphonsus à Castro says it to the same purpose, in the instance of Celestine dissolving marriages for heresy: "Neither ought this error of Celestine to be imputed to negligence alone, so that we may say he erred as a private individual, and not as a pope; because such a decision as this of his is found in the ancient decretals, in the chapter concerning the conversion of infidels which I myself have seen

* "De festo Conceptionis nihil dicitur, quia celebrandum non est, sicut in multis regionibus sit, et maxime in Angliâ; et hæc est ratio, quia in peccatis concepta fuit sicut et cæteri Sancti."—De Angelo custod. fol. 59. de Consecrat. dist. 3, can. pronunci and gloss. verb. Nativit.

† "Hæc in perpetuum valiturâ constitutione statuimus," &c. —De Reliquiis, &c. Extrav. Com. Sixt. IV. c. 1.

and read.”* And, therefore, it is a most intolerable folly to pretend that the pope cannot err in his chair, though he may err in his closet, and may maintain a false opinion even to his death; for, besides that it is sottish to think that either he would not have the world of his own opinion, (as all men naturally would,) or that if he were set in his chair, he would determine contrary to himself in his study, (and therefore to represent it as possible, they are fain to fly to a miracle, for which they have no colour, neither instructions, nor insinuation, nor warrant, nor promise,) besides that it were impious and unreasonable to depose him for heresy, who may so easily, even by setting himself in his chair, and reviewing his theorems, be cured; it is also against a very great experience: for, besides the former allegations, it is most notorious, that Pope Alexander III., in a council at Rome of three hundred archbishops and bishops, A. D. 1179, condemned Peter Lombard of heresy in a matter of great concernment, no less than something about the incarnation; from which sentence he was, after thirty-six years abiding it, absolved by Pope Innocent III. without repentance or dereliction of the opinion. Now, if this sentence was not a cathedral dictate, as solemn and great as could be expected, or as is said to be necessary to oblige all Christendom, let the great hyperaspists of the Roman church be judges, who tell us that a par-

* “*Neque Cælestini error talis fuit qui soli negligentiae imputari debeat, ita ut illum errasse dicamus velut privatam personam et non ut papam, quoniam hujusmodi Cælestini definitio habetur in antiquis decretalibus, in cap. Laudabilem, titulo de conversione infidelium; quam ego ipse vidi et legi.*”—*Lib. i. adv. Hæres. cap. 4.*

ticular council, with the pope's confirmation, is made œcumenical by adoption, and is infallible, and obliges all Christendom;* so Bellarmine; and therefore, he says, that it is "rash, erroneous, and bordering on heresy,"† to deny it: but whether it be or not it is all one, as to my purpose; for it is certain that in a particular council, confirmed by the pope, if ever, then and there the pope sat himself in his chair; and it is as certain that he sat besides the cushion, and determined ridiculously and falsely in this case: but this is a device for which there is no Scripture, no tradition, no one dogmatical resolute saying of any father, Greek or Latin, for above one thousand years after Christ; and themselves, when they list, can acknowledge as much.‡ And, therefore, Bellarmine's saying, I perceive, is believed by them to be true, that there are many things in the decretal epistles which make not articles to be *de fide*. And, therefore, "We are not implicitly to believe whatever the pope decrees,"§ says Almain. And this serves their turns in every thing they do not like; and, therefore, I am resolved it shall serve my turn also for something; and that is, that the matter of the pope's infallibility is so ridiculous and improbable, that they do not believe it themselves. Some of them clearly practised the contrary; and although pope Leo X. hath determined the pope to be above a council, yet the Sorbonne to this day scorn it at the very heart. And I might urge upon them that scorn

* Lib. ii. de Concil. cap. 5.

† "Temerarium, erroneum, et proximum hæresi."

‡ De Pontif. Rom. c. 14, § Respondeo. In 3 sent. d. 24. q. in con. 6. dub. 6, in fine.

§ "Non est necessariò credendum determinatis per summum pontificem."

that Almain truly enough, by way of argument, alleges.* It is a wonder that they who affirm the pope cannot err in judgment, do not also affirm that he cannot sin: they are like enough to say so, says he, if the vicious lives of the popes did not make a daily confutation of such flattery. Now, for my own particular, I am as confident, and think it as certain, that popes are actually deceived in matters of Christian doctrine, as that they do prevaricate the laws of Christian piety; and, therefore, Alphonsus à Castro calls them "impudent flatterers of the pope,"† that ascribe to him infallibility in judgment, or interpretation of Scripture.

But, if themselves did believe it heartily, what excuse is there in the world for the strange uncharitableness or supine negligence of the popes, that they do not set themselves in their chair, and write infallible commentaries, and determine all controversies without error, and blast all heresies with the word of their mouth, declare what is and what is not *de fide*, that their disciples and confidants may agree upon it; reconcile the Franciscans and Dominicans, and expound all mysteries? For it cannot be imagined, but he that was endued with so supreme power in order to so great ends, was also fitted with proportionable, that is extraordinary, personal abilities, succeeding and derived upon the persons of all the popes. And then the doctors of his church need not trouble themselves with study, nor writing explications of Scripture, but might wholly attend to practical devotion,

* De Authorit. Eccles. cap. 10, in fine.

† "Impudentes papæ assentatores."—Lib i. c. 4. ad vers. Hæres. edit. Paris, 1534. In seqq. non expurgantur ista verba. at idem sensus manet.

and leave all their scholastical wranglings, the distinguishing opinions of their orders; and they might have a fine church, something like fairy land, or Lucian's kingdom in the moon. But, if they say they cannot do this when they list, but when they are moved to it by the Spirit, then we are never the nearer; for so may the bishop of Angouleme write infallible commentaries when the Holy Ghost moves him to it; for I suppose his motions are not ineffectual, but he will sufficiently assist us in performing of what he actually moves us to: but, among so many hundred decrees which the popes of Rome have made, or confirmed and attested, (which is all one) I would fain know in how many of them did the Holy Ghost assist them? If they know it, let them declare it, that it may be certain which of their decretals are *de fide*; for as yet none of their own church knows. If they do not know, then neither can we know it from them, and then we are uncertain as ever: and, besides, the Holy Ghost may possibly move him, and he, by his ignorance of it, may neglect so profitable a motion; and then his promise of infallible assistance will be to very little purpose, because it is with very much fallibility applicable to practice. And, therefore, it is absolutely useless to any man or any church; because, suppose it settled in *Thesi*, that the pope is infallible, yet, whether he will do his duty, and perform those conditions of being assisted which are required of him, or whether he be a secret Simoniac, (for if he be, he is *ipso facto* no pope,) or whether he be a bishop, or priest, or a Christian, being all uncertain; every one of these depending upon the intention and power of the baptizer or ordainer, which also are fallible, because they de-

pend upon the honesty and power of other men, we cannot be infallibly certain of any pope that he is infallible; and, therefore, when our questions are determined, we are never the nearer, but may hug ourselves in an imaginary truth; the certainty of finding truth out depending upon so many fallible and contingent circumstances. And, therefore, the thing, if it were true, being so to no purpose, it is to be presumed that God never gave a power so impertinently, and from whence no benefit can accrue to the Christian church, for whose use and benefit, if at all, it must needs have been appointed.

But I am too long in this impertinency. If I were bound to call any man master upon earth, and to believe him upon his own affirmative and authority, I would, of all men, least follow him that pretends he is infallible and cannot prove it. For that he cannot prove it, makes me as uncertain as ever; and that he pretends to infallibility makes him careless of using such means which will morally secure those wise persons, who, knowing their own aptness to be deceived, use what endeavours they can to secure themselves from error, and so become the better and more probable guides.

Well! thus far we are come: although we are secured in fundamental points from involuntary error, by the plain, express, and dogmatical places of Scripture, yet, in other things, we are not, but may be invincibly mistaken, because of the obscurity and difficulty in the controverted parts of Scripture, by reason of the uncertainty of the means of its interpretation; since tradition is of an uncertain reputation, and sometimes evidently false; councils are contradictory to each other, and therefore, certainly, are equally deceived many of them,

and therefore all may; and then the popes of Rome are very likely to mislead us, but cannot ascertain us of truth in matter of question; and in this world we believe in part, and prophesy in part; and this imperfection shall never be done away, till we be translated to a more glorious state; either we must throw our chances, and get truth by accident or predestination, or else we must lie safe in a mutual toleration, and private liberty of persuasion, unless some other anchor can be thought upon, where we may fasten our floating vessels, and ride safely.

SECTION VIII.

Of the Disability of Fathers or Writers Ecclesiastical, to determine our Questions, with certainty and truth.

THERE are some that think they can determine all questions in the world by two or three sayings of the Fathers, or by the consent of so many as they will please to call a concurrent testimony. But this consideration will soon be at an end; for, if the fathers, when they are witnesses of tradition, do not always speak truth, as it happened in the case of Papias and his numerous followers, for almost three ages together, then is their testimony more improbable when they dispute or write commentaries.

2. The fathers of the first ages spake unitedly

concerning divers questions of secret theology, and yet were afterwards contradicted by one personage of great reputation, whose credit had so much influence upon the world, as to make the contrary opinion become popular: why, then, may not we have the same liberty, when so plain an uncertainty is in their persuasions, and so great contrariety in their doctrines? But this is evident in the case of absolute predestination, which, till St. Austin's time, no man preached, but all taught the contrary; and yet the reputation of this one excellent man altered the scene. But, if he might dissent from so general a doctrine, why may not we do so too, it being pretended that he is so excellent a precedent to be followed, if we have the same reason? He had no more authority nor dispensation to dissent, than any bishop hath now. And therefore St. Austin hath dealt ingenuously; and as he took this liberty to himself, so he denies it not to others, but, indeed, forces them to preserve their own liberty. And, therefore, when St. Jerome* had a great mind to follow the fathers in a point that he fancied, and the best security he had was, *Patiaris me cum talibus errare*, "You may allow me to err with such men," St. Austin would not endure it, but answered his reason, and neglected the authority. And therefore it had been most unreasonable that we should do that now, though in his behalf, which he, towards greater personages, (for so they were then,) at that time judged to be unreasonable. It is a plain recession from antiquity, which was determined by the council of Florence, "that the souls of the saints are received imme-

* Sess. ult.

diately in heaven, and clearly behold God himself, three in one;”* as who please to try, may see it dogmatically resolved to the contrary by Justin Martyr, † Iræneus, ‡ by Origen, § St. Chrysostom, || Theodoret, ¶ Arethas Cæsariensis, * Euthymius, † who may answer for the Greek church; and it is plain that it was the opinion of the Greek church, by that great difficulty the Romans had of bringing the Greeks to subscribe to the Florentine council, where the Latins acted their masterpiece of wit and stratagem, the greatest that hath been till the famous and superpolitic design of Trent. And for the Latin church, Tertulian † St. Ambrose, § St. Austin, || St. Hilary, ¶ Prudentius, * Lactantius, † Victorinus Martyr, ‡ and St. Bernard § are known to be of opinion that the souls of the saints are *in abditis receptaculis, et exterioribus atriiis*, “in secret receptacles and outer courts,” where they expect the resurrection of their bodies, and the glorification of their souls; and though they all believe them to be happy, yet they enjoy not the beatific vision before the resurrection. Now, there being so full a consent of Fathers, (for many more may be added,) and the decree of pope John XXII. besides, who was so

* “Piorum animas purgatas, &c. mox in cælum recipi, et intueri clarè ipsum Deum trinum et unum sicuti est.”

† Q. 60, ad Christian. ‡ Lib. v. § Hom. vii. in Levit.

|| Hom. xxxix. in 1 Cor. ¶ In c. 11, ad Heb.

* In c. 6, ad Apoc. † In 16, c. Luc.

‡ Lib. iv. adv. Mar. § Lib. ii. de Cain. c. 2.

|| Ep. iii. ad Fortunatianum. ¶ In Psal. 138.

* De exeq. Defunctor. † Lib. vii. c. 21. ‡ In c. 6, Apoc.

§ Serm. iii. de Om. Sanctis. Vid. enim St. Aug. in Enchir. c. 108, et lib. xii. de Civit. Dei. c. 9, et in Ps. 36, et in lib. i. Retract. c. 14. Vid. insuper testimonia quæ collegit Spala. lib. v. c. 8. n. 93, de Repub. Eccl. et Sixt. Senen. lib. 6, Annot. 345.

confident for his decree, that he commanded the university of Paris to swear that they would preach it and no other, and that none should be promoted to degrees in theology that did not swear the like, (as Occham,* Gerson,† Marsilius,‡ and Adrianus § report.) Since it is esteemed lawful to dissent from all these, I hope no man will be so unjust to press other men to consent to an authority which he himself judges to be incompetent. These two great instances are enough; but if more were necessary, I could instance, in the opinion of the Chiliasts, maintained by the second and third centuries, and disavowed ever since; in the doctrine of communicating infants, taught and practised as necessary by the fourth and fifth centuries, and detested by the Latin church in all the following ages; in the variety of opinions concerning the very form of baptism; some keeping close to the institution and the words of its first sanction, others affirming it to be sufficient, if it be administered in *nomine Christi*;|| particularly St. Ambrose, pope Nicholas I. V. Bede ¶ and St. Bernard,* besides some writers of after ages, as Hugo de S. Victore, and the doctors generally, his contemporaries. And it would not be inconsiderable to observe, that if any synod, general, national, or provincial, be receded from by the church of the later age, (as there have been very many,) then, so many fathers as were then assembled and united in opinion, are esteemed no authority to determine our persuasions. Now, suppose two hundred fathers assembled in

* In Oper. nonag. dierum.

+ Serm. de Paschat.

‡ In iv. sent. q. 13. a 3.

§ In 4, de Sacram. Confirmat.

|| De Consecrat. dist. 4, c. à quod in Judeo.

¶ In c. 10, Act.

* Ep. 340.

such a council, if all they had writ books and authorities, two hundred authorities had been alleged in confirmation of an opinion, it would have made a mighty noise, and loaded any man with an insupportable prejudice that should dissent: and yet every opinion maintained against the authority of any one council, though but provincial, is, in its proportion, such a violent recession and neglect of the authority and doctrine of so many fathers as were then assembled, who did as much declare their opinion in those assemblies, by their suffrages, as if they had writ it in so many books; and their opinion is more considerable in the assembly than in their writings, because it was more deliberate, assisted, united, and dogmatical. In pursuance of this observation, it is to be noted, by way of instance, that St. Austin, and two hundred and seventeen bishops, and all their successors,* for a whole age together, did consent in denying appeals to Rome; and yet the authority of so many fathers (all true catholics) is of no force now at Rome, in this question; but if it be in a matter they like, one of these fathers alone is sufficient. The doctrine of St. Austin alone brought in the festival and veneration of the assumption of the blessed virgin, and the hard sentence passed at Rome upon unbaptized infants, and the Dominican opinion concerning predetermination, derived from him alone, as from

* Vid. Epist. Bonifacii II. apud Nicolinum, tom. ii. Concil. pag. 544, et exemplar precum Eulalii apud eundem, ibid. p. 525. Qui anathematizat omnes decessores suos, qui, in ea causa, Roma se opponendo rectæ fidei regulam prævaricati sunt; inter quos tamen fuit Augustinus, quem pro maledicto Cælestinus tacite agnoscit, admittendo sc. exemplar precum. Vid. Doctor. Marta. de Jurisdict. part. iv. p. 273, et Erasm. Annot. in Hieron. præfat. in Daniel.

their original; so that if a father speaks for them, it is wonderful to see what tragedies are stirred up against them that dissent, as is to be seen in that excellent nothing of Campian's ten reasons. But if the fathers be against them, then "the fathers have, in some things, mistaken in no slight degree, and some of them most egregiously,"* says Belarmine; and it is certain, the chiefest of them have foully erred. Nay, Posa, Salmeron, and Wadding, in the question of the immaculate conception, make no scruple to dissent from antiquity, to prefer new doctors before the old; and, to justify themselves, bring instances in which the church of Rome had determined against the fathers. And it is not excuse enough to say that, singly, the fathers may err; but if they concur they are certain testimony: for there is no question this day disputed, by persons that are willing to be tried by the fathers, so generally attested on either side, as some points are which both sides dislike severally or conjunctly: and therefore, it is not honest for either side to press the authority of the fathers, as a concluding argument in matter of dispute, unless themselves will be content to submit, in all things, to the testimony of an equal number of them; which I am certain neither side will do.

3. If I should reckon all the particular reasons against the certainty of this topic, it would be more than needs as to this question; and therefore I will abstain from all disparagement of those worthy personages, who were excellent lights to their several dioceses and cures. And therefore I will

* "Patres in quibusdam non leviter lapsi sunt; constat, quosdam ex præcipuis."—De Verb. Dei, lib. iii. c. 10, § dices.

not instance, that Clemens Alexandrinus* taught, that Christ felt no hunger or thirst, but eat only to make demonstration of the verity of his human nature; nor that St. Hilary taught that Christ, in his sufferings, had no sorrow; nor that Origen taught the pains of hell not to have an eternal duration; nor that St. Cyprian taught rebaptization; nor that Athenagoras condemned second marriages; nor that St. John Damascen said, Christ only prayed in appearance, not really and in truth: I will let them all rest in peace, and their memories in honour. For if I should inquire into the particular probations of this article, I must do to them as I should be forced to do now: if any man should say that the writings of the schoolmen were excellent argument and authority to determine men's persuasions, I must consider their writings, and observe their defailances, their contradictions, the weakness of their arguments, the mis-allegations of Scripture, their inconsequent deductions, their false opinions, and all the weaknesses of humanity, and the failings of their persons, which no good man is willing to do, unless he be compelled to it by a pretence that they are infallible, or that they are followed by men even into errors or impiety. And, therefore, since there is enough in the former instances to cure any such mispersuasion and prejudice, I will instance, in the innumerable particularities that might persuade us to keep our liberty entire, or to use it discreetly. For it is not to be denied but that great advantages are to be made by their writings, *et probabile est quod omnibus, quod pluribus, quod sapientibus videtur*; if one wise man says a thing, it is an argument to me to believe it in its

* Strom. lib. iii. et vi.

degree of probation ; that is, proportionable to such an assent as the authority of a wise man can produce, and when there is nothing against it that is greater ; and so in proportion, higher and higher, as more wise men (such as the old doctors were) do affirm it. But that which I complain of is, that we look upon wise men that lived long ago, with so much veneration and mistake, that we reverence them, not for having been wise men, but that they lived long since. But, when the question is concerning authority, there must be something to build it on ; a Divine commandment, human sanction, excellency of spirit, and greatness of understanding, on which things all human authority is regularly built. But, now, if we had lived in their times, (for so we must look upon them now, as they did who, without prejudice, beheld them,) I suppose we should then have beheld them as we, in England, look on those prelates who are of great reputation for learning and sanctity : here only is the difference ; when persons are living, their authority is depressed by their personal defailances and the contrary interests of their contemporaries, which disband, when they are dead, and leave their credit entire, upon the reputation of those excellent books and monuments of learning and piety which are left behind : but beyond this, why the bishop of Hippo shall have greater authority than the bishop of the Canaries, *cæteris paribus*, I understand not. For did they that lived (to instance) in St. Austin's time, believe all that he wrote ? If they did they were much to blame, or else himself was to blame for retracting much of it a little before his death : and if, while he lived, his affirmative was no more authority than derives

from the credit of one very wise man, against whom, also, very wise men were opposed, I know not why his authority should prevail further now ; for there is nothing added to the strength of his reason since that time, but only that he hath been in great esteem with posterity. And if that be all, why the opinion of the following ages shall be of more force than the opinion of the first ages, against whom St. Austin, in many things, clearly did oppose himself, I see no reason ; or whether the first ages were against him, or no, yet that he is approved by the following ages is no better argument ; for it makes his authority not to be innate, but derived from the opinion of others, and so to be precarious, and to depend upon others, who, if they should change their opinions, and such examples there have been many, then there were nothing left to urge our consent to him ; which, when it was at the best, was only this, because he had the good fortune to be believed by them that came after, he must be so still ; and because it was no argument for the old doctors before him, this will not be very good in his behalf. The same I say of any company of them ; I say not so of all of them ; it is to no purpose to say it, for there is no question this day in contestation, in the explication of which all the old writers did consent. In the assignation of the canon of Scripture, they never did consent for six hundred years together ; and then, by that time the bishops had agreed indifferently well, and but indifferently, upon that, they fell out in twenty more ; and except it be in the apostles' creed, and articles of such nature, there is nothing which may, with any colour, be called a consent, much less tradition universal.

4. But I will rather choose to show the uncertainty of this topic, by such an argument which was not in the fathers' power to help; such as makes no invasion upon their great reputation, which I desire should be preserved as sacred as it ought. For other things, let who please, read Mr. Daillé, "On the true Use of the Fathers;" but I shall only consider, that the writings of the fathers have been so corrupted by the intermixture of heretics, so many false books put forth in their names, so many of their writings lost which would more clearly have explicated their sense; and, at last, an open profession made, and a trade of making the fathers speak, not what themselves thought, but what other men pleased; that it is a great instance of God's providence, and care of his church, that we have so much good preserved in the writings which we receive from the fathers, and that all truth is not as clear gone as is the certainty of their great authority and reputation.

The publishing books with the inscription of great names, began in St. Paul's time; for some had troubled the church of Thessalonica with a false epistle, in St. Paul's name, against the inconvenience of which he arms them, in 2 *Thess.* ii. 1. : and this increased daily in the church. The Arians wrote an epistle to Constantine,* under the name of Athanasius, and the Eutychians wrote against Cyril of Alexandria, under the name of Theodoret; and of the age in which the seventh synod was kept, Erasmus reports, "That books, under the assumed name of illustrious men, were

* Apolog. Athenas. ad. Constant.

everywhere to be met with.”* It was then a public business, and a trick not more base than public: but it was more ancient than so, and it is memorable in the books attributed to St. Basil, containing thirty chapters “concerning the Holy Spirit,” whereof, fifteen were plainly added by another hand, under the covert of St. Basil, as appears in the difference of the style, in the impertinent digressions, against the custom of that excellent man, by some passages contradictory to others of St. Basil, by citing Meletius as dead before him, who yet lived, three years after him,† and by the very frame and manner of the discourse; and yet it was so handsomely carried, and so well served the purposes of men, that it was quoted under the title of St. Basil by many, but without naming the number of chapters, and by St. John Damascen, in these words: “Basil, in a work containing thirty chapters, to Amphilochius;”‡ and to the same purpose, and in the number of twenty-seven and twenty-nine chapters, he is cited by Photius,§ by Euthymius, by Burchard, by Zonaras, Balsamon, and Nicephorus; but for this, see more in Erasmus’s preface upon this book of St. Basil. There is an epistle goes still under the name of St. Jerome, to the virgin Demetrias, and is of great use in the question of predestination, with its appendices, and yet a very learned man,|| eight hundred years ago, did believe it to be written by a

* “*Libris falso celebrium virorum titulo commendatis scatere omnia.*”—Vid. Baron. A.D. 553.

† Vid. Baron. in Annal.

‡ “*Basilus in opere triginta capitum de Spiritu S. ad Amphilochium.*”—Lib. i. de Imagin. Orat. 1.

§ Nomocan. tit. i. cap. 3.

|| V. Beda de Gratiâ Christi. adv. Julianum.

Pelagian, and undertakes to confute divers parts of it, as being high and confident Pelagianism, and written by Julianus Episc. Eclanensis;* but Gregorius Ariminensis, from St. Austin, affirms it to have been written by Pelagius himself. I might instance in too many. There is not any one of the fathers who is esteemed author of any considerable number of books, that hath escaped untouched: but the abuse in this kind hath been so evident, that now, if any interested person, of any side, be pressed with an authority very pregnant against him, he thinks to escape by accusing the edition, or the author, or the hands it passed through, or, at last, he therefore suspects it, because it makes against him: both sides being resolved that they are in the right, the authorities that they admit they will believe not to be against them; and they which are too plainly against them shall be no authorities: and, indeed, the whole world hath been so much abused, that every man thinks he hath reason to suspect whatsoever is against him, that is, what he please; which proceeding only produces this truth, that there neither is, nor can be any certainty, nor very much probability, in such allegations.

But there is a worse mischief than this, besides those very many which are not yet discovered, which like the pestilence destroys in the dark, and grows into inconvenience more insensibly and more irremediably; and that is, corruption of particular places, by inserting words and altering them to contrary senses; a thing which the fathers of the sixth general synod complained of concerning the

* Greg. Arim. in ii. sent. dist. xxvi. q. 1. a. 3.

constitutions of St. Clement, “in which certain corruptions of the true faith are introduced by persons heretically inclined, which have obscured the beauty of the divine decrees:”* and so also have his recognitions, so have his epistles been used, if, at least, they were his at all; particularly the fifth decretal epistle, that goes under the name of St. Clement, in which community of wives is taught upon the authority of St. Luke, saying, the first Christians had all things common; if all things, then wives also, says the epistle: a forgery like to have been done by some Nicolaitan, or other impure person. There is an epistle of Cyril extant, to Successus, bishop of Diocæsarea, in which he relates, that he was asked by Budus, bishop of Emessa, whether he did approve of the epistle of Athanasius to Epictetus, bishop of Corinth, and that his answer was: “If the copies you have are not corrupted, for many are found to be so by the enemies of the church.”† And this was done even while the authors themselves were alive; for so Dionysius of Corinth complained that his writings were corrupted by heretics, and Pope Leo, that his epistle to Flavianus was perverted by the Greeks: and in the synod of Constantinople, ‡ before quoted, (the sixth synod,) Macarius, and his disciples, were convicted “of garbling, or corrupting, the writings

* “Quibus jam olim, ab iis qui a fidè aliena sentiunt, adulterina quædam etiam pietate aliena introducta sunt, quæ divinarum nobis decretorum elegantem et venustam speciem obscurarunt.”—Can. ii.

† “Si hæc apud vos scripta non sint adultera; nam plura ex his ab hostibus Ecclesiæ deprehenduntur esse depravata.”—Euseb. lib. iv. c. 23.

‡ Act. viii. vid. etiam Synod. vii. act. 4.

of the saints." * Thus the third chapter of St. Cyprian's book, "On the Unity of the Church," in the edition of Pamelius, suffered great alteration. These words, *primatus Petro datur*, "the primacy is given to St. Peter," wholly inserted; and these, *super cathedram Petri fundata est ecclesia*, "the church is founded upon the chair of St. Peter:" and whereas it was before, *super unum ædificat ecclesiam Christus*, "Christ builds his church upon one;" that not being enough, they have made it *super illum unum*, "upon that one." Now, these additions are against the faith of all old copies before Minutius and Pamelius, and against Gratian, even after himself had been chastised by the Roman correctors, the commissaries of Gregory XIII.; as is to be seen where these words are alleged, *Decret. c. 24, q. 1. can. Loquitur Dominus ad Petrum*. So that we may say of Cyprian's works, as Pamelius himself said concerning his writings, and the writings of other of the fathers; saith he: "Whence we gather, that the writings of Cyprian, and others of the fathers, are in various ways corrupted by the transcribers." † But Gratian himself could do as fine a feat when he listed, or else somebody did it for him; and it was in this very question, their beloved article of the pope's supremacy; for he quotes these words out of St. Ambrose: "They do not hold the inheritance of Peter, who do not possess the seat of Peter:" ‡ *fidem*, "faith," not *sedem*,

* "Quod sanctorum testimonia aut truncârint aut depravârint."

† "Cypriani scripta ut et aliorum Veterum à librariis variè fuisse interpolata."—Annot. Ciprian. super. Concil. Carthag. n.1.

‡ "Non habent Petri hæreditatem, qui non habent Petri sedem."

“seat,” it is in St. Ambrose; but this error was made authentic by being inserted into the code of the law of the catholic church; and considering how little notice the clergy had of antiquity, but what was transmitted to them by Gratian, it will be no great wonder that all this part of the world swallowed such a bole, and the opinion that was wrapped in it. But I need not instance in Gratian any further, but refer any one that desires to be satisfied concerning this collection of his, to Augustinus, archbishop of Tarracon, in *Emendatione Gratiani*, where he shall find fopperies and corruptions, good store, noted by that learned man: but that the *Indices Expurgatorii*, commanded by authority, * and practised with public licence, profess to alter and correct the sayings of the fathers, and to reconcile them to the catholic sense, by putting in and leaving out, is so great an imposture, so unchristian a proceeding, that it hath made the faith of all books and all authors justly to be suspected. For considering their infinite diligence and great opportunity, as having had most of the copies in their own hands, together with an unsatisfiable desire of prevailing in their right, or in their wrong, they have made an absolute destruction of this topic; and when the fathers speak Latin, † or breathe in a Roman diocess, although the providence of God does infinitely overrule them, and that it is next to a miracle, that in the

* Vid. Ind. Expurg. Belg. in Bertram. et Fland. Hispan. Portugal. Neopolitan. Romanum. Junium in pefat. ad Ind. Expurg. Belg. Hasenmuserum, p. 275. Withlington, Apolog. num. 449.

† Videat Lector Andream Cristovium, in Bello Jesuitico, et Joh. Reynolds, in lib. de Idol. Rom.

monuments of antiquity there is no more found that can pretend for their advantage than there is, which, indeed, is infinitely inconsiderable; yet, our questions and uncertainties are infinitely multiplied, instead of a probable and reasonable determination. For since the Latins always complained of the Greeks, for privately corrupting the ancient records, both of councils and fathers,* and now the Latins make open profession, not of corrupting, but of correcting their writings, (that is the word,) and at the most it was but a human authority, and that of persons not always learned, and very often deceived; the whole matter is so unreasonable, that it is not worth a further disquisition. But if any one desires to inquire further, he may be satisfied in Erasmus; in Henry and Robert Stephens, in the prefaces before the editions of Fathers, and their observation upon them; in Bellarmine, *de Script. Eccles.*; in Dr. Reynolds, *de Libris Apocryphis*; in Scaliger; and Robert Coke of Leeds, in Yorkshire, in his book *de Censura Patrum*.

* Vid. Ep. Nicolai ad Michael. Imperat.

SECTION IX.

Of the incompetency of the Church in its diffusive capacity to be judge of Controversies, and the impertinency of that pretence of the Spirit.

AND now, after all these considerations of the several topics, tradition, councils, popes, and ancient doctors of the church, I suppose it will not be necessary to consider the authority of the church apart; for the church either speaks by tradition, or by a representative body in a council, by popes, or by the fathers: for the church is not a chimæra, not a shadow, but a company of men believing in Jesus Christ, which men either speak by themselves immediately, or by their rulers, or by their proxies and representatives. Now, I have considered it in all senses but in its diffusive capacity; in which capacity she cannot be supposed to be a judge of controversies, both because in that capacity she cannot teach us, as also because if by a judge we mean all the church diffused in all its parts and members, so there can be no controversy; for if all men be of that opinion, then there is no question contested: if they be not all of a mind, how can the whole diffusive catholic church be pretended in defiance of any one article, where the diffusive church being divided, part goes this way and part another? But if it be said, the greatest part must carry it; besides that it is im-

possible for us to know which way the greatest part goes, in many questions, it is not always true that the greater part is the best; sometimes the contrary is most certain, and it is often very probable, but it is always possible. And when paucity of followers was objected to Liberius, he gave this in answer: "There was a time when but three children of the captivity resisted the king's decree."* And Athanasius† wrote on purpose against those that did judge of truth by multitudes; and indeed it concerned him so to do, when he alone stood in the gap against the numerous armies of the Arians.

But if there could, in this case, be any distinct consideration of the church, yet to know which is the true church is so hard to be found out, that the greatest questions of Christendom are judged before you can get to your judge, and then there is no need of him. For those questions which are concerning the judge of questions, must be determined before you can submit to his judgment; and if you can yourselves determine those great questions, which consist much in universalities, then also you may determine the particulars, as being of less difficulty. And he that considers how many notes there are given to know the true church (no less than fifteen by Bellarmine) and concerning every one of them, almost, whether it be a certain note or no, there are very many questions and uncertainties; and when it is resolved which are the notes, there is more dispute about the application of these notes than of the *Πρωτοκρινόμενον*, (original question,) will quickly be satisfied that he

* Theod. lib. ii. c. 16, Hist.

† Tom. ii.

had better sit still than to go round about a difficult and troublesome passage, and at last get no further, but return to the place from whence he first set out. And there is one note amongst the rest,—holiness of doctrine ;—that is, so as to have nothing false either in faith or morals, (for so Bellarmine explicates it,) which supposes all your controversies judged before they can be tried by the authority of the church ; and when we have found out all true doctrine, (for that is necessary to judge of the church by, that as St Austin's council is, “ We should look for the church in the words of Christ;”)* then we are bound to follow because we judge it true, not because the church hath said it :—and this is to judge of the church by her doctrine ; not of the doctrine by the church. And, indeed, it is the best and only way ; but then how to judge of that doctrine will be afterwards inquired into. In the mean time, the church, that is, the governors of the churches, are to judge for themselves, and for all those who cannot judge for themselves. For others, they must know that their governors judge for them too, so as to keep them in peace and obedience, though not for the determination of their private persuasions ; for the economy of the church requires that her authority be received by all her children. Now this authority is divine in its original, for it derives immediately from Christ ; but it is human in its ministration. We are to be led like men, not like beasts : a rule is prescribed for the guides themselves to follow, as we are to follow the guides ; and although, in matters indeterminate or ambiguous, the presumption lies on behalf

* “ *Ecclesiam in verbis Christi investigemus.*”

of the governors; (for we do nothing for authority, if we suffer it not to weigh that part down of an indifferency and a question which she chooses;) yet if there be a manifest error, as it often happens, or if the church governors themselves be rent into innumerable sects, as it is this day in Christendom, then we are to be as wise as we can in choosing our guides, and then to follow so long as that reason remains for which we first chose them. And even in that government which was an immediate sanction of God, I mean the ecclesiastical government of the synagogue, where God had consigned the high priest's authority, with a menace of death to them that should disobey, that all the world might know the meaning and extent of such precepts, and that there is a limit beyond which they cannot command, and we ought not to obey; it came once to pass, that if the priest had been obeyed in his conciliary degrees, the whole nation had been bound to believe the condemnation of our blessed Saviour to have been just; and, at another time, the apostles must no more have preached in the name of Jesus. But here was manifest error; and the case is the same to every man that invincibly, and therefore innocently, believes it so. 'Obey God rather than man,' is our rule in such cases. For although every man is bound to follow his guide, unless he believes his guide to mislead him, yet when he sees reason against his guide, it is best to follow his reason; for though in this he may fall into error, yet he will escape the sin—he may do violence to truth, but never to his own conscience; and an honest error is better than an hypocritical profession of truth, or a violent luxation of the understanding; since, if he retains his honesty and

simplicity, he cannot err in a matter of faith or absolute necessity. God's goodness hath secured all honest and careful persons from that—for other things he must follow the best guides he can, and he cannot be obliged to follow better than God hath given him.

And there is yet another way pretended, of infallible expositions of Scripture, and that is, by the Spirit: but of this I shall say no more, but that it is impertinent to this question. For put case, the Spirit is given to some men, enabling them to expound infallibly; yet because this is but a private assistance, and cannot be proved to others, this infallible assistance may determine my own assent, but shall not enable me to prescribe to others; because it were unreasonable I should, unless I could prove to him that I have the Spirit, and so can secure him from being deceived, if he relies upon me. In this case I may say, as St. Paul, in the case of praying with the Spirit: 'He verily giveth thanks well; but the other is not edified.' So that, let this pretence be as true as it will, it is sufficient that it cannot be of consideration in this question.

The result of all this—since it is not reasonable to limit and to prescribe to all men's understandings, by any external rule in the interpretation of difficult places of Scripture, which is our rule; since no man, nor company of men, is secure from error, or can secure us that they are free from malice, interest, and design; and since all the ways by which we usually are taught, as tradition, councils, decretals, &c. are very uncertain in the matter, in their authority, in their being legitimate and natural, and many of them certainly false, and nothing certain but the divine authority of Scripture, in which

all that is necessary is plain, and much of that that is not necessary, is very obscure, intricate, and involved; either we must set up our rest only upon articles of faith and plain places, and be in-curious of other obscurer revelations; (which is a duty for persons of private understandings, and of no public function;) or, if we will search further, (to which, in some measure, the guides of others are obliged,) it remains, we inquire how men may determine themselves, so as to do their duty to God and not to disserve the church, that every such man may do what he is bound to, in his personal capacity, and as he relates to the public as a public minister.

SECTION X.

Of the Authority of Reason, and that it proceeding upon best grounds is the best judge.

HERE then I consider, that although no man may be trusted to judge for all others, unless this person were infallible and authorised so to do, which no man nor no company of men is, yet every man may be trusted to judge for himself; I say every man that can judge at all; (as for others, they are to be saved as it pleaseth God;) but others that can judge at all must either choose their guides, who shall judge for them; (and then they oftentimes do the wisest, and always save themselves a labour, but then they choose too;) or if they be persons of greater understanding, then they are to choose for

themselves in particular what the others do in general, and by choosing their guide: and for this any man may be better trusted for himself than any man can be for another: for, in this case, his own interest is most concerned; and ability is not so necessary as honesty, which certainly every man will best preserve in his own case, and to himself; (and, if he does not, it is he that must smart for it;) and it is not required of us not to be in error, but that we endeavour to avoid it.

2. He that follows his guide so far as his reason goes along with him; or which is all one, he that follows his own reason, (not guided only by natural arguments, but by divine revelation, and all other good means,) hath great advantages over him that gives himself wholly to follow any human guide whatsoever; because he follows all their reasons and his own too: he follows them till reason leaves them, or till it seems so to him, which is all one to his particular; for, by the confession of all sides, an erroneous conscience binds him, when a right guide does not bind him. But he that gives himself up wholly to a guide, is oftentimes (I mean, if he be a discerning person) forced to do violence to his own understanding, and to lose all the benefit of his own discretion, that he may reconcile his reason to his guide. And of this we see infinite inconveniences in the church of Rome; for we find persons of great understanding oftentimes so amused with the authority of their church, that it is pity to see them sweat in answering some objections, which they know not how to do, but yet believe they must, because the church hath said it. So that if they read, study, pray, search records, and use all the means of art and industry in the pursuit of truth,

it is not with a resolution to follow that which shall seem truth to them, but to confirm what before they did believe; and if any argument shall seem unanswerable against any article of their church, they are to take it for a temptation, not for an illumination, and they are to use it accordingly; which makes them make the devil to be the author of that which God's Spirit hath assisted them to find, in the use of lawful means, and the search of truth; and when the devil of falsehood is like to be cast out by God's Spirit, they say that it is through Belzebub, which was one of the worst things that ever the Pharisees said or did. And was it not a plain stifling of the just and reasonable demands made by the emperor, by the kings of France and Spain, and by the ablest divines among them, which was used in the council of Trent, when they demanded the restitution of priests to their liberty of marriage, the use of the chalice, the service in the vulgar tongue; and these things not only in pursuance of truth, but for other great and good ends, even to take away an infinite scandal, and a great schism? And yet, when they themselves did profess it, all the world knew these reasonable demands were denied merely upon a politic consideration; yet that these things should be framed into articles and decrees of faith, and they for ever after bound, not only not to desire the same things, but to think the contrary to be divine truths, never was reason made more a slave, or more useless. Must not all the world say, either they must be great hypocrites, or do great violence to their understanding, when they not only cease from their claim, but must also believe it to be unjust? If the use of their reason had not been restrained by

the tyranny and imperiousness of their guide, what the emperor, and the kings, and their theologues would have done, they can best judge who consider the reasonableness of the demand, and the unreasonableness of the denial. But we see many wise men, who, with their *optandum esset ut ecclesia licentiam daret, &c.*, proclaim to all the world, that in some things they consent and do not consent, and do not heartily believe what they are bound publicly to profess; and they themselves would clearly see a difference, if a contrary decree should be framed by the church; they would, with an infinite greater confidence, rest themselves in other propositions than what they must believe as the case now stands; and they would find that the authority of a church is a prejudice as often as a free and modest use of reason is a temptation.

3. God will have no man pressed with another's inconveniences in matters spiritual and intellectual—no man's salvation to depend upon another; and every tooth that eats sour grapes shall be set on edge for itself, and for none else; and this is remarkable in that saying of God by the prophet: 'If the prophet ceases to tell my people of their sins, and leads them into error, the people shall die in their sins, and the blood of them I will require at the hands of that prophet.'† Meaning, that God hath so set the prophets to guide us; that we also are to follow them by a voluntary assent, by an act of choice and election. For, although accidentally and occasionally the sheep may perish by the shepherd's fault, yet that which hath the chiefest influence upon their final condition, is their own

* "It were to be wished, that the church allowed, &c."

† Ezek. xxxiii.

act and election; and therefore God hath so appointed guides to us, that if we perish it may be accounted upon both our scores, upon our own and the guides' too; which says plainly, that although we are intrusted to our guides, yet we are intrusted to ourselves too. Our guides must direct us; and yet, if they fail, God hath not so left us to them, but he hath given us enough to ourselves to discover their failings, and our own duties in all things necessary; and for other things we must do as well as we can. But it is best to follow our guides, if we know nothing better; but if we do, it is better to follow the pillar of fire, than a pillar of cloud, though both possibly may lead to Canaan; but then, also, it is possible that it may be otherwise. But I am sure, if I do my own best; then, if it be best to follow a guide, and if it be also necessary, I shall be sure, by God's grace and my own endeavour, to get to it; but if I, without the particular engagement of my understanding, follow a guide, possibly I may be guilty of extreme negligence, or I may extinguish God's Spirit, or do violence to my own reason. And whether intrusting myself wholly with another be not a laying up my talent in a napkin, I am not so well assured: I am certain the other is not. And since another man's answering for me will not hinder, but that I also shall answer for myself; as it concerns him to see he does not wilfully misguide me, so it concerns me to see that he shall not, if I can help it; if I cannot, it will not be required at my hands: whether it be his fault or his invincible error, I shall be charged with neither.

4. This is no other than what is enjoined as a duty. For since God will be justified with a free

obedience—and there is an obedience of understanding as well as of will and affection—it is of great concernment, as to be willing to believe whatever God says, so also to inquire diligently whether the will of God be so as it is pretended. Even our acts of understanding are acts of choice; and therefore it is commanded, as a duty, to ‘search the Scriptures, to try the spirits, whether they be of God or no, of ourselves to be able to judge what is right, to prove all things, and to retain that which is best.’* For he that resolves not to consider, resolves not to be careful whether he have truth or no, and therefore hath an affection indifferent to truth or falsehood, which is all one as if he did choose amiss; and since, when things are truly propounded and made reasonable and intelligible, we cannot but assent, and then it is no thanks to us; we have no way to give our wills to God in matters of belief, but by our industry in searching it, and examining the grounds upon which the propounders build their dictates. And the not doing it, is oftentimes a cause that God gives a man over *εἰς νοῦν ἀδόκιμον*, into a reprobate and undiscerning mind and understanding.

5. And this very thing (though men will not understand it) is the perpetual practice of all men in the world, that can give a reasonable account of their faith. The very Catholic church itself is *rationalis et ubiq. diffusa*, saith Optatus, ‘reasonable, as well as diffused every where.’ For, take the proselytes of the church of Rome—even in their greatest submission of understanding they seem to them-

* Matt. xv. 10; John, v. 40; 1 John, iv. 1; Ephes. v. 17; Luke, xxiv. 25; Rom. iii. 11, i. 28; Apoc. ii. 2; Acts. xvii. 11.

selves to follow their reason most of all: for if you tell them, Scripture and tradition are their rules to follow, they will believe you when they know a reason for it; and if they take you upon your word, they have a reason for that too: either they believe you a learned man, or a good man, or that you can have no ends upon them, or something that is of an equal height to fit their understandings. If you tell them they must believe the church, you must tell them why they are bound to it; and if you quote Scripture to prove it, you must give them leave to judge whether the words alleged speak your sense or no, and therefore to dissent if they say no such thing; and although all men are not wise, and proceed discreetly, yet all make their choice some way or other. He that chooses to please his fancy, takes his choice as much as he that chooses prudently. And no man speaks more unreasonably than he that denies to men the use of their reason in choice of their religion: for that I may, by the way, remove the common prejudice, reason and authority are not things incompetent or repugnant, especially when the authority is infallible and supreme; for there is no greater reason in the world than to believe such an authority. But then we must consider, whether every authority that pretends to be such, is so indeed: and therefore, *Deus dixit, ergo hoc verum est*, "God hath said it, therefore it is true," is the greatest demonstration in the world for things of this nature. But it is not so in human dictates; and yet reason and human authority are not enemies: for it is a good argument for us to follow such an opinion, because it is made sacred by the authority of councils and ecclesiastical tradition,

and sometimes it is the best reason we have in a question, and then it is to be strictly followed; but there may also be, at other times, a reason greater than it that speaks against it, and then the authority must not carry it. But then the difference is not between reason and authority, but between this reason and that, which is greater; for authority is a very good reason, and is to prevail, unless a stronger comes and disarms it, but then it must give place. So that in this question, by reason, I do not mean a distinct topic, but a transcendent that runs through all topics; for reason, like logic, is instrument of all things else; and when revelation, and philosophy, and public experience, and all other grounds of probability or demonstration, have supplied us with matter, then reason does but make use of them: that is, in plain terms, there being so many ways of arguing, so many sects, such differing interests, such variety of authority, so many pretences, and so many false beliefs, it concerns every wise man to consider which is the best argument, which proposition relies upon the truest grounds: and if this were not his only way, why do men dispute and urge arguments, why do they cite councils and fathers, why do they allege Scripture and tradition, and all this on all sides, and to contrary purposes? If we must judge, then we must use our reason; if we must not judge, why do they produce evidence? Let them leave disputing, and decree propositions magisterially: but then we may choose whether we will believe them or no; or, if they say we must believe them, they must prove it, and tell us why. And all these disputes concerning tradition, councils, fathers, &c., are not arguments against or besides

reason, but contestations and pretences to the best arguments, and the most certain satisfaction of our reason. But then all these coming into question, submit themselves to reason; that is, to be judged by human understanding, upon the best grounds and information it can receive. So that Scripture, tradition, councils, and fathers, are the evidence in a question, but reason is the judge; that is, we being the persons that are to be persuaded, we must see that we be persuaded reasonably. And it is unreasonable to assent to a lesser evidence, when a greater and clearer is propounded: but of that every man for himself is to take cognizance, if he be able to judge; if he be not, he is not bound under the tie of necessity to know any thing of it. That that is necessary shall be certainly conveyed to him: God, that best can, will certainly take care for that; for if he does not, it becomes to be not necessary; or, if it should still remain necessary, and he damned for not knowing it, and yet to know it be not in his power, then who can help it? there can be no further care in this business. In other things, there being no absolute and prime necessity, we are left to our liberty to judge that way that makes best demonstration of our piety, and of our love to God and truth; not that way that is always the best argument of an excellent understanding, for this may be a blessing, but the other only is a duty.

And now that we are pitched upon that way which is most natural and reasonable in determination of ourselves, rather than of questions, which are often indeterminable, since right reason, proceeding upon the best grounds it can, viz. of divine revelation and human authority and proba-

bility, is our guide; and supposing the assistance of God's Spirit, (which he never denies them that fail not of their duty in all such things in which he requires truth and certainty,) it remains that we consider how it comes to pass that men are so much deceived in the use of their reason and choice of their religion; and that, in this account, we distinguish those accidents which make error innocent, from those which make it become a heresy.

SECTION XI.

Of some Causes of Error in the exercise of Reason which are exculpate in themselves.

1. THEN I consider that there are a great many inculpable causes of error, which are arguments of human imperfections, not convictions of a sin. And first, the variety of human understandings is so great, that what is plain and apparent to one, is difficult and obscure to another; one will observe a consequent from a common principle, and another from thence will conclude the quite contrary. When St. Peter saw the vision of the sheet let down, with all sorts of beasts in it, and a voice, saying, 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat,' if he had not, by a particular assistance, been directed to the meaning of the Holy Ghost, possibly he might have had other apprehensions of the meaning of

that vision; for to myself it seems naturally to speak nothing but the abolition of the Mosaical rites, and the restitution of us to that part of Christian liberty which consists in the promiscuous eating of meats; and yet, besides this, there want not some understandings in the world, to whom these words seem to give St. Peter a power to kill heretical princes. Methinks it is a strange understanding that makes such extractions, but Bozius and Baronius did so. But men may understand what they please, especially when they are to expound oracles. It was an argument of some wit, but of singularity of understanding, that happened in the great contestation between the missals of St. Ambrose and St. Gregory. The lot was thrown, and God made to be judge, so as he was tempted to a miracle, to answer a question which themselves might have ended without much trouble. The two missals were laid upon the altar, and the church door shut and sealed. By the morrow mattins, they found St. Gregory's missal torn in pieces, (saith the story,) and thrown about the church, but St. Ambrose's opened and laid upon the altar in a posture of being read. If I had been to judge of the meaning of this miracle, I should have made no scruple to have said, it had been the will of God that the missal of St. Ambrose, which had been anciently used, and publicly tried and approved of, should still be read in the church, and that of Gregory let alone, it being torn by an angelical hand, as an argument of its imperfection, or of the inconvenience of innovation. But yet they judged it otherwise; for by the tearing and scattering about, they thought it was meant, it should be used over all the world, and that of St. Ambrose read only

in the church of Millain. I am more satisfied that the former was the true meaning, than I am of the truth of the story; but we must suppose that. And now there might have been eternal disputings about the meaning of the miracle, and nothing left to determine, when two fancies are the litigants, and the contestations about probabilities *hinc inde*. And I doubt not this was one cause of so great variety of opinions in the primitive church, when they proved their several opinions, which were mysterious questions of Christian theology, by testimonies out of the obscurer prophets, out of the Psalms and Canticles, as who please to observe their arguments of discourse and actions of council shall perceive they very much used to do. Now although men's understandings be not equal, and that it is fit the best understandings should prevail, yet that will not satisfy the weaker understandings; because all men will not think that another understanding is better than his own; or, at least, not in such a particular in which, with fancy, he hath pleased himself. But commonly they that are least able are most bold, and the more ignorant are the more confident: therefore it is but necessary, if he would have another bear with him, he also should bear with another; and if he will not be prescribed to, neither let him prescribe to others. And there is the more reason in this, because such modesty is commonly to be desired of the more imperfect; for wise men know the ground of their persuasion, and have their confidence proportionable to their evidence; others have not, but overact their trifles: and therefore I said, it is but a reasonable demand, that they that have the least reason should not be most imperious; and for

others, it being reasonable enough, for all their great advantages upon other men, they will be soon persuaded to it; for although wise men might be bolder, in respect of the persons of others less discerning, yet they know there are but few things so certain as to create much boldness and confidence of assertion. If they do not, they are not the men I take them for.

2. When an action or opinion is commenced with zeal and piety, against a known vice, or a vicious person, commonly all the mistakes of its proceeding are made sacred by the holiness of the principle, and so abuses the persuasions of good people, that they make it as a characteristic note to distinguish good persons from bad; and then, whatever error is consecrated by this means, is therefore made the more lasting, because it is accounted holy; and the persons are not easily accounted heretics, because they erred upon a pious principle. There is a memorable instance in one of the greatest questions of Christendom, viz. concerning images. For when Philippicus had espied the images of the six first synods upon the front of a church, he caused them to be pulled down: now he did it in hatred of the sixth synod; for he, being a Monothelite, stood condemned by that synod. The catholics that were zealous for the sixth synod, caused the images and representments to be put up again; and then sprung the question concerning the lawfulness of images in churches.* Philippicus and his party strived, by suppressing images, to do disparagement to the sixth synod; the catholics, to preserve the honour of the sixth

* Vid. Paulum Diaconum.

synod, would uphold images. And then the question came to be changed, and they who were easy enough to be persuaded to pull down images, were overawed by a prejudice against the Monothelites; and the Monothelites strived to maintain the advantage they had got, by a just and pious pretence against images. The Monothelites would have secured their error by the advantage and consociation of a truth; and the other would rather defend a dubious and disputable error, than lose and let go a certain truth. And thus the case stood, and the successors of both parts were led invincibly: for when the heresy of the Monothelites disbanded, (which it did in a while after,) yet the opinion of the Iconoclasts, and the question of images grew stronger. Yet, since the Iconoclasts at the first were heretics, not for their breaking images, but for denying the two wills of Christ, his divine and his human;—that they were called Iconoclasts was to distinguish their opinion in the question concerning the images;—but that then Iconoclasts so easily had the reputation of heretics, was because of the other opinion, which was conjunct in their persons; which opinion men afterwards did not easily distinguish in them, but took them for heretics in gross, and whatsoever they held to be heretical. And thus, upon this prejudice, grew great advantages to the veneration of images; and the persons at first were much to be excused, because they were misguided by that which might have abused the best men. And if Epiphanius, who was as zealous against images in churches as Philippicus or Leo Isaurus, had but begun a public contestation, and engaged emperors to have made decrees against them, Christendom would have had

other apprehensions of it than they had when the Monothelites began it: for few men will endure a truth from the mouth of the devil, and if the person be suspected, so are his ways too. And it is a great subtlety of the devil so to temper truth and falsehood in the same person that truth may lose much of its reputation by its mixture with error, and the error may become more plausible by reason of its conjunction with truth. And this we see by too much experience; for we see many truths are blasted in their reputation, because persons whom we think we hate, upon just grounds of religion, have taught them. And it was plain enough in the case of Maldonat,* that said of an explication of a place of Scripture, that it was most agreeable to antiquity, but because Calvin had so expounded it he therefore chose a new one: this was malice. But when a prejudice works tacitly, undiscernibly, and irresistibly, of the person so wrought upon, the man is to be pitied, not condemned, though possibly his opinion deserves it highly. And therefore it hath been usual to discredit doctrines by the personal defailances of them that preach them, or with the disreputation of that sect that maintains them, in conjunction with other perverse doctrines. Faustus,† the Manichee, in St. Austin, glories much that in their religion God was worshipped purely, and without images. St. Austin liked it well, for so it was in his too; but from hence, Sanders concludes, that to pull down images in churches was the heresy of the Manichees. The Jews endure no images; therefore Bellarmine makes

* In cap. 6, Johan.

† Lib. xx. c. 3, Cont. Faustum Man. Lib. i. c. ult. de Imagin.

it to be a piece of Judaism to oppose them.* He might as well have concluded against saying our prayers, and church music, that it is Judaical, because the Jews used it. And he would be loath to be served so himself; for he that had a mind to use such arguments might, with much better probability, conclude against their sacrament of extreme unction; because, when the miraculous healing was ceased, then they were not catholics but heretics that did transfer it to the use of dying persons, says Irenæus; † for so did the Valentinians: and, indeed, this argument is something better than I thought for at first, because it was in Irenæus's time reckoned among the heresies. But there are a sort of men that are even with them, and hate some good things which the church of Rome teaches, because she who teaches so many errors, hath been the publisher, and is the practiser of those things. I confess the thing is always unreasonable, but sometimes it is invincible and innocent; and then may serve to abate the fury of all such decreitory sentences as condemn all the world but their own disciples.

3. There are some opinions that have gone hand in hand with a blessing, and a prosperous profession; and the good success of their defenders hath amused many good people, because they thought they heard God's voice where they saw God's hand; and therefore have rushed upon such opinions with great piety, and as great mistaking. For where they once had entertained a fear of God, and apprehension of his so sensible declaration, such a fear produces scruple; and a scrupulous conscience

* De Reliq. SS. lib. ii. c. 6, Sect. Nicolaus.

† Lib. i. c. 3, Adv. Hær.

is always to be pitied, because, though it is seldom wise, it is always pious. And this very thing hath prevailed so far upon the understandings even of wise men, that Bellarmine makes it a note of the true church : which opinion, when it prevails, is a ready way to make that, instead of martyrs, all men should prove heretics or apostates in persecution ; for since men in misery are very suspicious, out of strong desires to find out the cause, that by removing it they may be relieved, they apprehend that to be it that is first presented to their fears ; and then, if ever truth be afflicted, she shall also be destroyed. I will say nothing in defiance of this fancy, although all the experience in the world says it is false ; and that, of all men, Christians should least believe it to be true, to whom a perpetual cross is their certain expectation ; (and the argument is like the moon, for which no garment can be fit ; it alters according to the success of human affairs, and in one age will serve a papist, and in another a protestant ;) yet, when such an opinion does prevail upon timorous persons, the malignity of their error (if any be consequent to this fancy, and taken up upon the reputation of a prosperous heresy) is not to be considered simply and nakedly, but abatement is to be made in a just proportion to that fear, and to that apprehension.

4. Education is so great and so invincible a prejudice, that he who masters the inconvenience of it is more to be commended than he can justly be blamed that complies with it. For men do not always call them principles which are the prime fountains of reason, from whence such consequents naturally flow, as are to guide the actions and discourses of men ; but they are principles which they

are first taught, which they sucked in next to their milk; and, by a proportion to those first principles, they usually take their estimate of propositions. For whatsoever is taught to them at first they believe infinitely, for they know nothing to the contrary: they have had no other masters whose theorems might abate the strength of their first persuasions. And it is a great advantage in those cases to get possession; and before their first principles can be dislodged, they are made habitual and complexional; it is in their nature then to believe them, and this is helped forward very much by the advantage of love and veneration which we have to the first parents of our persuasions; and we see it in the orders of regulars in the church of Rome. That opinion which was the opinion of their patron or founder, or of some eminent personage of the institute, is enough to engage all the order to be of that opinion; and it is strange that all the Dominicans shall be of one opinion in the matter of pre-determination and immaculate conception, and all the Franciscans of the quite contrary; as if their understandings were formed in a different mould, and furnished with various principles by their very rule. Now this prejudice works by many principles; but how strongly they do possess the understanding, is visible in that great instance of the affection and perfect persuasion the weaker sort of people have to that which they call the religion of their forefathers.* You may as well charm a fever asleep with the noise of bells, as make any pretence of reason against that religion which old men

* "Optima rati ea quæ magno assensu recepta sunt, quorumq. exempla multa sunt; nec ad rationem, sed ad similitudinem vivimus."—Sen. Vid. Minut. Fel. octav.

have entailed upon their heirs male so many generations till they can prescribe. And the apostles found this to be most true in the extremest difficulty they met with, to contest against the rites of Moses, and the long superstition of the Gentiles, which they therefore thought fit to be retained, because they had done so formerly; ‘proceeding as things were or had been, not as they ought to be,’* and all the blessings of this life which God gave them, they had in conjunction with their religion, and therefore they believed it was for their religion, and this persuasion was bound fast in them with ribs of iron; the apostles were forced to unloose the whole conjuncture of parts and principles in their understandings, before they could make them malleable and receptive of any impresses: but the observation and experience of all wise men can justify this truth. All that I shall say to the present purpose is this, that consideration is to be had to the weakness of persons when they are prevailed upon by so innocent a prejudice; and, when there cannot be arguments strong enough to overmaster an habitual persuasion, bred with a man, nourished up with him, that always eat at his table, and lay in his bosom, he is not easily to be called heretic; for, if he keeps the foundation of faith, other articles are not so clearly demonstrated on either side but that a man may innocently be abused to the contrary. And therefore, in this case, to handle him charitably, is but to do him justice; and when an opinion *in minoribus articulis*, “in points of inferior moment,” is entertained upon the title and stock of education, it may be the better permitted

* *Pergentes non quo eundum est, sed quo itur.*

to him, since upon no better stock nor stronger arguments, most men entertain their whole religion, even Christianity itself.

5. There are some persons of a differing persuasion, who, therefore, are the rather to be tolerated, because the indirect practices and impostures of their adversaries have confirmed them, that those opinions which they disavow are not from God, as being upheld by means not of God's appointment, for it is no unreasonable discourse to say, that God will not be served with a lie, for he does not need one, and he hath means enough to support all those truths which he hath commanded; and hath supplied every honest cause with enough for its maintenance, and to contest against its adversaries. And (but that they which use indirect arts will not be willing to lose any of their unjust advantages, nor yet be charitable to those persons whom either to gain or to undo they leave nothing unattempted) the church of Rome hath much reason not to be so decretory in her sentences against persons of a differing persuasion; for if their cause were entirely the cause of God, they have given wise people reason to suspect it, because some of them have gone to the devil to defend it. And if it be remembered what tragedies were stirred up against Luther, for saying the devil had taught him an argument against the mass, it will be of as great advantage against them that they go to the devil for many arguments to support not only the mass, but the other distinguishing articles of their church; I instance in the notorious forging of miracles, and framing of false and ridiculous legends. For the former, I need no other instances than what happened in the great contestation about the immacu-

late conception, when there were miracles brought on both sides to prove the contradictory parts; and though it be more than probable that both sides played the jugglers, yet the Dominicans had the ill luck to be discovered, and the actors burned at Berne. But this discovery happened by Providence; for the Dominican opinion hath more degrees of probability than the Franciscan, is clearly more consonant both to Scripture and all antiquity, and this part of it is acknowledged by the greatest patrons themselves, as Salmeron, Posa, and Wadding; yet because they played the knaves in a just question, and used false arts to maintain a true proposition, God Almighty, to show that he will not be served by a lie, was pleased rather to discover the imposture in the right opinion than in the false; since nothing is more dishonourable to God than to offer a sin in sacrifice to him, and nothing more incongruous in the nature of the thing, than that truth and falsehood should support each other, or that true doctrine should live at the charges of a lie. And he that considers the arguments for each opinion, will easily conclude, that if God would not have truth confirmed by a lie, much less would he himself attest a lie with a true miracle. And by this ground it will easily follow, that the Franciscan party, although they had better luck than the Dominicans, yet had not more honesty, because their cause was worse, and therefore their arguments no whit the better. And although the argument drawn from miracles is good to attest a holy doctrine, which by its own worth will support itself, after way is a little made by miracles; yet of itself, and by its own reputation, it will not support any fabric; for instead of proving a doc-

trine to be true, it makes that the miracles themselves are suspected to be illusions, if they be pretended in behalf of a doctrine which we think we have reason to account false. And therefore the Jews did not believe Christ's doctrine for his miracles, but disbelieve the truth of his miracles because they did not like his doctrine. And if the holiness of his doctrine, and the Spirit of God by inspirations and infusions, and by that which St. Peter calls 'a surer word of prophecy,' had not attested the divinity both of his person and his office, we should have wanted many degrees of confidence which now we have upon the truth of Christian religion.* But now, since we are foretold by this surer word of prophecy, that is, the prediction of Jesus Christ, that Antichrist should come in all wonders and signs, and lying miracles; and that the church saw much of that already verified in Simon Magus, Apollonius Tyanæus, and Manetho, and divers heretics;† it is now come to that pass, that the argument, in its best advantage, proves nothing so much as that the doctrine which it pretends to prove is to be suspected, because it was foretold that false doctrine should be obtruded under such pretences. But then, when not only true miracles are an insufficient argument to prove a truth, since the establishment of Christianity, but that the miracles themselves are false and spurious; it makes that doctrine in whose defence they come, justly to be suspected, because they are a demonstration that the interested persons use all means,

* Vide Baron. A. D. 63, n. 22. Philostrat. lib. iv. t. 485. Compend. Cedren, p. 202.

† Stapelton, Prompt. Moral. pars Æstiva, p. 627.

leave nothing unattempted, to prove their propositions; but since they so fail as to bring nothing from God, but something from the devil for its justification, it is a great sign that the doctrine is false, because we know the devil, unless it be against his will, does nothing to prove a true proposition that makes against him. And now, then, those persons who will endure no man of another opinion, might do well to remember how, by their exorcisms, their devils' tricks at Loudun, and the other side pretending to cure mad folks and persons bewitched, and the many discoveries of their juggling, they have given so much reason to their adversaries to suspect their doctrine, that either they must not be ready to condemn their persons who are made suspicious by their indirect proceeding, in attestation of that which they value so high as to call their religion, or else they must condemn themselves for making the scandal active and effectual.

As for false legends, it will be of the same consideration, because they are false testimonies of miracles that were never done; which differs only from the other, as a lie in words from a lie in action. But of this we have witness enough in that decree of pope Leo X., session the eleventh of the last Lateran council, where he excommunicates all the forgers and inventors of visions and false miracles, which is a testimony that it was then a practice so public as to need a law for its suppression; and if any man shall doubt whether it were so or no, let him see the *Centum Gravamina* of the princes of Germany, where it is highly complained of. But the extreme stupidity and sottishness of the inventors of lying stories is so great, as to give occasion to some per-

sons to suspect the truth of all church story;* witness the Legend of Lombardy, of the author of which the bishop of the Canaries gives this testimony: "You will oftener read in this book monstrous prodigies than real miracles; he who wrote it was a shameless and dull fellow, and far enough from being of a serious and judicious mind."† But, I need not descend so low; for St. Gregory and V. Bede themselves reported miracles, for the authority of which they only had the report of the common people;‡ and it is not certain than St. Jerome had so much in his stories of St. Paul and St. Anthony, and the fauns and the satyrs which appeared to them, and desired their prayers.§ But I shall only, by way of eminency, note what Sir Thomas More says, in his epistle to Ruthal, the king's secretary, before the dialogue of Lucian (Philopseudes;) that, therefore, he undertook the translation of that dialogue, to free the world from a superstition that crept in under the face and title of religion. For such lies, says he, are transmitted to us with such authority, that a certain impostor had persuaded St. Austin, that the very fable which Lucian scoffs, and makes sport withal in that dialogue,|| was a real story, and acted in his own days. The epistle is worth the reading to this purpose: but, he says, this abuse grew to such a height, that scarce any life of

* *Tà γὰρ μὴ εἰρημένα ἐκκλιζόμενοι, δὲ τὰ ἀβιάτως εἰρημένα ὑποπτενέσθαι παρασκευέουσιν.*—Isid. Pelus.

† "In illo enim libro miraculorum monstra sæpius quam vera miracula legas. Hanc homo scripsit ferrei oris, plumbei cordis, animi certe parum severi et prudentis."

‡ Vide lib. xi. loc. Theol. cap. 6. § Canus, *ibid.*

|| Viz. De duobus spurinis, altero decedente, altero in vitam redeunte post viginti dies; quam in aliis nominibus ridet Lucianus. Vide etiam argumentum Gilberti Cognati, in Annotat. in hunc Dialog.

any saint or martyr is truly related, but is full of lies and lying wonders; and some persons thought they served God, if they did honour to God's saints by inventing some prodigious story or miracle for their reputation. So that now it is no wonder, if the most pious men are apt to believe, and the greatest historians are easy enough to report such stories, which, serving to a good end, are also con- signed by the report of persons otherwise pious and prudent enough. I will not instance in Vincentius his *Speculum*, Turonensis, Thomas Cantipratanus, John Herolt, *Vite Patrum*,* nor the revelations of St. Bridget, though confirmed by two popes, Martin V. and Boniface IX. : even the best and most deliberate amongst them, Lippoman, Surius, Lipsius, Bzovius, and Baronius, are so full of fables, that they cause great disreputation to the other monuments and records of antiquity, and yet do no advantage to the cause under which they serve and take pay. They do no good, and much hurt; but yet, accidentally, they may procure this advantage to charity, since they do none to faith; that, since they have so abused the credit of story, that our confidences want much of that support we should receive from her records of antiquity, yet the men that dissent and are scandalized by such proceedings should be excused, if they should chance to be afraid of truth that hath put on garments of imposture; and, since much violence is done to the truth and certainty of their judging, let none be done to their liberty of judging: since they cannot meet a right guide, let them have a charitable judge. And, since it is one very great ar-

* Vide Palæot. de Sacra Sindone, part i. Epist. ad Lector.

gument against Simon Magus and against Mahomet, that we can prove their miracles to be impostures, it is much to be pitied if timorous and suspicious persons shall invincibly and honestly less apprehend a truth which they see conveyed by such a testimony, which we all use as an argument to reprove the Mahometan superstition.

6. Here also comes in all the weaknesses and trifling prejudices which operate not by their own strength, but by advantage taken from the weakness of some understandings. Some men, by a proverb or a common saying, are determined to the belief of a proposition, for which they have no argument better than such a proverbial sentence. And when divers of the common people in Jerusalem were ready to yield their understandings to the belief of the Messiah, they were turned clearly from their apprehensions by that proverb, "Look and see, does any good thing come from Galilee?" and this: "When Christ comes, no man knows from whence he is;" but this man was known of what parents, of what city. And thus the weakness of their understanding was abused, and that made the argument too hard for them. And the whole seventh chapter of St. John's Gospel is a perpetual instance of the efficacy of such trifling prejudices, and the vanity and weakness of popular understandings. Some whole ages have been abused by a definition, which, being once received, as most commonly they are, upon slight grounds, they are taken for certainties in any science respectively, and for principles; and upon their reputation men use to frame conclusions, which must be false or uncertain, according as the definitions are. And he that hath observed any thing of the weaknesses of men, and

the successions of groundless doctrines from age to age, and how seldom definitions which are put into systems, or that derive from the fathers, or approved among school-men, are examined by persons of the same interests, will bear me witness, how many great inconveniences press hard upon the persuasions of men, who are abused, and yet never consider who hurt them. Others, and they very many, are led by authority, or examples of princes, and great personages: ‘Have any of the rulers believed on him?’* Some, by the reputation of one learned man, are carried into any persuasion whatsoever. And, in the middle and latter ages of the church, this was the more considerable, because the infinite ignorance of the clerks and the men of the long robe, gave them over to be led by those few guides which were marked to them by an eminency, much more than their ordinary; which also did the more amuse them, because most commonly they were fit for nothing but to admire what they understood not; their learning then was in some skill in the master of the sentences, in Aquinas or Scotus, whom they admired next to the most intelligent order of angels. Hence came opinions that made sects and division of names—Thomists, Scotists, Albertists, Nominals, Reals, and I know not what monsters of names; and whole families of the same opinion, the whole institute of an order being engaged to believe according to the opinion of some leading man of the same order; as if such an opinion were imposed upon them as a proof of holy obedience. But this inconvenience is greater when the principle of the mistake runs higher, when the

* John, vii.

opinion is derived from a primitive man and a saint; for then it often happens, that what at first was but a plain, innocent seduction, comes to be made sacred by the veneration which is consequent to the person, for having lived long ago; and then, because the person is also since canonized, the error is almost made eternal, and the cure desperate. These, and the like prejudices, which are as various as the miseries of humanity, or the variety of human understandings, are not absolute excuses, unless to some persons; but truly, if they be to any, they are exemptions to all, from being pressed with too peremptory a sentence against them; especially if we consider what leave is given to all men, by the church of Rome, to follow any one probable doctor, in an opinion which is contested against by many more. And as for the doctors of the other side, they being destitute of any pretences to an infallible medium to determine questions, must, of necessity, allow the same liberty to the people, to be as prudent as they can in the choice of a fallible guide; and when they have chosen, if they do follow him into error, the matter is not so inexpiable for being deceived in using the best guides we had, which guides, because themselves were abused, did also, against their wills, deceive me: so that this prejudice may the easier abuse us, because it is almost like a duty to follow the dictates of a probable doctor; or, if it be over acted, or accidentally pass into an inconvenience, it is therefore to be excused, because the principle was not ill, unless we judge by our event, not by the antecedent probability. Of such men as these it was said by St. Austin, "The common sort of people are safe, in their not inquiring by their own industry, and, in

the simplicity of their understanding, relying upon the best guides they can get."*

But this is of such a nature, in which, as we may inculpably be deceived, so we may turn it into a vice or a design, and then the consequent errors will alter the property, and become heresies. There are some men that have men's persons in admiration, because of advantage; and some that have itching ears, and heap up teachers to themselves. In these and the like cases, the authority of a person, and the prejudices of a great reputation, is not the excuse but the fault: and a sin is so far from excusing an error, that error becomes a sin by reason of its relation to that sin, as to its parent and principle.

SECTION XII.

Of the innocency of Error in opinion, in a pious Person.

AND, therefore, as there are so many innocent causes of error as there are weaknesses within, and harmless and unavoidable prejudices from without, so, if ever error be procured by a vice, it hath no excuse, but becomes such a crime, of so much malignity, as to have influence upon the effect and consequent, and, by communication, makes it be-

* "Cæteram turbam non intelligendi vivacitas, sed credendi simplicitas tutissimam facit."—Contr. Fund. cap. 4. And Gregory Nazianzen, *Σώζει πολλάκις τὸν λαὸν τὸ ἀβασάνισον.*—Orat. xxi.

come criminal. The apostles noted two such causes, covetousness and ambition; the former in them of the circumcision, and the latter in Diotrophes and Simon Magus; and there were some that were 'led away by divers lusts:'* they were of the long robe too; but they were the she disciples upon whose consciences some false apostles had influence, by advantage of their wantonness; and thus the three principles of all sin become also the principles of heresy—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. And in pursuance of these arts, the devil hath not wanted fuel to set awork incendiaries, in all ages of the church. The bishops were always honourable, and, most commonly, had great revenues, and a bishopric would satisfy the two designs of covetousness and ambition; and this hath been the golden apple very often contended for, and very often the cause of great fires in the church. "Thebulis created great disturbances in the church, because he could not obtain the bishopric of Jerusalem," said Egesippus, in Eusebius. Tertullian turned Montanist, in discontent for missing the bishopric of Carthage, after Agrippinus; and so did Montanus himself, for the same discontent, saith Nicephorus. Novatus would have been bishop of Rome; Donatus, of Carthage; Arius, of Alexandria; Aerius, of Sebastia: but they all missed, and therefore all of them vexed Christendom. And this was so common a thing, that oftentimes the threatening the church with a schism, or a heresy, was a design to get a bishopric: and Socrates reports of Asterius, that he did frequent the conventicles of the Arians,

* 2 Tim. iii.

“for he aimed at some bishopric.” And setting aside the infirmities of men, and their innocent prejudices, Epiphanius makes pride to be the only cause of heresies; ὑβρις ἢ πρόκρισις, pride and prejudice cause them all, the one criminally, the other innocently. And, indeed, St. Paul does almost make pride the only cause of heresies; his words cannot be expounded, unless it be at least the principal: ‘If any man teach otherwise and consent not to sound words, and to the doctrine that is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.’*

The sum is this; if ever an opinion be begun with pride, or managed with impiety, or ends in a crime, the man turns heretic; but let the error be never so great, so it be not against an article of creed, if it be simple, and hath no confederation with the personal iniquity of the man, the opinion is as innocent as the person, though, perhaps, as false as he is ignorant; and therefore shall burn, though he himself escape. But in these cases, and many more, (for the causes of deception increase by all accidents, and weaknesses, and illusions,) no man can give certain judgment upon the persons of men in particular, unless the matter of fact and crime be accident and notorious. The man cannot, by human judgment, be concluded a heretic, unless his opinion be an open recession from plain, demonstrative, divine authority, (which must needs be notorious, voluntary, vincible, and criminal,) or that there be a

* 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

palpable serving of an end, accidental and extrinsic to the opinion.

But this latter is very hard to be discerned ; because those accidental and adherent crimes which make the man a heretic, in questions not simply fundamental or of necessary practice, are actions so internal and spiritual, that cognizance can but seldom be taken of them. And therefore, to instance, though the opinion of purgatory be false, yet to believe it cannot be heresy, if a man be abused into the belief of it invincibly ; because it is not a doctrine either fundamentally false or practically impious, it neither proceeds from the will, nor hath any immediate or direct influence upon choice and manners. And as for those other ends of upholding that opinion, which possibly its patrons may have ; as for the reputation of their church's infallibility, for the advantage of dirges, requiems, masses, monthly minds, anniversaries, and other offices for the dead, which usually are very profitable, rich, and easy, these things may possibly have sole influences upon their understanding, but whether they have or no God only knows. If the proposition and article were true, these ends might justly be subordinate, and consistent with a true proposition. And there are some truths that are also profitable ; as the necessity of maintenance to the clergy, the doctrine of restitution, giving alms, lending freely, remitting debts, in cases of great necessity : and it would be but an ill argument that the preachers of these doctrines speak false, because, possibly, in these articles, they may serve their own ends. For although Demetrius and the craftsmen were without excuse for resisting the preaching of St. Paul, because it was notorious they resisted the

truth upon ground of profit and personal emoluments, and the matter was confessed by themselves; yet, if the clergy should maintain their just rights and revenues, which by pious dedications and donatives were long since ascertained upon them, is it to be presumed, in order of law and charity, that this end is in the men subordinate to truth, because it is so in the thing itself, and that therefore no judgment, in prejudice of these truths, can be made from that observation?

But if in any other way we are ascertained of the truth or falsehood of a proposition respectively, yet the judgment of the personal ends of the men cannot ordinarily be certain and judicial, because, most commonly, the acts are private and the purposes internal, and temporal ends may sometimes consist with truth; and whether the purposes of the men make these ends principal or subordinate, no man can judge; and be they how they will, yet they do not always prove that when they are conjunct with error, the error was caused by these purposes and criminal intentions.

But in questions practical, the doctrine itself, and the person too, may with more ease be re-proved, because matter of fact being evident, and nothing being so certain as the experiments of human affairs, and these being the immediate consequents of such doctrines, are with some more certainty of observation redargued, than the speculative; whose judgment is of itself more difficult, more remote from matter and human observation, and with less curiosity and explicitness declared in Scripture, as being of less consequence and concernment, in the order of God's and man's great end. In other things, which end in notion and

ineffective contemplation, where neither the doctrine is malicious, nor the person apparently criminal, he is to be left to the judgment of God; and as there is no certainty of human judicature in this case, so it is to no purpose it should be judged. For if the person may be innocent with his error, and there is no rule whereby he can certainly be pronounced that he is actually criminal, (as it happens in matters speculative,) since the end of the commandment is love out of a 'pure conscience, and faith unfeigned;' and the commandment may obtain its end in a consistence with this simple speculative error; why should men trouble themselves with such opinions, so as to disturb the public charity or the private confidence? Opinions and persons are just so to be judged as other matters and persons criminal; for no man can judge any thing else: it must be a crime, and it must be open, so as to take cognizance, and make true human judgment of it. And this is all I am to say concerning the causes of heresies, and of the distinguishing rules for guiding of our judgments towards others.

As for guiding our judgments, and the use of our reason in judging for ourselves, all that is to be said is reducible to this one proposition. Since errors are then made sins when they are contrary to charity, or inconsistent with a good life and the honour of God, that judgment is the truest, or, at least, that opinion most innocent, that, first, best promotes the reputation of God's glory, and, secondly, is the best instrument of holy life. For in questions and interpretations of dispute, these two analogies are the best to make propositions, and

conjectures, and determinations. Diligence and care in obtaining the best guides, and the most convenient assistances, prayer, and modesty of spirit, simplicity of purposes and intentions, humility and aptness to learn, and a peaceable disposition, are therefore necessary to finding out truths, because they are parts of good life, without which our truths will do us but little advantage, and our errors can have no excuse; but with these dispositions, as he is sure to find out all that is necessary, so what truth he inculpably misses of, he is sure is therefore not necessary, because he could not find it when he did his best and his most innocent endeavours. And this I say to secure the persons, because no rule can antecedently secure the proposition in matters disputable. For even in the proportions and explications of this rule, there is infinite variety of disputes; and when the dispute is concerning free will, one party denies it, because he believes it magnifies the grace of God, that it works irresistibly; the other affirms, because he believes it engages us upon greater care and piety of our endeavours. The one opinion thinks God reaps the glory of our good actions, the other thinks it charges our bad actions upon him. So in the question of merit, one part chooses his assertion, because he thinks it encourages us to do good works; the other believes it makes us proud, and therefore he rejects it. The first believes it increases piety, the second believes it increases spiritual presumption and vanity. The first thinks it magnifies God's justice, the other thinks it derogates from his mercy. Now then, since neither this, nor any ground can secure a man from possibility of mistaking, we were

infinitely miserable if it would not secure us from punishment, so long as we willingly consent not to a crime, and do our best endeavour to avoid an error. Only by the way, let me observe, that since there are such great differences of apprehension concerning the consequents of an article, no man is to be charged with the odious consequences of his opinion. Indeed, his doctrine is, but the person is not, if he understands not such things to be consequent to his doctrine; for if he did, and then avows them, they are his direct opinions, and he stands as chargeable with them as with his first propositions; but if he disavows them, he would certainly rather quit his own opinion than avow such errors or impieties, which are pretended to be consequent to it; because every man knows that can be no truth, from whence falsehood naturally and immediately does derive; and he therefore believes his first propositions, because he believes it innocent of such errors as are charged upon it, directly or consequently.

So that now, since no error, neither for itself, nor its consequents, is to be charged as criminal upon a pious person, since no simple error is a sin, nor does condemn us before the throne of God, since he is so pitiful to our crimes, that he pardons many *de toto et integro*, in all makes abatement for the violence of temptation, and the surprisal and invasion of our faculties, and, therefore, much less will demand of us an account for our weaknesses; and since the strongest understanding cannot pretend to such an immunity and exemption from the condition of men, as not to be deceived and confess its weakness; it remains, we inquire what deportment is to be used towards persons of a differ-

ing persuasion, when we are (I do not say doubtful of a proposition, but) convinced that he that differs from us is in error; for this was the first intention and the last end of this discourse.

SECTION XIII.

Of the Deportment to be used towards Persons disagreeing, and the Reasons why they are not to be punished with Death, &c.

FOR although every man may be deceived, yet some are right and may know it too, for every man that may err does not therefore certainly err; and if he errs because he recedes from his rule, then if he follows it he may do right; and if ever any man upon just grounds did change his opinion, then he was in the right and was sure of it too; and, although confidence is mistaken for a just persuasion many times, yet some men are confident, and have reason so to be. Now when this happens, the question is, what deportment they are to use towards persons that disagree from them, and by consequence are in error.

1. Then no Christian is to be put to death, dismembered, or otherwise directly persecuted for his opinion, which does not teach impiety or blasphemy. If it plainly and apparently brings in a crime, and himself does act it or encourage it, then the matter of fact is punishable according to its proportion or

malignity; as, if he preaches treason or sedition, his opinion is not his excuse, because it brings in a crime, and a man is never the less traitor because he believes it lawful to commit treason; and a man is a murderer if he kills his brother unjustly, although he thinks he does God good service in it. Matters of fact are equally judicable, whether the principle of them be from within or from without; and if a man could pretend to innocence in being seditious, blasphemous, or perjured, by persuading himself it is lawful, there were as great a gate opened to all iniquity as will entertain all the pretences, the designs, the impostures, and disguises of the world. And therefore God hath taken order, that all rules concerning matters of fact and good life shall be so clearly explicated that, without the crime of the man, he cannot be ignorant of all his practical duty. And therefore the apostles and primitive doctors made no scruple of condemning such persons for heretics that did dogmatise a sin. He that teacheth others to sin is worse than he that commits the crime, whether he be tempted by his own interest, or encouraged by the other's doctrine. It was as bad in Basilides to teach it to be lawful to renounce faith and religion, and take all manner of oaths and covenants in time of persecution, as if himself had done so; nay, it is as much worse, as the mischief is more universal, or as a fountain is greater than a drop of water taken from it. He that writes treason in a book, or preaches sedition in a pulpit, and persuades it to the people, is the greatest traitor and incendiary, and his opinion there is the fountain of a sin; and therefore could not be entertained in his understanding upon weakness, or inculpable or innocent

prejudice : he cannot, from Scripture or divine revelation, have any pretence to colour that so fairly as to seduce either a wise or an honest man. If it rests there and goes no further, it is not cognizable, and so scapes that way ; but if it be published, and comes, *à stylo ad machæram*, (as Tertullian's phrase is,) "from the pen to the sword," then it becomes matter of fact in principle and in persuasion, and is just so punishable as is the crime that it persuades. Such were they of whom St. Paul complains,* who brought in damnable doctrines and lusts. St. Paul's, 'I would they were even cut off,' is just of them ; take it in any sense of rigour and severity, so it be proportionable to the crime, or criminal doctrine. Such were those of whom God spake in Deut. xiii. : 'If any prophet tempts to idolatry, saying, Let us go after other gods, he shall be slain.' But these do not come into this question. But the proposition is to be understood concerning questions disputable as matter of opinion, which also, for all that law of killing, such false prophets were permitted with impunity in the synagogue, as appears beyond exception in the great divisions and disputes between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. I deny not, but certain and known idolatry, or any other sort of practical impiety, with its principiant doctrine may be punished corporally, because it is no other but matter of fact ; but no matter of mere opinion, no errors that of themselves are not sins, are to be persecuted, or punished by death, or corporal inflictions. This is now to be proved.

2. All the former discourse is sufficient argu-

* Gal. v.

ment how easy it is for us, in such matters, to be deceived. So long as Christian religion was a simple profession of the articles of belief, and a hearty prosecution of the rules of good life, the fewness of the articles and the clearness of the rule was cause of the seldom prevarication. But when divinity is swelled up to so great a body, when the several questions, which the peevishness and wantonness of sixteen ages have commenced, are centered into one, and from all these questions something is drawn into the body of theology till it hath ascended up to the greatness of a mountain, and the sum of divinity collected by Aquinas makes a volume as great as was that of Livy, mocked at in the epigram,

“*Quem mea vix totum bibliotheca capit,—*” *

it is impossible for any industry to consider so many particulars, in the infinite numbers of questions as are necessary to be considered before we can with certainty determine any. And after all the considerations which we can have in a whole age, we are not sure not to be deceived. The obscurity of some questions, the nicety of some articles, the intricacy of some revelations, the variety of human understandings, the windings of logic, the tricks of adversaries, the subtlety of sophisters, the engagement of educations, personal affections, the portentous number of writers, the infinity of authorities, the vastness of some arguments, as consisting in enumeration of many particulars, the uncertainty of others, the several degrees of probability, the difficulties of Scripture, the invalidity

* “A work which shelves like mine can scarce contain.”

of probation of tradition, the opposition of all exterior arguments to each other, and their open contestation, the public violence done to authors and records, the private arts and supplantings, the falsifyings, the indefatigable industry of some men to abuse all understandings and all persuasions into their own opinions,—these, and thousands more, even all the difficulty of things, and all the weaknesses of man, and all the arts of the devil, have made it impossible for any man, in so great variety of matter, not to be deceived. No man pretends to it but the pope, and no man is more deceived than he is in that very particular.

3. From hence proceeds a danger which is consequent to this proceeding; for if we, who are so apt to be deceived and so insecure in our resolution of questions disputable, should persecute a disagreeing person, we are not sure we do not fight against God; for if his proposition be true and persecuted, then, because all truth derives from God, this proceeding is against God; and therefore this is not to be done, upon Gamaliel's ground, lest peradventure we be found to fight against God, of which, because we can have no security (at least) in this case, we have all the guilt of a doubtful or an uncertain conscience. For if there be no security in the thing, as I have largely proved, the conscience, in such cases, is as uncertain as the question is: and if it be not doubtful where it is uncertain, it is because the man is not wise, but as confident as ignorant; the first without reason, and the second without excuse. And it is very disproportionable for a man to persecute another certainly, for a proposition that, if he were wise, he would know is not certain, at least the other per-

son may innocently be uncertain of it. If he be killed he is certainly killed; but if he be called heretic it is not so certain that he is an heretic. It were good, therefore, that proceedings were according to evidence, and the rivers not swell over the banks, nor a certain definitive sentence of death passed upon such persuasions which cannot certainly be defined. And this argument is of so much the more force because we see that the greatest persecutions that ever have been were against truth, even against Christianity itself; and it was a prediction of our blessed Saviour, that persecution should be the lot of true believers: and if we compute the experience of suffering Christendom, and the prediction, that truth should suffer, with those few instances of suffering heretics, it is odds but persecution is on the wrong side, and that it is error and heresy that is cruel and tyrannical, especially since the truth of Jesus Christ, and of his religion, are so meek, so charitable, and so merciful. And we may, in this case, exactly use the words of St. Paul: 'But, as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit; even so it is now;' and so it ever will be till Christ's second coming.

4. Whoever persecutes a disagreeing person, arms all the world against himself,* and all pious people of his own persuasion, when the scales of authority return to his adversary and attest his contradictory; and then what can he urge for mercy for himself,

* "Quo comperto illi in nostram perniciem licentiore audacia grassabuntur."—St. Aug. Epist. ad Donat. Procons. et Contr. ep Fund. "Ita nunc debeo sustinere et tantâ patientia vobiscum agere quanta mecum egerunt proximi mei cum in vestro dogmate rabi- osus ac cœcus errarem."

or his party, that showeth none to others? If he says, that he is to be spared because he believes true, but the other was justly persecuted because he was in error, he is ridiculous; for he is as confidently believed to be a heretic as he believes his adversary such; and whether he be or no, being the thing in question, of this he is not to be his own judge; but he that hath authority on his side will be sure to judge against him, So that what either side can indifferently make use of, it is good that neither would, because neither side can, with reason sufficient, do it in prejudice of the other. If a man will say that every man must take his adventure, and if it happens authority to be with him, he will persecute his adversaries; and if it turns against him he will bear it as well as he can, and hope for a reward of martyrdom and innocent suffering; besides that this is so equal to be said of all sides; besides that this is a way to make an eternal disunion of hearts and charities, and that it will make Christendom nothing but a shambles, and a perpetual butchery; and as fast as men's wits grow wanton, or confident, or proud, or abused, so often there will be new executions and massacres;—besides all this, it is most unreasonable and unjust, as being contrariant to those laws of justice and charity, whereby we are bound with greater zeal to spare and preserve an innocent than to condemn a guilty person: and there is less malice and iniquity in sparing the guilty than in condemning the good; because it is in the power of men to remit a guilty person to divine judicature, and for divers causes not to use severity, but in no case is it lawful, neither hath God at all given to man a power to condemn such persons as cannot be

proved other than pious and innocent; and therefore it is better, if it should so happen, that we should spare the innocent person and one that is actually deceived, than that, upon the turn of the wheel, the true believers should be destroyed.

And this very reason he that had authority sufficient and absolute to make laws, was pleased to urge as a reasonable inducement for the establishing of that law which he made for the indemnity of erring persons. It was in the parable of the tares mingled with the good seed, in the Lord's field; the good seed (Christ himself being the interpreter) are the children of the kingdom, the tares are the children of the wicked one; upon this comes the precept, 'Gather not the tares by themselves, but let them both grow together till the harvest,' that is, till the day of judgment. This parable hath been tortured infinitely to make it confess its meaning, but we shall soon dispatch it. All the difficulty and variety of exposition is reducible to these two questions: what is meant by gather not, and what by tares? That is, what kind of sword is forbidden, and what kind of persons are to be tolerated? The former is clear, for the spiritual sword is not forbidden to be used to any sort of criminals, for that would destroy the power of excommunication: the prohibition therefore lies against the use of the temporal sword in cutting off some persons; who they are is the next difficulty. But by tares, or the children of the wicked one, are meant, either persons of ill lives, wicked persons only in *re practicâ*, (in conduct;) or else another kind of evil persons, men criminal or faulty in *re intellectuali*, (in understanding.) One or other of these two must be meant—a third I know not.

But the former cannot be meant, because it would destroy all bodies politic, which cannot consist without laws, nor laws without a compulsory and a power of the sword; therefore, if criminals were to be let alone till the day of judgment, bodies politic must stand or fall *ad arbitrium impiorum*, "according to the pleasure of evil men;" and nothing good could be protected, not innocence itself; nothing could be secured but violence and tyranny. It follows then, that since a kind of persons which are indeed faulty are to be tolerated, it must be meant of persons faulty in another kind, in which the Gospel had not, in other places, clearly established a power externally compulsory; and therefore, since in all actions practically criminal a power of the sword is permitted, here, where it is denied, must mean a crime of another kind, and, by consequence, errors intellectual, commonly called heresy.

And, after all this, the reason there given confirms this interpretation,* for therefore it is forbidden to cut off these tares, lest we also pull up the wheat with them, which is the sum of these two last arguments. For, because heresy is of so nice consideration and difficult sentence, in thinking to root up heresies we may, by our mistakes, † destroy true doctrine; which, although it be possible to be done, in all cases of practical question, by mistake, yet, because external actions are more discernible than inward speculations and opinions,

* Vide St. Chrysost. Hom. xlvii. in cap. 13, Matt. et St. August. Quæst. in cap. 13, Matt. St. Cyprian. Ep. lib. iii. Ep. 1. Theophyl. in 13, Matt.

† S. Hieron. in cap. 13, Matt. ait, "Per hanc parabolam significari, ne in rebus dubiis præceps fiat iudicium."

innocent persons are not so easily mistaken for the guilty, in actions criminal as in matters of inward persuasion. And upon that very reason St. Martin was zealous to have procured a revocation of a commission granted to several tribunes, to make inquiry in Spain for sects and opinions: for under colour of rooting out the Priscillianists there was much mischief done, and more likely to happen to the orthodox: for it happened then, as oftentimes since, “ a heretic was sometimes discovered rather by his pallid countenance and his dress than by his creed.”* They were no good inquisitors of heretical pravity, so Sulpitius witnesses. But, secondly, the reason says, that therefore these persons are so to be permitted as not to be persecuted, lest, when a revolution of human affairs sets contrary opinions in the throne or chair, they who were persecuted before should now themselves become persecutors of others, and so, at one time or other, before or after, the wheat be rooted up, and the truth be persecuted. But as these reasons confirm the law and this sense of it, so, abstracting from the law, it is of itself concluding by an argument *ab incommodo*, (from inconvenience,) and that founded upon the principles of justice and right reason, as I formerly alleged.

5. We are not only uncertain of finding out truths, in matters disputable, but we are certain that the best and ablest doctors of Christendom †

* “ *Pallore potius et veste quam fide hæreticus dijudicari solbat aliquando per tribunos Maximi.*”

† “ *Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt cum quo labore verum inveniatur, et quam difficilè caveantur errores. Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt quam rarum et arduum sit carnalia phantasmata piæ mentis serenitate superare. Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt quibus et suspiriis et gemitibus fiat ut ex quantula-*

have been actually deceived in matters of great concernment; which thing is evident in all those instances of persons from whose doctrines all sorts of Christians, respectively, take liberty to dissent. The errors of Papias, Irenæus, Lactantius, Justin Martyr, in the millenary opinion; of St. Cyprian, Firmilian, the Asian and African fathers, in the question of rebaptization; St. Austin, in his decreetory and uncharitable sentence against the unbaptized children of Christian parents; the Roman or the Greek doctors, in the question of the procession of the Holy Ghost, and in the matter of images, are examples beyond exception. "The errors that attach to the minds of men are numberless."* Now, if these great personages had been persecuted or destroyed for their opinions, who should have answered the invaluable loss the church of God should have sustained, in missing so excellent, so exemplary, and so great lights? But, then, if these persons erred, and by consequence might have been destroyed, what should have become of others whose understanding was lower, and their security less, their errors more, and their danger greater? At this rate all men should have passed through the fire; for who can escape when St. Cyprian and St. Austin cannot? Now, to say these persons were not to be persecuted because, although they had errors, yet none condemned by the church at that time or before, is to say nothing to the purpose, nor nothing that

cunque parte possit intelligi Deus. Postremo illi in vos sæviant, qui nullo tali errore decepti sunt, quali vos deceptos vident."—St. August. Contr. Ep. Fund.

* "Ἀμφι ὃ ἄνθρώπων φρέσιν ἄμπλακίαι ἄναρίζητοι κρέμανται.

is true. Not true, because St. Cyprian's error was condemned by pope Stephen, which, in the present sense of the prevailing party in the church of Rome, is to be condemned by the church. Not to the purpose, because it is nothing else but to say that the church did tolerate their errors; for since those opinions were open and manifest to the world, that the church did not condemn them, it was either because those opinions were by the church not thought to be errors, or if they were, yet she thought fit to tolerate the error and the erring person. And if she would do so still it would, in most cases, be better than now it is. And yet, if the church had condemned them it had not altered the case as to this question; for either the persons, upon the condemnation of their error, should have been persecuted, or not. If not, why shall they now, against the instance and precedent of those ages who were confessedly wise and pious, and whose practices are often made to us arguments to follow? If yea, and that they had been persecuted, it is the thing which this argument condemns, and the loss of the church had been invaluable in the losing or the provocation and temptation of such rare personages; and the example and the rule of so ill consequence, that all persons might, upon the same ground, have suffered; and though some had escaped, yet no man could have any more security from punishment than from error.

6. Either the disagreeing person is in error or not, but a true believer; in either of the cases, to persecute him is extremely imprudent. For if he be a true believer, then it is a clear case that we do open violence to God, and his servants, and his truth. If he be in error, what greater folly and

stupidity than to give to error the glory of martyrdom, and the advantages which are accidentally consequent to a persecution? For as it was true of the martyrs, *Quoties morimur toties nascimur* ;* and the increase of their trouble was the increase of their confidence and the establishment of their persuasions, so it is in all false opinions; for that an opinion is true or false, is extrinsical or accidental to the consequents and advantages it gets by being afflicted. And there is a popular pity that follows all persons in misery, and that compassion breeds likeness of affections, and that very often produces likeness of persuasion; and so much the rather, because there arises a jealousy and pregnant suspicion that they who persecute an opinion are destitute of sufficient arguments to confute it, and that the hangman is the best disputant. For if those arguments which they have for their own doctrine were a sufficient ground of confidence and persuasion, men would be more willing to use those means which are better compliances with human understanding, which more naturally do satisfy it, which are more human and Christian, than that way which satisfies none, which destroys many, which provokes more, which makes all men jealous. To which add, that those who die for their opinion leave in all men great arguments of the heartiness of their belief, of the confidence of their persuasion, of the piety and innocency of their persons, of the purity of their intention and simplicity of purposes; that they are persons totally disinterested and separate from design. For no interest can be so great as to be put in balance

* "As often as we die, so often do we begin to live."

against a man's life and his soul, and he does very imprudently serve his ends who seemingly and fore-knowingly loses his life in the prosecution of them. Just as if Titius should offer to die for Sempronius, upon condition he might receive twenty talents when he had done his work. It is certainly an argument of a great love, and a great confidence, and a great sincerity, and a great hope, when a man lays down his life in attestation of a proposition. 'Greater love than this hath no man, than to lay down his life,' saith our blessed Saviour. And although laying of a wager is an argument of confidence more than truth, yet laying such a wager, staking of a man's soul, and pawning his life, gives a hearty testimony that the person is honest, confident, resigned, charitable, and noble. And I know not whether truth can do a person or a cause more advantages than these can do to an error. And therefore, besides the impiety, there is great imprudence in canonizing a heretic and consecrating an error by such means, which were better preserved as encouragements of truth and comforts to real and true martyrs. And it is not amiss to observe, that this very advantage was taken by heretics, who were ready to show and boast their catalogues of martyrs; in particular, the Circumcellians did so, and the Donatists; and yet the first were heretics, the second schismatics. And it was remarkable in the scholars of Priscilian, who, as they had their master in the reputation of a saint while he was living, so when he was dead they had him in veneration as a martyr; they with reverence and devotion carried his, and the bodies of his slain companions, to an honourable sepulchre, and counted it religion to swear by

the name of Priscillian. So that the extinguishing of the person gives life and credit to his doctrine, and when he is dead he yet speaks more effectually.

7. It is unnatural and unreasonable to persecute disagreeing opinions. Unnatural; for understanding being a thing wholly spiritual, cannot be restrained, and therefore neither punished by corporal afflictions. It is in *alienâ republicâ*, a matter of another world; you may as well cure the colic by brushing a man's clothes, or fill a man's belly with a syllogism: these things do not communicate in matter, and therefore neither in action nor passion; and since all punishments, in a prudent government, punish the offender to prevent a future crime, and so it proves more medicinal than vindictive, the punitive act being in order to the cure and prevention; and since no punishment of the body can cure a disease in the soul, it is disproportionable in nature; and in all civil government, to punish where the punishment can do no good, it may be an act of tyranny, but never of justice. For is an opinion ever the more true or false for being persecuted? Some men have believed it the more, as being provoked into a confidence and vexed into a resolution; but the thing itself is not the truer; and though the hangman may confute a man with an inexplicable dilemma, yet not convince his understanding; for such premises can infer no conclusion but that of a man's life; and a wolf may as well give laws to the understanding as he whose dictates are only propounded in violence and writ in blood. And a dog is as capable of a law as a man, if there be no choice in his obedience, nor discourse in his choice, nor reason to satisfy his discourse. And as it is unnatural, so it is

unreasonable that Sempronius should force Caius to be of his opinion, because Sempronius is consul this year and commands the Lictors; as if he that can kill a man cannot but be infallible: and if he be not, why should I do violence to my conscience because he can do violence to my person?

8. Force in matters of opinion can do no good, but is very apt to do hurt; for no man can change his opinion when he will, or be satisfied in his reason that his opinion is false because discountenanced. If a man could change his opinion when he lists, he might cure many inconveniences of his life: all his fears and his sorrows would soon disband, if he would but alter his opinion, whereby he is persuaded that such an accident that afflicts him is an evil, and such an object formidable; let him but believe himself impregnable, or that he receives a benefit when he is plundered, disgraced, imprisoned, condemned, and afflicted, neither his sleeps need to be disturbed, nor his quietness decomposed. But if a man cannot change his opinion when he lists, nor ever does heartily or resolutely but when he cannot do otherwise, then to use force may make him an hypocrite but never to be a right believer; and so, instead of erecting a trophy to God and true religion, we build a monument for the devil. Infinite examples are recorded in church story to this very purpose; but Socrates instances in one for all; for when Eleusius, bishop of Cyzicum, was threatened by the emperor Valens with banishment and confiscation if he did not subscribe to the decree of Ariminum, at last he yielded to the Arian opinion, and presently fell into great torment of conscience, openly at Cyzicum recanted the error, asked God and the church for-

giveness, and complained of the emperor's injustice, and that was all the good the Arian party got by offering violence to his conscience. And so many families in Spain, which are, as they call them, new Christians, and of a suspected faith, into which they were forced by the tyranny of the Inquisition, and yet are secret Moors, is evidence enough of the inconvenience of preaching a doctrine in *in ore gladii cruentandi*, at the point of the sword. For it either punishes a man for keeping a good conscience or forces him into a bad; it either punishes sincerity or persuades hypocrisy; it persecutes a truth or drives into error; and it teaches a man to dissemble and to be safe, but never to be honest.

9. It is one of the glories of Christian religion, that it was so pious, excellent, miraculous, and persuasive that it came in upon its own piety and wisdom, with no other force but a torrent of arguments, and demonstration of the Spirit; a mighty rushing wind to beat down all strong holds, and every high thought and imagination; but towards the persons of men it was always full of meekness and charity, compliance and toleration, condescension and bearing with one another, "restoring persons overtaken with an error, in the spirit of meekness, considering lest we also be tempted." The consideration is as prudent and the proposition as just as the precept is charitable and the precedent was pious and holy. Now, things are best conserved with that which gives it the first being, and which is agreeable to its temper and constitution. That precept which it chiefly preaches, in order to all the blessedness in the world, that is, of meekness, mercy, and charity, should also preserve itself,

and promote its own interest. For, indeed, nothing will do it so well; nothing doth so excellently insinuate itself into the understandings and affections of men, as when the actions and persuasions of a sect, and every part and principle and promotion are univocal. And it would be a mighty disparagement to so glorious an institution, that in its principle it should be merciful and humane, and in the promotion and propagation of it so inhuman; and it would be improbable and unreasonable that the sword should be used in the persuasion of one proposition, and yet, in the persuasion of the whole religion, nothing like it. To do so may serve the end of a temporal prince, but never promote the honour of Christ's kingdom; it may secure a design of Spain, but will very much disserve Christendom, to offer to support it by that which good men believe to be a distinctive cognizance of the Mahometan religion from the excellency and piety of Christianity, whose sense and spirit is described in those excellent words of St. Paul, *2 Tim. ii. 24*: 'The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth.' They that oppose themselves must not be stricken by any of God's servants; and, if yet any man will smite these who are his opposites in opinion, he will get nothing by that; he must quit the title of being a servant of God for his pains. And I think a distinction of persons secular and ecclesiastical will do no advantage for an escape; because even the secular power, if it be Christian and a servant of God, must not be 'a striker; the servant of the Lord must not strive.' I mean in those cases where

meekness of instruction is the remedy, or if the case be irremediable, abscission by censures is the penalty.

10. And if yet in the nature of the thing it were neither unjust nor unreasonable, yet there is nothing under God Almighty that hath power over the soul of man so as to command a persuasion, or to judge a disagreeing. Human positive laws direct all external acts in order to several ends, and the judges take cognizance accordingly; but no man can command the will, or punish him that obeys the law against his will: for, because its end is served in external obedience, it neither looks after more, neither can it be served by more, nor take notice of any more. And yet, possibly, the understanding is less subject to human power than the will, for the human power hath a command over external acts, which naturally and regularly flow from the will; and at most, suppose a direct act of will, but always either a direct or indirect volition, primary or accidental; but the understanding is a natural faculty, subject to no command but where the command is itself a reason fit to satisfy and persuade it. And therefore God commanding us to believe such revelations, persuades and satisfies the understanding by his commanding and revealing: for there is no greater probation in the world that a proposition is true, than because God hath commanded us to believe it. But because no man's command is a satisfaction to the understanding, or a verification of the proposition, therefore the understanding is not subject to human authority. They may persuade, but not enjoin where God hath not; and where God hath, if it appears so to him, he is an infidel if he does not believe it. And,

if all men have no other efficacy or authority on the understanding but by persuasion, proposal, and entreaty, then a man is bound to assent but according to the operation of the argument, and the energy of persuasion; neither, indeed, can he, though he would never so fain; and he that, out of fear and too much compliance and desire to be safe, shall desire to bring his understanding with some luxation to the belief of human dictates and authorities, may as often miss of the truth as hit it, but is sure always to lose the comfort of truth, because he believes it upon indirect, insufficient, and incompetent arguments; and as his desire it should be so is his best argument that it is so, so the pleasing of men is his best reward, and his not being condemned and contradicted all the possession of a truth.

SECTION XIV.

Of the Practice of Christian Churches towards Persons disagreeing, and when Persecution first came in.

AND thus this truth hath been practised in all times of Christian religion, when there were no collateral designs on foot, nor interests to be served, nor passions to be satisfied. In St. Paul's time, though the censure of heresy were not so loose and forward as afterwards; and all that were called heretics were clearly such, and highly criminal; yet as their crime was, so was their censure, that is, spiritual. They were first admonished, once at

least, for so Irenæus,* Tertullian,† Cyprian,‡ Ambrose,§ and Jerome,|| read that place of Titus iii. But since that time all men, and at that time some read it, ‘after a second admonition’ reject a heretic. Rejection from the communion of saints, after two warnings, that is the penalty. St. John expresses it by not eating with them, not bidding them God speed; but the persons against whom he decrees so severely, are such as denied Christ to be come in the flesh, direct antichrists; and, let the sentence be as high as it lists, in this case all that I observe is, that since in so damnable doctrines nothing but spiritual censure, separation from the communion of the faithful, was enjoined and prescribed, we cannot pretend to an apostolical precedent, if in matters of dispute and innocent question, and of great uncertainty and no malignity, we should proceed to sentence of death.

For it is but an absurd and illiterate arguing, to say that excommunication is a greater punishment, and killing a less; and, therefore, whoever may be excommunicated may also be put to death; (which, indeed, is the reasoning that Bellarmine uses;) for, first, excommunication is not directly and of itself a greater punishment than corporal death; because it is indefinite and incomplete, and in order to a further punishment, which, if it happens, then the excommunication was the inlet to it; if it does not, the excommunication did not signify half so much as the loss of a member, much less death. For it may be totally ineffectual, either by the iniquity of the proceeding or repentance of the person; and, in all times and cases, it is a me-

* Lib. iii. c. 3.

† De Præscript.

‡ Lib. ad Quirinum.

§ In hunc locum.

|| Ibidem.

dicine if the man please ; if he will not, but perseveres in his impiety, then it is himself that brings the censure to effect, that actuates the judgment, and gives a sting and an energy upon that which otherwise would be *χρεῖσ ἀκυρος*, “an authority without force.” Secondly, but when it is at worst, it does not kill the soul, it only consigns it to that death which it had deserved, and should have received independently from that sentence of the church. Thirdly, and yet excommunication is to admirable purpose ; for whether it refers to the person censured or to others, it is prudential in itself, it is exemplary to others, it is medicinal to all. For the person censured is by this means threatened into piety, and the threatening made the more energetical upon him because, by fiction of law, or as it were, by a sacramental representment, the pains of hell are made presential to him ; and so becomes an act of prudent judicature and excellent discipline, and the best instrument of spiritual government ; because the nearer the threatening is reduced to matter, and the more present and circumstantial it is made, the more operative it is upon our spirits while they are immersed in matter. And this is the full sense and power of excommunication in its direct intention : consequently and accidentally other evils might follow it, as in the times of the apostles the censured persons were buffeted by Satan ; and even at this day there is less security even to the temporal condition of such a person whom his spiritual parents have anathematised. But, besides this, I know no warrant to affirm any thing of excommunication, for the sentence of the church does but declare, not effect the final sentence of damnation. Whoever deserves

excommunication deserves damnation ; and he that repents shall be saved, though he die out of the church's external communion ; and if he does not repent he shall be damned, though he was not excommunicate.

But suppose it greater than the sentence of corporal death, yet it follows not because heretics may be excommunicate therefore killed ; for from a greater to a less, in a several kind of things, the argument concludes not. It is a greater thing to make an excellent discourse than to make a shoe ; yet he that can do the greater cannot do this less. An angel cannot beget a man, and yet he can do a greater matter, in that kind of operations which we term spiritual and angelical. And if this were concluding, that whoever may be excommunicate may be killed, then, because of excommunications the church is confessed the sole and entire judge, she is also an absolute disposer of the lives of persons. I believe this will be but ill doctrine in Spain : for in *Bullâ Cœnæ Domini*, the king of Spain is every year excommunicated on Maunday Thursday. But if, by the same power, he might also be put to death, (as upon this ground he may,) the pope might, with more ease, be invested in that part of St. Peter's patrimony which that king hath invaded and surprised. But besides this, it were extreme harsh doctrine in a Roman consistory, from whence excommunications issue for trifles, for fees, for not suffering themselves infinitely to be oppressed, for any thing : if this be greater than death, how great a tyranny is that which does more than kill men for less than trifles ; or else how inconsequent is that argument which concludes its purpose upon so false pretence and supposition ?

Well, however zealous the apostles were against heretics, yet none were by them or their dictates put to death. The death of Annanias and Sapphira, and the blindness of Elymas the sorcerer, amount not to this, for they were miraculous inflictions; and the first was a punishment to vow-breach and sacrilege, the second of sorcery and open contestation against the religion of Jesus Christ; neither of them concerned the case of this present question. Or if the case were the same, yet the authority is not the same; for he that inflicted these punishments was infallible, and of a power competent; but no man at this day is so. But, as yet, people were converted by miracles, and preaching, and disputing; and heretics, by the same means, were regarded, and all men instructed, none tortured for their opinion. And this continued till Christian people were vexed by disagreeing persons, and were impatient and peevish, by their own too much confidence, and the luxuriancy of a prosperous fortune; but then they would not endure persons that did dogmatize any thing which might intrench upon their reputation or their interest. And it is observable, that no man nor no age did ever teach the lawfulness of putting heretics to death, till they grew wanton with prosperity. But when the reputation of the governors was concerned, when the interests of men were endangered, when they had something to lose, when they had built their estimation upon the credit of disputable questions, when they began to be jealous of other men, when they overvalued themselves and their own opinions, when some persons invaded bishoprics upon pretence of new opinions—then they, as they thrived in the favour of emperors, and in the success of

their disputes, solicited the temporal power to banish, to fine, to imprison, and to kill their adversaries.

So that the case stands thus:—In the best times, amongst the best men, when there were fewer temporal ends to be served, when religion and the pure and simple designs of Christianity were only to be promoted; in those times, and amongst such men, no persecution was actual, nor persuaded, nor allowed, towards disagreeing persons. But as men had ends of their own and not of Christ's, as they receded from their duty, and religion from its purity; as Christianity began to be compounded with interests, and blended with temporal designs, so men were persecuted for their opinions. This is most apparent, if we consider when persecution first came in, and if we observe how it was checked by the holiest and the wisest persons.

The first great instance I shall note, was in Priscillian and his followers, who were condemned to death by the tyrant Maximus: which instance, although St. Jerome observes as a punishment and judgment for the crime of heresy, yet is of no use in the present question, because Maximus put some Christians of all sorts to death promiscuously, catholic and heretic, without choice; and therefore the Priscillianists might as well have called it a judgment upon the catholics, as the catholics upon them.

But when Ursæus and Statius, two bishops, procured the Priscillianists' death, by the power they had at court, St. Martin was so angry at them for their cruelty, that he excommunicated them both. And St. Ambrose, upon the same stock, denied his communion to the Itaciani. And the account that

Sulpitius gives of the story is this : “ The example was worse than the men. If the men were heretical the execution of them, however, was unchristian.”*

But it was of more authority that the Nicene fathers supplicated the emperor, and prevailed for the banishment of Arius; † of this we can give no other account, but that, by the history of the time, we see baseness enough, and personal misdemeanour, and factiousness of spirit in Arius to have deserved worse than banishment, ‡ though the obliquity of his opinion were not put into the balance ; which we have reason to believe was not so much as considered, because Constantine gave toleration to differing opinions, and Arius himself was restored upon such conditions to his country and office, which would not stand with the ends of the catholics, if they had been severe exactors of concurrence and union of persuasions.

I am still within the scene of ecclesiastical persons, and am considering what the opinions of the learnedest and the holiest prelates were concerning this great question. If we will believe St. Austin, (who was a credible person,) no good man did allow it. “ No good men approve of inflicting death upon any one, though he be a heretic.”§ This was St. Austin’s final opinion ; for he had first been of the mind that it was not honest to do any violence to

* “ Hoc modo homines luce indignissimi pessimo exemplo necati sunt.”

† Sozom. lib. i. c. 20.

‡ Socrat. lib. i. c. 26. cont. Crescon. Grammat. lib. iii. c. 59. Vide etiam Epist. lxi. ad Dulciliū, et Epist. clviii, et cxcix. et lib. i. c. 29. cont. tit. Petilian. Vide etiam Socrat. lib. iii. c. 3, et. 29.

§ “ Nullis tamen bonis in catholicā hoc placet, si usque ad mortem in quenquam, licet hæreticum, sæviatur.”—Lib. ii. cap. 5. Retractat. Vide Epist. 48, ad Vincent. script. post Retract. et Epist. 50, ad Bonifac.

mispersuaded persons; and when, upon an accident happening in Hippo, he had altered and retracted that part of the opinion, yet, then also he excepted death, and would by no means have any mere opinion made capital. But for aught appears, St. Austin had greater reason to have retracted that retraction than his first opinion: for his saying, of *nullis bonis placet*, “no good men approve of it,” was as true as the thing was reasonable it should be so. Witness those known testimonies of Tertullian,* Cyprian,† Lactantius,‡ Jerôme,§ Sulpitius Severus,|| Minutius,¶ Hilary,* Damascen,† Chrysostom,‡ Theophylact,§ and Bernard,|| and divers others, whom the reader may find quoted by the archbishop of Spalato.¶

Against this concurrent testimony my reading can furnish me with no adversary nor contrary instances, but in Atticus of Constantinople, Theodosius of Synada, in Statius and Ursæus, before reckoned. Only, indeed, some of the later popes of Rome began to be busy and unmerciful, but it was then when themselves were secure, and their interests great, and their temporal concernments highly considerable.

For it is most true, and not amiss to observe it, that no man who was under the ferula did ever think it lawful to have opinions forced, or heretics put to death; and yet many men, who themselves have escaped the danger of a pile and a faggot,

* Ad Scapulam.

† Lib. iii. Ep. 1. Epist.

‡ Lib. v. c. 20. § In cap. 13, Matt. et in cap. 2. Hos.

|| In Vit St. Martin. ¶ Octav. * Cont. Auxent. Arr.

† 3 Sect. c. 32. ‡ In cap. 13, Matt. Hom. 47.

§ In Evang. Matt. || In verba Apost. fides ex auditu.

¶ Lib. viii. de Rep. Eccles. cap. 8.

have changed their opinion just as the case was altered ; that is, as themselves were unconcerned in the suffering. Petilian, Parmenian, and Gaudentius,* by no means would allow it lawful, for themselves were in danger, and were upon that side that is ill thought of and discountenanced : but Gregory † and Leo, ‡ popes of Rome, upon whose side the authority and advantages were, thought it lawful they should be punished and persecuted, for themselves were unconcerned in the danger of suffering. And therefore St. Gregory commends the exarch of Ravenna, for forcing them who dissented from those men who called themselves the church. And there were some divines in the Lower Germany, who, upon great reasons, spake against the tyranny of the inquisition, and restraining prophesying, who yet, when they had shaken off the Spanish yoke, began to persecute their brethren. It was unjust in them, in all men unreasonable and uncharitable, and often increases the error, but never lessens the danger.

But yet, although the church, I mean in her distinct and clerical capacity, was against destroying or punishing difference in opinion, till the popes of Rome did super-seminate, and persuade the contrary, yet the bishops did persuade the emperors to make laws against heretics, and to punish disobedient persons with fines, with imprisonment, with death and banishment respectively. This, indeed, calls us to a new account : for the churchmen might not proceed to blood, nor corporal in-

* Apud. Aug. lib. i. c. 7, cont. Epist. Parmenian. et lib. ii. c. 10, cont. tit. Petilian.

† Epist. i. ad Turbium. ‡ Lib. i. Ep. 72.

fictions, but might they not deliver over to the secular arm, and persuade temporal princes to do it? For this I am to say, that since it is notorious that the doctrine of the clergy was against punishing heretics, the laws which were made by the emperors against them might be for restraint of differing religion, in order to the preservation of the public peace, which is too frequently violated by the division of opinions. But I am not certain whether that was always the reason, or whether or no some bishops of the court did not also serve their own ends, in giving their princes such untoward counsel; but we find the laws made severally to several purposes, in divers cases, and with different severity. Constantine the emperor made a sanction, “that they who erred might enjoy the blessing of peace and quietness equally with the faithful.”* The emperor Gratian decreed, “that every one might follow what religious opinion he chose, and that all might come to the ecclesiastical conventions without apprehension;”† but he excepted the Manichees, the Photinians, and Eunomians. Theodosius the elder made a law of death against the Anabaptists of his time, and banished Eunomius, and against other erring persons appointed a pecuniary mulct; but he did no executions so severe as his sanctions, to show they were made *in terrorem* only.‡ So were the laws of Valentinian and Martian, § decreeing, *contra omnes*

* “Ut parem cum fidelibus ii qui errant pacis et quietis fruitionem gaudentes accipiant.”—Apud. Euseb. de Vita Constant.

† “Ut quam quisque vellet religionem sequeretur; et conventus Ecclesiasticos semoto metu omnes agerent.”

‡ Vide Socrat. lib. vii. c. 12.

§ Vid. Cod. de Hæretic. L. Manichees. et leg. Arriani, et l. Quicunque.

qui prava docere tenent, “ who persisted in teaching heretical opinions,” that they should be put to death; so did Michael* the emperor, but Justinian only decreed banishment.

But whatever whispers some politics might make to their princes, as the wisest and holiest did not think it lawful for churchmen alone to do executions, so neither did they transmit such persons to the secular judicature. And therefore, when the edict of Macedonius, the president, was so ambiguous, that it seemed to threaten death to heretics unless they recanted, St. Austin admonished him carefully to provide that no heretic should be put to death; alleging it, also, not only to be unchristian, but illegal also, and not warranted by imperial constitutions; for before his time no laws were made for their being put to death; but, however, he prevailed that Macedonius published another edict, more explicit and less seemingly severe. But in his epistle to Donatus, the African proconsul, he is more confident and determinate: “ We are impelled by necessity rather to perish by them, than to rush upon those who are devoted to destruction by your decrees.” †

But afterwards, many got a trick of giving them over to the secular power, which at the best is no better than hypocrisy, removing envy from themselves, and laying it upon others; a refusing to do that in external act which they do in council and approbation; which is a transmitting the act to another, and retaining a proportion of guilt unto themselves, even their own and the others' too. I end this

* Apud Paulum Diac. lib. xvi. et lib. xxiv.

† “ Necessitate nobis impactâ et indictâ, ut potius occidi ab eis eligamus, quam eos occidendos vestris judiciis ingeramus.”

with the saying of Chrysostom: "We ought to reprove and condemn impieties and heretical *doctrines*, but to spare the *men*, and to pray for their salvation."*

SECTION XV.

How far the Church or Governors may act to the restraining false or differing Opinions.

BUT although heretical persons are not to be destroyed, yet heresy being a work of the flesh, and all heretics criminal persons, whose acts and doctrine have influence upon communities of men, whether ecclesiastical or civil, the governors of the republic, or church, respectively, are to do their duties in restraining those mischiefs which may happen to their several charges, for whose indemnity they are answerable. And therefore, according to the effect or malice of the doctrine or the person, so the cognizance of them belongs to several judicatures. If it be false doctrine in any capacity, and doth mischief in any sense, or teaches ill life in any instance, or encourages evil in any particular, *ὅτι ἐπιπορεύειν*, these men must be silenced; they must be convinced by sound doctrine, and put to silence by spiritual evidence, and restrained by authority ecclesiastical; that is, by spiritual cen-

* "Dogmata impia, et quæ ab hæreticis profecta sunt arguere et anathematizare oportet, hominibus autem parcendum et pro salute eorum orandum."—Serm. de Anathemate.

tures, according as it seems necessary to him who is most concerned in the regimen of the church. For all this we have precept, and precedent apostolical, and much reason. For by thus doing the governor of the church uses all that authority that is competent, and all the means that is reasonable, and that proceeding which is regular, that he may discharge his cure and secure his flock. And that he possibly may be deceived in judging a doctrine to be heretical, and, by consequence, the person excommunicate suffers injury, is no argument against the reasonableness of the proceeding. For all the injury that is visible and in appearance, and so is his crime. Judges must judge according to their best reason, guided by the law of God as their rule, and by evidence and appearance as their best instrument, and they can judge no better. If the judges be good and prudent, the error of proceeding will not be great nor ordinary; and there can be no better establishment of human judicature than is a fallible proceeding upon an infallible ground: and if the judgment of heresy be made by estimate and proportion of the opinion to a good or a bad life respectively, supposing an error in the deduction, there will be no malice in the conclusion; and that he endeavours to secure piety according to the best of his understanding, and yet did mistake in his proceeding, is only an argument that he did his duty after the manner of men, possibly with the piety of a saint, though not with the understanding of an angel. And the little inconvenience that happens to the person injuriously judged, is abundantly made up in the excellency of the discipline, the goodness of the example, the care of the public, and all those great influences

into the manners of men which derive from such an act so publicly consigned. But such public judgment in matters of opinion must be seldom and curious, and never but to secure piety and a holy life; for in matters speculative, as all determinations are fallible, so scarce any of them are to purpose, nor ever able to make compensation of either side, either for the public fraction or the particular injustice, if it should so happen in the censure.

But then, as the church may proceed thus far, yet no Christian man, or community of men, may proceed farther. For if they be deceived in their judgment and censure, and yet have passed only spiritual censures, they are totally ineffectual, and come to nothing; there is no effect remaining upon the soul, and such censures are not to meddle with the body so much as indirectly. But, if any other judgment pass upon persons erring, such judgments whose effects remain, if the person be unjustly censured, nothing will answer and make compensation for such injuries. If a person be excommunicate unjustly, it will do him no hurt; but if he be killed, or dismembered unjustly, that censure and infliction is not made ineffectual by his innocence, he is certainly killed and dismembered. So that as the church's authority in such cases, so restrained and made prudent, cautelous, and orderly, is just and competent; so the proceeding is reasonable, it is provident for the public, and the inconveniences that may fall upon particulars so little, as that the public benefit makes ample compensation, so long as the proceeding is but spiritual.

This discourse is in the case of such opinions, which, by the former rules, are formal heresies, and

upon practical inconveniences. But, for matters of question which have not in them an enmity to the public tranquillity, as the republic hath nothing to do, upon the ground of all the former discourses, so, if the church meddles with them where they do not derive into ill life, either in the person or in the consequent, or else the destructions of the foundation of religion, which is all one; for that those fundamental articles are of greatest necessity, in order to a virtuous and godly life, which is wholly built upon them, (and therefore are principally necessary)—if she meddles further, otherwise than by preaching, and conferring, and exhortation, she becomes tyrannical in her government, makes herself an immediate judge of consciences and persuasions, lords it over their faith, destroys unity and charity; and, as he that dogmatizes the opinion becomes criminal, if he troubles the church with an immodest, peevish, and pertinacious proposal of his article, not simply necessary; so the church does not do her duty, if she so condemns it *pro tribunali*, as to enjoin him and all her subjects to believe the contrary. And as there may be pertinacy in doctrine, so there may be pertinacy in judging, and both are faults. The peace of the church, and the unity of her doctrine is best conserved when it is judged by the proportion it hath to that rule of unity which the apostles gave, that is, the creed for articles of mere belief, and the precepts of Jesus Christ, and the practical rules of piety, which are most plain and easy, and without controversy set down in the gospels and writings of the apostles. But to multiply articles, and adopt them into the family of the faith, and to require assent to such articles, which (as St. Paul's phrase is) are of

doubtful disputation, equal to that assent we give to matters of faith, is to build a tower upon the top of a bulrush; and the further the effect of such proceedings does extend, the worse they are; the very making such a law is unreasonable; the inflicting spiritual censures upon them that cannot do so much violence to their understanding as to obey it, is unjust and ineffectual; but to punish the person with death, or with corporal infliction, indeed it is effectual, but it is therefore tyrannical. We have seen what the church may do towards restraining false or differing opinions; next I shall consider, by way of corollary, what the prince may do as for his interest, and only in securing his people, and serving the ends of true religion.

SECTION XVI.

Whether it be lawful for a Prince to give Toleration to several Religions.

FOR upon these very grounds we may easily give account of that great question, whether it be lawful for a prince to give toleration to several religions?

For, first, it is a great fault that men will call the several sects of Christians by the names of several religions. The religion of Jesus Christ is the form of sound doctrine and wholesome words, which is set down in Scripture indefinitely, actually conveyed to us by plain places, and separated as for the question of necessary or not necessary by the

symbol of the apostles. Those impertinencies which the wantonness and vanity of men hath commenced, which their interests have promoted, which serve not truth so much as their own ends, are far from being distinct religions; for matters of opinion are no parts of the worship of God, nor in order to it, but as they promote obedience to his commandments; and when they contribute towards it, are, in that proportion as they contribute, parts and actions, and minute particulars of that religion to whose end they do, or pretend to serve. And such are all the sects and all the pretences of Christians, but pieces and minutes of Christianity, if they do serve the great end, as every man for his own sect and interest believes for his share it does.

2. Toleration hath a double sense or purpose: for sometimes by it men understand a public license and exercise of a sect; sometimes it is only an indemnity of the persons privately to convene and to opine as they see cause, and as they mean to answer to God. Both these are very much to the same purpose, unless some persons whom we are bound to satisfy be scandalized; and then the prince is bound to do as he is bound to satisfy. *To God it is all one.* For, abstracting from the offence of persons, which is to be considered just as our obligation is to content the persons, it is all one whether we indulge to them to meet publicly or privately, to do actions of religion, concerning which we are not persuaded that they are truly holy. To God it is just one to be in the dark and in the light; the thing is the same, only the circumstance of public and private is different, which cannot be concerned in any thing, nor can it concern

any thing but the matter of scandal and relation to the minds and fantasies of certain persons.

3. So that to tolerate is not to persecute. And the question, whether the prince may tolerate divers persuasions, is no more than whether he may lawfully persecute any man for not being of his opinion. Now, in this case, he is just so to tolerate diversity of persuasions as he is to tolerate public actions; for no opinion is judicable, nor no person punishable, but for a sin; and if his opinion, by reason of its managing or its effect, be a sin in itself, or becomes a sin to the person, then, as he is to do towards other sins, so to that opinion or man so opining. But to believe so, or not so, when there is no more but mere believing, is not in his power to enjoin, therefore not to punish. And it is not only lawful to tolerate disagreeing persuasions, but the authority of God only is competent to take notice of it, and infallible to determine it, and fit to judge; and therefore no human authority is sufficient to do all those things which can justify the inflicting temporal punishments upon such as do not conform in their persuasions to a rule or authority which is not only fallible, but supposed by the disagreeing person to be actually deceived.

But I consider, that in the toleration of a different opinion, religion is not properly and immediately concerned, so as in any degree to be endangered. For it may be safe in diversity of persuasions, and it is also a part of Christian religion,* that the liberty of men's consciences should

* " *Humani juris et naturalis potestatis, unicuique quod putaverit, colere. Sed nec religionis est cogere religionem, quæ suscipi sponte debet, non vi.*"—Tertul. ad Scapulam.

be preserved in all things, where God hath not set a limit and made a restraint; that the soul of man should be free, and acknowledge no master but Jesus Christ; that matters spiritual should not be restrained by punishments corporal; that the same meekness and charity should be preserved in the promotion of Christianity, that gave it foundation, and increment, and firmness in its first publication; that conclusions should not be more dogmatical than the virtual resolution and efficacy of the premises; and that the persons should not more certainly be condemned than their opinions confuted; and lastly, that the infirmities of men and difficulties of things should be both put in balance, to make abatement in the definitive sentence against men's persons. But then, because toleration of opinions is not properly a question of religion, it may be a question of policy: and although a man may be a good Christian, though he believe an error not fundamental, and not directly or evidently impious, yet his opinion may accidentally disturb the public peace, through the overactiveness of the person, and the confidence of their belief, and the opinion of its appendant necessity; and therefore toleration of differing persuasions, in these cases, is to be considered upon political grounds, and is just so to be admitted or denied as the opinions or toleration of them may consist with the public and necessary ends of government. Only this: as Christian princes must look to the interest of their government, so especially must they consider the interests of Christianity, and not call redargution or modest discovery of an established error, by the name of disturbance of the peace. For it is very likely that the peevishness and im-

patience of contradiction in the governors may break the peace. Let them remember but the gentleness of Christianity, the liberty of consciences which ought to be preserved; and let them do justice to the persons, whoever they are that are peevish, provided no man's person be overborne with prejudice. For if it be necessary for all men to subscribe to the present established religion, by the same reason, at another time, a man may be bound to subscribe to the contradictory, and so to all religions in the world. And they only who by their too much confidence entitle God to all their fancies, and make them to be questions of religion and evidences for heaven, or consignations to hell, they only think this doctrine unreasonable; and they are the men that first disturb the church's peace, and then think there is no appeasing the tumult but by getting the victory. But they that consider things wisely, understand, that since salvation and damnation depend not upon impertinencies, and yet that public peace and tranquillity may; the prince is in this case to seek how to secure government, and the issues and intentions of that, while there is in the cases directly no insecurity to religion, unless by the accidental uncharitableness of them that dispute; which uncharitableness is also much prevented when the public peace is secured, and no person is on either side engaged upon revenge,* or troubled with disgrace, or vexed with punishments by any decretory sentence against him. It was the saying of a wise statesman, (I mean Thuanus:)+ “If you persecute heretics or

* “*Dextera præcipuè capit indulgentia mentes, asperitas odium sævaque bella parit.*”

† “*Hæretici qui pace data factionibus scinduntur, persecutione uniuntur contra remp.*”

discrepant, they unite themselves as to a common defence: if you permit them, they divide themselves upon private interest;" and the rather, if this interest was an ingredient of the opinion.

The sum is this: it concerns the duty of a prince because it concerns the honour of God, that all vices and every part of ill life be discountenanced and restrained; and therefore, in relation to that, opinions are to be dealt with. For the understanding being to direct the will, and opinions to guide our practices, they are considerable only as they teach impiety and vice, as they either dishonour God or disobey him. Now all such doctrines are to be condemned; but for the persons preaching such doctrines, if they neither justify nor approve the pretended consequences which are certainly impious, they are to be separated from that consideration. But if they know such consequences and allow them, or if they do not stay till the doctrines produce impiety, but take sin beforehand, and manage them impiously in any sense; or if either themselves or their doctrine do really and without colour or feigned pretext disturb the public peace and just interests, they are not to be suffered. In all other cases, it is not only lawful to permit them, but it is also necessary that princes and all in authority should not persecute discrepant opinions. And in such cases, wherein persons not otherwise incompetent are bound to reprove an error, (as they are in many,) in all these, if the prince makes restraint he hinders men from doing their duty, and from obeying the laws of Jesus Christ.

SECTION XVII.

Of Compliance with disagreeing Persons, or weak Consciences in general.

UPON these grounds it remains that we reduce this doctrine to practical conclusions, and consider among the differing sects and opinions which trouble these parts of Christendom, and come into our concernment, which sects of Christians are to be tolerated, and how far; and which are to be restrained and punished in their several proportions.

The first consideration is, that since diversity of opinions does more concern public peace than religion, what is to be done to persons who disobey a public sanction, upon a true allegation that they cannot believe it to be lawful to obey such constitutions, although they disbelieve them upon insufficient grounds; that is, whether in *constituta lege* disagreeing persons or weak consciences are to be complied withal, and their disobeying and disagreeing tolerated?

1. In this question, there is no distinction can be made between persons truly weak, and but pretending so. For all that pretend to it are to be allowed the same liberty, whatsoever it be; for no man's spirit is known to any but to God and himself; and therefore pretences and realities, in this case, are both alike, in order to the public toleration. And this very thing is one argument to per-

suade a negative. For the chief thing in this case is the concernment of public government, which is then most of all violated, when what may prudently be permitted to some purposes may be demanded to many more, and the piety of the laws abused to the impiety of other men's ends. And if laws be made so malleable, as to comply with weak consciences, he that hath a mind to disobey is made impregnable against the coercitive power of the law by this pretence. For a weak conscience signifies nothing in this case but a dislike of the law upon a contrary persuasion. For if some weak consciences do obey the law, and others do not, it is not their weakness indefinitely that is the cause of it, but a definite and particular persuasion to the contrary. So that if such a pretence be excuse sufficient from obeying, then the law is a sanction obliging every one to obey that hath a mind to it, and he that hath not may choose; that is, it is no law at all; for he that hath a mind to it may do it, if there be no law, and he that hath no mind to it need not for all the law.

And therefore the wit of man cannot prudently frame a law of that temper and expedient, but either he must lose the formality of a law, and neither have power coercitive nor obligatory, but by the will of inferiors, or else it cannot, antecedently to the particular case, give leave to any sort of men to disagree or disobey.

2. Suppose that a law be made, with great reason, so as to satisfy divers persons, pious and prudent, that it complies with the necessity of government, and promotes the interest of God's service and public order, it may be easily imagined that these persons, which are obedient sons of the church,

may be as zealous for the public order and discipline of the church, as others for their opinion against it, and may be as much scandalized, if disobedience be tolerated, as others are if the law be exacted; and what shall be done in this case? Both sorts of men cannot be complied withal, because, as these pretend to be offended at the law, and by consequence, (if they understand the consequents of their own opinion,) at them that obey the law; so the others are justly offended at them that unjustly disobey it. If, therefore, there be any on the right side as confident and zealous as they who are on the wrong side, then the disagreeing persons are not to be complied with to avoid giving offence; for if they be, offence is given to better persons, and so the mischief which such complying seeks to prevent is made greater and more unjust, obedience is discouraged, and disobedience is legally canonized for the result of a holy and a tender conscience.

3. Such complying with the disagreeings of a sort of men, is the total overthrow of all discipline; and it is better to make no laws of public worship, than to rescind them in the very constitution; and there can be no end in making the sanction but to make the law ridiculous, and the authority contemptible. For, to say that complying with weak consciences, in the very framing of a law of discipline, is the way to preserve unity, were all one as to say, to take away all laws is the best way to prevent disobedience. In such matters of indifferency, the best way of cementing the fraction is to unite the parts in the authority; for then the question is but one, viz. whether the authority must be obeyed or not? But if a permission be given of disputing the

particulars, the questions become next to infinite. A mirror, when it is broken, represents the object multiplied and divided; but if it be entire, and through one centre transmits the species to the eye, the vision is one and natural. Laws are the mirror in which men are to dress and compose their actions, and therefore must not be broken with such clauses of exception, which may, without remedy, be abused, to the prejudice of authority, and peace, and all human sanctions. And I have known, in some churches, that this pretence hath been nothing but a design to discredit the law, to dismantle the authority that made it, to raise their own credit, and a trophy of their zeal, to make it a characteristic note of a sect, and the cognizance of holy persons; and yet the men that claimed exemption from the laws, upon pretence of having weak consciences, if in hearty expression you had told them so to their heads, they would have spit in your face, and were so far from confessing themselves weak, that they thought themselves able to give laws to Christendom, to instruct the greatest clerks, and to catechise the church herself. And which is the worst of all, they who were perpetually clamorous that the severity of the laws should slacken as to their particular, and in matter adia-phorous, (in which, if the church hath any authority, she hath power to make laws,) to indulge a leave to them to do as they list, yet were the most imperious amongst men, most decretory in their sentences, and most impatient of any disagreeing from them, though in the least minute and particular; whereas, by all the justice of the world, they who persuade such a compliance in matters of fact, and of so little question, should not deny to

tolerate persons that differ in questions of great difficulty and contestation.

4. But yet, since all things almost in the world have been made matters of dispute, and the will of some men, and the malice of others, and the infinite industry and pertinacy of contesting, and resolution to conquer, hath abused some persons innocently into a persuasion that even the laws themselves, though never so prudently constituted, are superstitious or impious, such persons who are otherwise pious, humble, and religious, are not to be destroyed for such matters, which in themselves are not of concernment to salvation, and neither are so accidentally to such men and in such cases where they are innocently abused, and they err without purpose and design. And therefore, if there be a public disposition in some persons to dislike laws of a certain quality, if it be foreseen, it is to be considered *in lege dicendâ*, (in the framing of a statute;) and whatever inconvenience or particular offence is foreseen, is either to be directly avoided in the law, or else a compensation in the excellency of the law, and certain advantages made to outweigh their pretensions: but *in lege jam dictâ*, (in a statute already enacted,) because there may be a necessity some persons should have a liberty indulged them, it is necessary that the governors of the church should be entrusted with a power to consider the particular case, and indulge a liberty to the person, and grant personal dispensations. This, I say, is to be done at several times, upon particular instance, upon singular consideration, and new emergencies. But that a whole kind of men, such a kind to which all men, without possibility of being confuted may pretend, should at

once, in the very frame of the law, be permitted to disobey, is to nullify the law, to destroy discipline, and to hallow disobedience; it takes away the obliging part of the law, and makes that the thing enacted shall not be enjoined, but tolerated only; it destroys unity and uniformity, which to preserve was the very end of such laws of discipline; it bends the rule to the thing which is to be ruled, so that the law obeys the subject, not the subject the law; it is to make a law for particulars, not upon general reason and congruity, against the prudence and design of all laws in the world, and absolutely without the example of any church in Christendom; it prevents no scandal, for some will be scandalized at the authority itself, some at the complying, and remissness of discipline, and several men at matters and upon ends contradictory: all which cannot, some ought not, to be complied withal.

6. The sum is this: the end of the laws of discipline is in an immediate order to the conservation and ornament of the public, and therefore the laws must not so tolerate, as by conserving persons to destroy themselves and the public benefit; but if there be cause for it, they must be cassated; or if there be no sufficient cause, the complyings must be so as may best preserve the particulars, in conjunction with the public end, which, because it is primarily intended, is of greatest consideration; but the particulars, whether of case or person, are to be considered occasionally and emergently by the judges, but cannot antecedently and regularly be determined by a law.

But this sort of men is of so general pretence, that all laws and all judges may easily be abused

by them. Those sects which are signified by a name, which have a system of articles, a body of profession, may be more clearly determined in their question concerning the lawfulness of permitting their professions and assemblies.

I shall instance in two, which are most troublesome and most disliked; and by an account made of these, we may make judgment what may be done towards others, whose errors are not apprehended of so great malignity. The men I mean are the anabaptists and the papists.

SECTION XVIII.

A particular consideration of the Opinions of the Anabaptists.

IN the Anabaptists I consider only their two capital opinions, the one against the baptism of infants, the other against magistracy; and because they produce different judgments and various effects, all their other fancies, which vary as the moon does, may stand or fall in their proportion and likeness to these.

And first, I consider their denying baptism to infants: although it be a doctrine justly condemned by the most sorts of Christians, upon great grounds of reason, yet possibly their defence may be so great as to take off much, and rebate the edge of their adversaries' assault. It will be neither unpleasant nor unprofitable to draw a short scheme

of plea for each party, the result of which possibly may be, that though they be deceived, yet they have so great excuse on their side that their error is not impudent or vincible. The baptism of infants rests wholly upon this discourse.

When God made a covenant with Abraham, for himself and his posterity, into which the gentiles were reckoned by spiritual adoption, he did, for the present, consign that covenant with the sacrament of circumcision. The extent of which rite was to all his family, from the *major domo*, (the head or patriarch,) to the *proselytus domicilio*, (the proselyte among his servants,) and to infants of eight days old. Now the very nature of this covenant being a covenant of faith for its formality, and with all faithful people for the object, and circumcision being a seal of this covenant, if ever any rite do supervene to consign the same covenant, that rite must acknowledge circumcision for its type and precedent. And this the apostle tells us, in express doctrine. Now the nature of types is to give some proportions to its successor, the antitype; and they both being seals of the same righteousness of faith, it will not easily be found where these two seals have any such distinction in their nature or purposes, as to appertain to persons of differing capacity, and not equally concern all; and this argument was thought of so much force by some of those excellent men which were bishops in the primitive church, that a good bishop writ an epistle to St. Cyprian, to know of him whether or no it were lawful to baptize infants before the eighth day, because the type of baptism was ministered in that circumcision; he, in his discourse, supposing that the first rite was a direction to the second,

which prevailed with him so far as to believe it to limit every circumstance.

And not only this type, but the acts of Christ which were previous to the institution of baptism, did prepare our understanding by such impresses as were sufficient to produce such persuasion in us, that Christ intended this ministry for the actual advantage of infants as well as of persons of understanding. For Christ commanded that children should be brought unto him, he took them in his arms, he imposed hands on them and blessed them; and, without question, did, by such acts of favour, consign his love to them, and them to a capacity of an eternal participation of it. And possibly the invitation which Christ made to all to come to him, all them that are heavy laden, did, in its proportion, concern infants as much as others, if they be guilty of original sin, and if that sin be a burthen, and presses them to spiritual danger or inconvenience. And it is all the reason of the world, that since the grace of Christ is as large as the prevarication of Adam, all they who are made guilty by the first Adam should be cleansed by the second. But as they are guilty by another man's act, so they should be brought to the font to be purified by others, there being the same proportion of reason, that by others' acts they should be relieved who were in danger of perishing by the act of others. And therefore St. Austin argues excellently to this purpose: "The church furnishes them with the feet of others that they may come, with the heart of others that they may believe, with the tongue of others that they may make confession; in order that, as they are diseased in consequence of another's sin, so being

made whole by another's confession, they may be saved."* And Justin Martyr: "The children of pious parents are accounted worthy of baptism, through the faith of those who bring them to be baptized."†

But whether they have original sin or no, yet take them in their state as they are by nature, they cannot go to God, or attain to eternity, to which they were intended in their first being and creation: and therefore, much less since their naturals are impaired by the curse on human nature procured by Adam's prevarication. And if a natural agent cannot in its state of nature attain to heaven, which is a supernatural end, much less when it is loaden with accidental and grievous impediments. Now, then, since the only way revealed to us of acquiring heaven is by Jesus Christ, and the first inlet into Christianity and access to him is by baptism, as appears by the perpetual analogy of the New Testament, either infants are not persons capable of that end which is the perfection of human nature, and to which the soul of man, in its being made immortal, was essentially designed, and so are miserable and deficient from the end of humanity, if they die before the use of reason; or else they must be brought to Christ by the church doors, that is, by the font and waters of baptism.

And, in reason, it seems more pregnant and plausible, that infants, rather than men of under-

* "Accommodat illis mater ecclesia aliorum pedes, ut veniant; aliorum cor, ut credant; aliorum linguam, ut fateantur: ut quoniam, quod ægri sunt, alio peccante prægravantur, sic cum sani fiant alio confitente salventur."—Serm. x. de Verb. Apost.

† Ἀξιοῦνται δὲ τῶν διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος ἀγαθῶν τὰ βρέφη τῇ πίστει τῶν προσφερόντων αὐτὰ τῷ βαπτίσματι.—Resp. ad Orthodoxos.

standing, should be baptized. For since the efficacy of the sacraments depends upon divine institution and immediate benediction, and that they produce their effects independently upon man, in them that do not hinder their operation; since infants cannot by any act of their own promote the hope of their own salvation, which men of reason and choice may, by acts of virtue and election; it is more agreeable to the goodness of God, the honour and excellency of the sacrament, and the necessity of its institution, that it should in infants supply the want of human acts and free obedience. Which the very thing itself seems to say it does, because its effect is from God, and requires nothing on man's part but that its efficacy be not hindered: and then in infants the disposition is equal, and the necessity more; they cannot object to other's acts, and by the same reason cannot do other's acts, which, without the sacraments, do advantage us towards our hopes of heaven; and therefore have more need to be supplied by an act and an institution divine and supernatural.

And this is not only necessary in respect of the condition of infants' incapacity to do acts of grace, but also in obedience to divine precept. For Christ made a law, whose sanction is with an exclusive negative to them that are not baptized: 'Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' If then infants have a capacity of being co-heirs with Christ, in the kingdom of his Father, as Christ affirms they have, by saying, 'For of such is the kingdom of heaven,' then there is a necessity that they should be brought to baptism, there being an absolute exclusion of all persons unbaptized, and

all persons not spiritual, from the kingdom of heaven.

But, indeed, it is a destruction of all the hopes and happiness of infants, a denying to them an exemption from the final condition of beasts and insects, or else a designing of them to a worse misery, to say that God hath not appointed some external or internal means of bringing them to an eternal happiness. Internal they have none; for grace being an improvement, and heightening the faculties of nature, in order to a heighthened and supernatural end, grace hath no influence or efficacy upon their faculties, who can do no natural acts of understanding; and if there be no external means, then they are destitute of all hopes and possibilities of salvation.

But, thanks be to God, he hath provided better, and told us accordingly; for he hath made a promise of the Holy Ghost to infants as well as to men. 'The promise is made to you and to your children,' said St. Peter; 'the promise of the Father,' the promise that he would send the Holy Ghost. Now, if you ask how this promise shall be conveyed to our children, we have an express out of the same sermon of St. Peter: * 'Be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost:' so that, because the Holy Ghost is promised, and baptism is the means of receiving the promise, therefore baptism pertains to them to whom the promise, which is the effect of baptism, does appertain. And that we may not think this argument is fallible, or of human collection, observe that it is the argument of the same apostle in express

* Acts, ii. 38, 39.

terms; for in the case of Cornelius and his family, he justified his proceeding by this very medium; ' Shall we deny baptism to them who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost as well as we? ' Which discourse, if it be reduced to form of argument, says this: they that are capable of the same grace are receptive of the same sign; but then (to make the syllogism up with an assumption proper to our present purpose) infants are capable of the same grace, that is, of the Holy Ghost, (for the promise is made to our children as well as to us, and St. Paul says, the children of believing parents are holy, and therefore have the Holy Ghost, who is the fountain of holiness and sanctification,) therefore they are to receive the sign and the seal of it; that is, the sacrament of baptism.

And indeed, since God entered a covenant with the Jews, which did also actually involve their children, and gave them a sign to establish the covenant and its appendant promise, either God does not so much love the church as he did the synagogue, and the mercies of the gospel are more restrained than the mercies of the law, God having made a covenant with the infants of Israel, and none with the children of Christian parents; or if he hath, yet we want the comfort of its consignation; and, unless our children are to be baptized, and so intitled to the promises of the new covenant, as the Jewish babes were by circumcision, this mercy which appertains to infants is so secret, and undeclared, and unconsigned, that we want much of that mercy and outward testimony which gave them comfort and assurance.

And in proportion to these precepts and revelations was the practice apostolical; for they (to

whom Christ gave in precept to make disciples all nations, baptizing them, and knew that nations without children never were, and that therefore they were passively concerned in that commission,) baptized whole families, particularly that of Stephanus, and divers others, in which it is more than probable there were some minors, if not sucking babes. And this practice did descend upon the church in after ages, by tradition apostolical. Of this we have sufficient testimony from Origen: "The church has received it by tradition from the apostles, to admit little children to the rite of baptism:"* and St. Austin: "This practice the church has received upon the faith of the fathers."† And generally all writers (as Calvin says) affirm the same thing, for "there is no writer so ancient as not to refer its origin to the apostolic age."‡ From hence the conclusion is, that infants ought to be baptized, that it is simply necessary, that they who deny it are heretics, and such are not to be endured, because they deny to infants hopes, and take away the possibility of their salvation, which is revealed to us on no other condition of which they are capable, but baptism. For by the insinuation of the type, by the action of Christ, by the title infants have to heaven, by the precept of the gospel, by the energy of the promise, by the reasonableness of the thing, by the infinite necessity

* "Pro hoc ecclesia ab apostolis traditionem accepit, etiam parvulis baptismum dare."—In Rom. vi. tom. ii. p. 543.

† "Hoc ecclesia à majorum fide percepit."—Serm. x. de Verb. Apost. c. 2.

‡ "Nullus est scriptor tam vetustus, qui non ejus originem ad apostolorum sæculum pro certo referat."—4 Instit. cap. 16, § 8.

on the infants' part, by the practice apostolical, by their tradition, and the universal practice of the church; by all these, God and good people proclaim the lawfulness, the conveniency, and the necessity of infants' baptism.

To all this the Anabaptist gives a soft and gentle answer, that it is a goodly harangue, which upon strict examination will come to nothing; that it pretends fairly and signifies little; that some of these allegations are false, some impertinent, and all the rest insufficient.

For the argument from circumcision is invalid upon infinite considerations: figures and types prove nothing, unless a commandment go along with them, or some express to signify such to be their purpose. For the deluge of waters and the ark of Noah were a figure of baptism, said Peter; and if, therefore, the circumstances of one should be drawn to the other, we should make baptism a prodigy rather than a rite. The paschal lamb was a type of the eucharist, which succeeds the other as baptism does to circumcision; but because there was, in the manducation of the paschal lamb, no prescription of sacramental drink, shall we thence conclude that the eucharist is to be ministered but in one kind? And even in the very instance of this argument, supposing a correspondence of analogy between circumcision and baptism, yet there is no correspondence of identity; for although it were granted that both of them did consign the covenant of faith, yet there is nothing in the circumstance of children's being circumcised, that so concerns that mystery but that it might very well be given to children, and yet baptism only to men of reason; because circumcision left a

character in the flesh, which being imprinted upon infants did its work to them when they came to age; and such a character was necessary, because there was no word added to the sign; but baptism imprints nothing that remains on the body, and if it leaves a character at all it is upon the soul, to which also the word is added, which is as much a part of the sacrament as the sign itself is. For both which reasons, it is requisite that the persons baptized should be capable of reason, that they may be capable both of the word of the sacrament and the impress made upon the spirit. Since, therefore, the reason of this parity does wholly fail, there is nothing left to infer a necessity of complying in this circumstance of age, any more than in the other annexes of the type: and the case is clear in the bishop's question to Cyprian;* for why shall not infants be baptized just upon the eighth day, as well as circumcised? If the correspondence of the rites be an argument to infer one circumstance which is impertinent and accidental to the mysteriousness of the rite, why shall it not infer all? And then, also, females must not be baptized, because they were not circumcised. But it were more proper, if we would understand it right, to prosecute the analogy from the type to the anti-type, by way of letter, and spirit, and signification; and as circumcision figures baptism, so also the adjuncts of the circumcision shall signify something spiritual in the adherencies of baptism; and therefore, as infants were circumcised, so spiritual infants shall be baptized, which is spiritual circumcision; for therefore babes had the ministry of the

* Lib. iii. Epist. 8. ad Fidum.

type, to signify that we must, when we give our names to Christ, become *νήπιοι ἐν πονηρίᾳ*, children in malice; 'for unless you become like one of these little ones, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' said our blessed Saviour; and then the type is made complete. And this seems to have been the sense of the primitive church; for in the age next to the apostles they gave to all baptized persons milk and honey, to represent to them their duty, that though in age and understanding they were men, yet they were babes in Christ, and children in malice. But to infer the sense of the pædo-baptists is so weak a manner of arguing, that Austin, whose device it was, (and men use to be in love with their own fancies,) at the most pretended it but as probable and a mere conjecture.

And as ill success will they have with the other arguments as with this; for, from the action of Christ's blessing infants, to infer that they are to be baptized, proves nothing so much as that there is great want of better arguments. The conclusion would be with more probability derived thus: Christ blessed children and so dismissed them, but baptized them not, therefore infants are not to be baptized; but let this be as weak as its enemy, yet that Christ did not baptize them is an argument sufficient that Christ hath other ways of bringing them to heaven than by baptism; he passed his act of grace upon them by benediction and imposition of hands.

And therefore, although neither infants nor any man by nature can attain to a supernatural end without the addition of some instrument or means of God's appointing, ordinarily and regularly; yet where God hath not appointed a rule nor an order, as

in the case of infants we contend he hath not, the argument is invalid. And as we are sure that God hath not commanded infants to be baptized, so we are sure God will do them no injustice, nor damn them for what they cannot help.

And therefore let them be pressed with all the inconveniences that are consequent to original sin, yet either it will not be laid to the charge of infants, so as to be sufficient to condemn them, or if it could, yet the mercy and absolute goodness of God will secure them, if he takes them away before they can glorify him with a free obedience. "Why is innocent infancy to be anxious for the remission of sins?"* was the question of Tertullian, (*lib. de Bapt.*) he knew no such danger from their original guilt, as to drive them to a laver of which, in that age of innocence, they had no need, as he conceived. And therefore there is no necessity of flying to the help of others, for tongue, and heart, and faith, and predispositions to baptism; for what need all this stir? As infants without their own account, without any act of their own, and without any exterior solemnity, contracted the guilt of Adam's sin, and so are liable to all the punishment which can with justice descend upon his posterity, who are personally innocent; so infants shall be restored without any solemnity or act of their own, or of any other men for them, by the second Adam, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, by his righteousness and mercies, applied either immediately, or how or when he shall be pleased to appoint. And so St. Austin's argument will come to nothing, without any need of god-

* "Quid ergo festinat innocens ætas ad remissionem peccatorum."

fathers, or the faith of any body else. And it is too narrow a conception of God Almighty, because he hath tied us to the observation of the ceremonies of his own institution, that therefore he hath tied himself to it. Many thousand ways there are by which God can bring any reasonable soul to himself; but nothing is more unreasonable, than because he hath tied all men of years and discretion to this way, therefore we, of our own heads, shall carry infants to him that way without his direction: the conceit is poor and low, and the action consequent to it is too bold and venturous. "I have nothing to do in religion but with myself and my household."* Let him do what he please to infants, we must not.

Only this is certain, that God hath as great care of infants as of others; and because they have no capacity of doing such acts as may be in order to acquiring salvation, God will, by his own immediate mercy, bring them thither where he hath intended them; but to say that therefore he will do it by an external act and ministry, and that confined to a particular, viz. this rite and no other, is no good argument, unless God could not do it without such means, or that he had said he would not. And why cannot God as well do his mercies to infants now immediately, as he did before the institution either of circumcision or baptism?

However, there is no danger that infants should perish for want of this external ministry, much less for prevaricating Christ's precept of 'Except a man be born again,' &c. For, first, the water and the Spirit in this place signify the same thing; and

* "Mysterium meum mihi et filiis domus meæ."

by water is meant the effect of the Spirit, cleansing and purifying the soul, as appears in its parallel place of Christ baptizing with the Spirit and with fire. For although this was literally fulfilled in Pentecost, yet morally there is more in it, for it is the sign of the effect of the Holy Ghost, and his productions upon the soul; and it was an excellency of our blessed Saviour's office, that he baptizes all that come to him with the Holy Ghost and with fire; for so St. John, preferring Christ's mission and office before his own, tells the Jews, not Christ's disciples, that Christ shall baptize them with fire and the Holy Spirit; that is, 'all that come to him,' as John the Baptist did with water, for so lies the antithesis: and you may as well conclude that infants must also pass through the fire as through the water. And that we may not think this a trick to elude the pressure of this place, Peter says the same thing; for when he had said that baptism saves us, he adds, by way of explication, 'not the washing of the flesh, but the confidence of a good conscience towards God;' plainly saying, that it is not water, or the purifying of the body, but the cleansing of the spirit, that does that which is supposed to be the effect of baptism; and if our Saviour's exclusive negative be expounded by analogy to this of Peter, as certainly the other parallel instance must, and this may, then it will be so far from proving the necessity of infant's baptism, that it can conclude for no man that he is obliged to the rite; and the doctrine of the baptism is only to derive from the very words of institution, and not be forced from words which were spoken before it was ordained. But to let pass this advantage, and to suppose it meant of ex-

ternal baptism, yet this no more infers a necessity of infants' baptism, than the other words of Christ infer a necessity to give them the holy communion: 'Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And yet we do not think these words sufficient argument to communicate them; if men, therefore, will do us justice, either let them give both sacraments to infants, as some ages of the church did, or neither. For the wit of man is not able to show a disparity in the sanction, or in the energy of its expression. And therefore they were honest that understood the obligation to be parallel, and performed it accordingly; and yet because we say they were deceived in one instance, and yet the obligation (all the world cannot reasonably say but) is the same, they are as honest and as reasonable that do neither. And since the ancient church did with an equal opinion of necessity give them the communion, and yet men now-a-days do not, why shall men be more burthened with a prejudice and a name of obloquy for not giving the infants one sacrament, more than they are disliked for not affording them the other? If Anabaptist shall be a name of disgrace, why shall not some other name be invented for them that deny to communicate infants, which shall be equally disgraceful, or else both the opinions signified by such names, be accounted no disparagement, but receive their estimate according to their truth?

Of which truth, since we are now taking account from pretences of Scripture, it is considerable that the discourse of St. Peter, which is pretended for the entitling infants to the promise of the Holy

Ghost, and by consequence to baptism, which is supposed to be its instrument and conveyance, is wholly a fancy, and hath in it nothing of certainty or demonstration, and not much probability. For besides that the thing itself is unreasonable, and the Holy Ghost works by the heightening and improving our natural faculties, and therefore is a promise that so concerns them as they are reasonable creatures, and may have a title to it in proportion to their nature, but no possession or reception of it till their faculties come into act; besides this, I say, the words mentioned in St. Peter's sermon (which are the only record of the promise) are interpreted upon a weak mistake. 'The promise belongs to you and to your children,' therefore infants are actually receptive of it in that capacity. That is the argument, but the reason of it is not yet discovered, nor ever will; for 'to you and your children,' is to you and your posterity, to you and your children when they are of the same capacity in which you are effectually receptive of the promise; but he that, whenever the word children is used in Scripture, shall by children understand infants, must needs believe that in all Israel there were no men, but all were infants; and if that had been true it had been the greater wonder they should overcome the Anakims, and beat the king of Moab, and march so far, and discourse so well, for they were all called the children of Israel.

And for the allegation of St. Paul, that infants are holy if their parents be faithful, it signifies nothing but that they are holy by designation, just as Jeremiah and John Baptist were sanctified in their mother's womb, that is, they were appointed

and designed for holy ministries, but had not received the promise of the Father—the gift of the Holy Ghost—for all that sanctification; and just so the children of Christian parents are sanctified: that is, designed to the service of Jesus Christ and the future participation of the promises.

And as the promise appertains not (for aught appears) to infants in that capacity and consistence, but only by the title of their being reasonable creatures, and when they come to that act of which by nature they have the faculty, so if it did, yet baptism is not the means of conveying the Holy Ghost. For that which Peter says, ‘Be baptized and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost,’ signifies no more than this: first, be baptized, and then by imposition of the apostles’ hands (which was another mystery and rite) ye shall receive the promise of the Father. And this is nothing but an insinuation of the rite of confirmation, as is to this sense expounded by divers ancient authors; and in ordinary ministry the effect of it is not bestowed upon any unbaptized persons, for it is in order next after baptism, and upon this ground Peter’s argument in the case of Cornelius was concluding enough, *a majori ad minus*, (from the greater to the less). Thus the Holy Ghost was bestowed upon him and his family, which gift, by ordinary ministry, was consequent to baptism, (not as the effect is to the cause or to the proper instrument, but as a consequent is to an antecedent, in a chain of causes accidentally and by positive institution depending upon each other.) God by that miracle did give testimony, that the persons of the men were in great dispositions towards heaven, and therefore were to be admitted

to those rites which are the ordinary inlets into the kingdom of heaven. But then, from hence to argue that wherever there is a capacity of receiving the same grace there also the same sign is to be ministered, and from hence to infer pædobaptism, is an argument very fallacious upon several grounds. First, because baptism is not the sign of the Holy Ghost, but by another mystery it was conveyed ordinarily, and extraordinarily it was conveyed independently from any mystery; and so the argument goes upon a wrong supposition. Secondly, if the supposition were true, the proposition built upon it is false; for they that are capable of the same grace are not always capable of the same sign; for women, under the law of Moses, although they were capable of the righteousness of faith, yet they were not capable of the sign of circumcision. For God does not always convey his graces in the same manner, but to some mediately, to others immediately; and there is no better instance in the world of it than the gift of the Holy Ghost, (which is the thing now instanced in this contestation); for it is certain in Scripture, that it was ordinarily given by imposition of hands, and that after baptism; (and when this came into an ordinary ministry it was called by the ancient church chrisim, or confirmation); but yet it was given sometimes without imposition of hands, as at Pentecost and to the family of Cornelius; sometimes before baptism, sometimes after, sometimes in conjunction with it.

And after all this, lest these arguments should not ascertain their cause, they fall on complaining against God, and will not be content with God unless they may baptize their children, but take exceptions that God did more for the children of

the Jews. But why so? Because God made a covenant with their children actually as infants, and consigned it by circumcision. Well, so he did with our children too in their proportion. He made a covenant of spiritual promises on his part, and spiritual and real services on ours; and this pertains to children when they are capable, but made with them as soon as they are alive, and yet not so as with the Jews' babes; for as their rite consigned them actually, so it was a national and temporal blessing and covenant, as a separation of them from the portion of the nations, a marking them for a peculiar people, (and therefore, while they were in the wilderness, and separate from the commixture of all people, they were not all circumcised,) but as that rite did seal the righteousness of faith, so by virtue of its adherency and remanency in their flesh, it did that work when the children came to age. But in Christian infants the case is otherwise; for the new covenant being established upon better promises, is not only to better purposes, but also in distinct manner to be understood; when their spirits are as receptive of a spiritual act or impress as the bodies of Jewish children were of the sign of circumcision, then it is to be consigned: but this business is quickly at an end, by saying that God hath done no less for ours than for their children; for he will do the mercies of a Father and Creator to them, and he did no more to the other; but he hath done more to ours, for he hath made a covenant with them, and built it upon promises of the greatest concernment; he did not so to them. But then, for the other part, which is the main of the argument, that unless this mercy be consigned by baptism, as

good not at all in respect of us, because we want the comfort of it; this is the greatest vanity in the world; for when God hath made a promise pertaining also to our children, (for so our adversaries contend, and we also acknowledge in its true sense,) shall not this promise, this word of God, be of sufficient truth, certainty, and efficacy to cause comfort, unless we tempt God, and require a sign of him? May not Christ say to these men as sometime to the Jews, 'a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, but no sign shall be given unto it?' But the truth is, this argument is nothing but a direct quarrelling with God Almighty.

Now, since there is no strength in the doctrinal part, the practice and precedents apostolical and ecclesiastical will be of less concernment, if they were true, as is pretended; because actions apostolical are not always rules for ever. It might be fit for them to do it *pro loco et tempore*, (for the place and time,) as divers others of their institutions, but yet no engagement passed thence upon following ages; for it might be convenient at that time, in the new spring of Christianity, and till they had engaged a considerable party, by that means to make them parties against the gentiles' superstition, and by way of preoccupation to ascertain them to their own sect when they came to be men; or for some other reason not transmitted to us, because the question of fact itself is not sufficiently determined. For the insinuation of that precept of baptizing all nations, of which children certainly are a part, does as little advantage as any of the rest, because other parallel expressions of Scripture do determine and expound themselves to a sense that

includes not all persons absolutely, but of a capable condition, as 'Worship him all ye nations, praise him all ye people of the earth,' &c. and divers more.

As for the conjecture concerning the family of Stephanus, at the best it is but a conjecture; and besides that, it is not proved that there were children in the family; yet if that were granted, it follows not that they were baptized, because by whole families, in Scripture, is meant all persons of reason and age within the family. For it is said of the ruler at Capernaum, that 'he believed and all his house.' Now, you may also suppose that in his house were little babes—that is likely enough—and you may suppose that they did believe too before they could understand, but that is not so likely. And then the argument from baptizing of Stephen's household may be allowed just as probable: but this is unmanlike to build upon such slight airy conjectures.

But tradition, by all means, must supply the place of Scripture, and there is pretended a tradition apostolical that infants were baptized: but at this we are not much moved; for we, who rely upon the written word of God as sufficient to establish all true religion, do not value the allegation of traditions; and however the world goes, none of the reformed churches can pretend this argument against this opinion, because they who reject tradition when it is against them, must not pretend it at all for them. But if we should allow the topic to be good, yet how will it be verified? for so far as it can yet appear, it relies wholly upon the testimony of Origen, for from him Austin had it. Now a tradition apostolical, if it be not

consigned with a fuller testimony than of one person, whom all after ages have condemned of many errors, will obtain so little reputation amongst those who know that things have upon greater authority pretended to derive from the apostles, and yet falsely, that it will be a great argument that he is credulous and weak that shall be determined by so weak probation in matters of so great concernment. And the truth of the business is, as there was no command of Scripture to oblige children to the susception of it, so the necessity of pædobaptism was not determined in the church till in the eighth age after Christ; but in the year 418, in the Milevitan council, a provincial of Africa, there was a canon made for pædobaptism:—never till then! I grant it was practised in Africa before that time, and they or some of them thought well of it; and though that be no argument for us to think so, yet none of them did ever before pretend it to be necessary, none to have been a precept of the gospel. St. Austin was the first that ever preached it to be absolutely necessary, and it was in his heat and anger against Pelagius, who had warmed and chafed him so in that question that it made him innovate in other doctrines, possibly of more concernment than this. And that although this was practised anciently in Africa, yet that it was without an opinion of necessity, and not often there, nor at all in other places, we have the testimony of a learned pædobaptist, Ludovicus Vives, who in his annotations upon St. Austin, *De Civit. Dei*, lib. i. c. 27, affirms, “that anciently none but adults were baptized.”*

* “Neminem nisi adultum antiquit̄s solere baptizari.”

But, besides that the tradition cannot be proved to be apostolical, we have very good evidence from antiquity, that it was the opinion of the primitive church that infants ought not to be baptized; and this is clear in the sixth canon of the council of Neocæsarea. The words are these: "A woman with child may be baptized when she please; for her baptism concerns not the child."* The reason of the connexion of the parts of that canon is in the following words: "because every one in that confession is to give a demonstration of his own choice and election:" meaning plainly, that if the baptism of the mother did also pass upon the child, it were not fit for a pregnant woman to receive baptism; because in that sacrament there being a confession of faith, which confession supposes understanding and free choice, it is not reasonable the child should be consigned with such a mystery, since it cannot do any act of choice or understanding. The canon speaks reason, and it intimates a practice, which was absolutely universal in the church, of interrogating the catechumens concerning the articles of creed; which is one argument that either they did not admit infants to baptism, or that they did prevaricate egregiously in asking questions of them, who themselves knew were not capable of giving answer.

And to supply their incapacity, by the answer of a godfather, is but the same unreasonableness acted with a worse circumstance.† And there is no sen-

* *Περὶ κνοφορούσης ὅτι δεῖ φωτίζεσθαι ὅποτε βούλεται, οὐδὲν γὰρ κοινωνεῖ ἢ τίκτουσα τῷ τικτομένῳ διὰ τὸ ἐκάστου ἰδιὰν τὴν προαίρεσιν τὴν ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ δεικνύσθαι.*

† "Quid ni necesse est sponsores etiam periculo ingeri, qui et ipsi per mortalitatem destituere promissiones suas possint, et proventu malæ indolis falli?"—Franc. Junius in notis ad Tertul. lib. de Baptis. ap. 18.

sible account can be given of it; for that which some imperfectly murmur concerning stipulations civil, performed by tutors in the name of their pupils, is an absolute vanity. For what if by positive constitution of the Romans such solemnities of law are required in all stipulations, and by indulgence are permitted in the case of a notable benefit accruing to minors, must God be tied, and Christian religion transact her mysteries by proportion and compliance with the law of the Romans? I know God might, if he would, have appointed godfathers to give answer in behalf of the children, and to be fidejussors for them; but we cannot find any authority or ground that he hath, and if he had, then it is to be supposed he would have given them commission to have transacted the solemnity with better circumstances, and given answers with more truth. For the question is asked of believing in the present. And if the godfathers answer in the name of the child, "I do believe," it is notorious they speak false and ridiculously; for the infant is not capable of believing; and if he were he were also capable of dissenting, and how then do they know his mind? And therefore Tertullian gives advice, that the baptism of infants should be deferred till they could give an account of their faith,* and the same also is the counsel of Gregory,† bishop of Nazianzum, although he allows them to hasten it in case of necessity; for though his reason taught him what was fit, yet he

* Lib. de Baptis. prope finem, cap. 18. "Itaque pro personæ cujusque conditione ac dispositione, etiam ætate, cunctatio baptismi utilior est, præcipuè tamen circa parvulos.—Fiant Christiani cum Christum nosse potuerint."

† Orat. xl. quæst. in S. Baptisma.

was overborne with the practice and opinion of his age, which began to bear too violently upon him; and yet, in another place, he makes mention of some to whom baptism was not administered, *διὰ νηπιότητα*, “by reason of infancy.” To which if we add that the parents of St. Austin, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, although they were Christian, yet did not baptize their children before they were thirty years of age, it will be very considerable in the example, and of great efficacy for destroying the supposed necessity or derivation from the apostles.

But, however, it is against the perpetual analogy of Christ's doctrine to baptize infants: for besides that Christ never gave any precept to baptize them, nor ever himself nor his apostles (that appears) did baptize any of them, all that either he or his apostles said concerning it, requires such previous dispositions to baptism of which infants are not capable, and these are faith and repentance. And not to instance in those innumerable places that require faith before this sacrament, there needs no more but this one saying of our blessed Saviour: ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned;’* plainly thus, faith and baptism in conjunction will bring a man to heaven; but if he have not faith, baptism shall do him no good. So that if baptism be necessary then so is faith, and much more; for want of faith damns absolutely—it is not said so of the want of baptism. Now if this decretory sentence be to be understood of persons of age, and if children by such an answer (which indeed is

* Mark, xvi.

reasonable enough) be excused from the necessity of faith, the want of which regularly does damn, then it is sottish to say the same incapacity of reason and faith shall not excuse from the actual susception of baptism, which is less necessary, and to which faith and many other acts are necessary predispositions, when it is reasonably and humanly received. The conclusion is, that baptism is also to be deferred till the time of faith: and whether infants have faith or no is a question to be disputed by persons that care not how much they say, nor how little they prove.

1. Personal and actual faith they have none; for they have no acts of understanding; and besides, how can any man know that they have, since he never saw any sign of it, neither was he told so by any one that could tell? 2. Some say they have imputative faith; but then so let the sacrament be too; that is, if they have the parents' faith or the church's, then so let baptism be imputed also by derivation from them, that as in their mothers' womb and while they hang on their breasts they live upon their mothers' nourishment, so they may upon the baptism of their parents or their mother the church. For since faith is necessary to the susception of baptism, (and they themselves confess it by striving to find out new kinds of faith to daub the matter up,) such as the faith is such must be the sacrament; for there is no proportion between an actual sacrament and an imputative faith, this being in immediate and necessary order to that; and whatsoever can be said to take off from the necessity of actual faith, all that and much more may be said to excuse from the actual susception of baptism. 3. The first of these

devices was that of Luther and his scholars, the second of Calvin and his; and yet there is a third device which the church of Rome teaches, and that is that infants have habitual faith: but who told them so? how can they prove it? what revelation or reason teaches any such thing? Are they by this habit so much as disposed to an actual belief, without a new master? Can an infant sent into a Mahometan province be more confident for Christianity when he comes to be a man, than if he had not been baptized? Are there any acts precedent, concomitant, or consequent to this pretended habit? This strange invention is absolutely without art, without Scripture, reason, or authority: but the men are to be excused unless there were a better. But for all these stratagems the argument now alleged against the baptism of infants is demonstrative and unanswerable.

To which also this consideration may be added, that if baptism be necessary to the salvation of infants, upon whom is the imposition laid? To whom is the command given? to the parents or to the children? Not to the children, for they are not capable of a law; nor to the parents, for then God hath put the salvation of innocent babes into the power of others, and infants may be damned for their fathers' carelessness or malice. It follows, that it is not necessary at all to be done to them to whom it cannot be prescribed as a law, and in whose behalf it cannot be reasonably intrusted to others with the appendant necessity; and if it be not necessary it is certain it is not reasonable; and most certain it is no where in terms prescribed, and therefore it is to be presumed, that it ought to be understood and administered according as other

precepts are, with reference to the capacity of the subject and the reasonableness of the thing.

For I consider that the baptizing of infants does rush us upon such inconveniences which in other questions we avoid like rocks, which will appear if we discourse thus.

Either baptism produces spiritual effects or it produces them not: if it produces not any, why is such contention about it? what are we the nearer heaven if we are baptized? and if it be neglected, what are we the farther off? But if (as without all peradventure all the pædobaptists will say) baptism does do a work upon the soul, producing spiritual benefits and advantages, these advantages are produced by the external work of the sacrament alone, or by that as it is helped by the co-operation and predispositions of the suscipient.

If by the external work of the sacrament alone, how does this differ from the *opus operatum* of the papists, save that it is worse? For they say the sacrament does not produce its effect but in a suscipient, disposed by all requisites and due preparatives of piety, faith, and repentance; though in a subject so disposed, they say the sacrament by its own virtue does it, but this opinion says, it does it of itself without the help or so much as the co-existence of any condition but the mere reception.

But if the sacrament does not do its work alone, but *per modum recipientis*, (according to the predispositions of the suscipient,) then because infants can neither hinder it nor do any thing to further it, it does them no benefit at all. And if any man runs for succour to that exploded refuge, that infants have faith, or any other inspired habit of I know

not what or how, we desire no more advantage in the world than that they are constrained to an answer without revelation, against reason, common sense, and all the experience in the world.

The sum of the argument in short is this, though under another representment :—

Either baptism is a mere ceremony, or it implies a duty on our part. If it be a ceremony only, how does it sanctify us, or make the comers thereunto perfect? If it implies a duty on our part, how then can children receive it, who cannot do duty at all?

And indeed this way of ministration makes baptism to be wholly an outward duty, a work of the law, a carnal ordinance; it makes us adhere to the letter without regard of the spirit, to be satisfied with shadows, to return to bondage, to relinquish the mysteriousness, the substance, and spirituality of the gospel. Which argument is of so much the more consideration because, under the spiritual covenant, or the gospel of grace, if the mystery goes not before the symbol, (which it does when the symbols are seals and consignations of the grace, as it is said the sacraments are,) yet it always accompanies it, but never follows in order of time; and this is clear in the perpetual analogy of Holy Scripture.

For baptism is never propounded, mentioned, or enjoined, as a means of remission of sins, or of eternal life, but something of duty, choice, and sanctity is joined with it, in order to production of the end so mentioned: ‘ Know ye not that as many as are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death?’* There is the mystery and the symbol

* Rom. vi. 3.

together, and declared to be perpetually united, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν, “so many of us as were baptized.” All of us who were baptized into one were baptized into the other. Not only into the name of Christ, but into his death also. But the meaning of this, as it is explained in the following words of St. Paul, makes much for our purpose; for to be baptized into his death, signifies ‘to be buried with him in baptism, that as Christ rose from the dead we also should walk in newness of life.’* That is the full mystery of baptism; for being baptized into his death, or which is all one in the next words, ἐν ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, ‘into the likeness of his death,’ cannot go alone; ‘if we be so planted into Christ, we shall be partakers of his resurrection,’† and that is not here instanced in precise reward, but in exact duty; for all this is nothing but ‘crucifixion of the old man, a destroying the body of sin, that we no longer serve sin.’‡

This indeed is truly to be baptized, both in the symbol and the mystery; whatsoever is less than this is but the symbol only, a mere ceremony, an *opus operatum*, a dead letter, an empty shadow, an instrument without an agent to manage, or force to actuate it.

Plainer yet: ‘Whosoever are baptized into Christ have put on Christ, have put on the new man:’ but to put on this new man is ‘to be formed in righteousness, and holiness, and truth.’ This whole argument is the very words of St. Paul; the major proposition is dogmatically determined, *Gal. iii. 27*; the minor in *Ephes. iv. 24*. The conclusion then is obvious, that they who are not formed new in

* Rom. iv. 4.

† Verse 5.

‡ Verse 6.

righteousness, and holiness, and truth—they who, remaining in the present incapacities, cannot walk in newness of life—they have not been baptized into Christ, and then they have but one member of the distinction used by St. Peter, they have that baptism ‘which is a putting away the filth of the flesh,’ but they have not that baptism ‘which is the answer of a good conscience towards God,’* which is the only ‘baptism that saves us:’ and this is the case of children; and then the case is thus:—

As infants by the force of nature cannot put themselves into a supernatural condition, (and therefore, say the pædobaptists, they need baptism to put them into it,) so if they be baptized before the use of reason, before the works of the Spirit, before the operations of grace, before they can throw off ‘the works of darkness, and live in righteousness and newness of life,’ they are never the nearer: from the pains of hell they shall be saved by the mercies of God and their own innocence, though they die in a state of nature, and baptism will carry them no further. For that baptism that saves us is not the only washing with water of which only children are capable, but the answer of a good conscience towards God; of which they are not capable till the use of reason, till they know to choose the good and refuse the evil.

And from thence I consider anew, that all vows made by persons under others’ names, stipulations made by minors, are not valid till they, by a supervening act, after they are of sufficient age, do ratify them. Why then may not infants as well make

* 1 Peter, iii. 21.

the vow *de novo*, as *de novo* ratify that which was made for them *ab antiquo*, when they come to years of choice? * If the infant vow be invalid till the manly confirmation, why were it not as good they staid to make it till that time, before which if they do make it it is to no purpose? This would be considered.

And in conclusion; our way is the surer way, for not to baptize children till they can give an account of their faith is the most proportionable to an act of reason and humanity; and it can have no danger in it; for to say that infants may be damned for want of baptism, (a thing which is not in their power to acquire, they being persons not yet capable of a law,) is to affirm that of God which we dare not say of any wise and good man. Certainly it is much derogatory to God's justice, and a plain defiance to the infinite reputation of his goodness.

And therefore, whoever will pertinaciously persist in this opinion of the pædobaptists, and practise it accordingly, they pollute the blood of the everlasting testament, they dishonour and make a pageantry of the sacrament, they ineffectually represent a sepulchre into the death of Christ, and please themselves in a sign without effect, making baptism like the fig-tree in the gospel, full of leaves but no fruit; and they invoke the Holy Ghost in vain, doing as if one should call upon him to illuminate a stone or a tree.

Thus far the Anabaptists may argue; and men have disputed against them with so much weakness and confidence, that they have been encou-

* Vide Erasmmum in præfat. ad Annotat. in Matth.

raged in their error* more by the accidental advantages we have given them by our weak arguings than by any truth of their cause, or excellency of their wit. But the use I make of it as to our present question is this: that since there is no direct impiety in the opinion, nor any that is apparently consequent to it, and they with so much probability do, or may, pretend to true persuasion, they are, with all means Christian, fair, and humane, to be redargued or instructed; but if they cannot be persuaded, they must be left to God, who knows every degree of every man's understanding, all his weaknesses and strengths, what impress each argument makes upon his spirit, and how irresistible every reason is; and he alone judges his innocency and sincerity. And for that question, I think there is so much to be pretended against that which I believe to be the truth, that there is much more truth than evidence on our side; and therefore we may be confident as for our own particulars, but not too forward peremptorily to prescribe to others, much less to damn, or to kill, or to persecute them that only in this particular disagree.

* Οὐκ ἐν τοῖς ἐαυτῶν δόγμασι τεν ἰσχυν ἔχοντες, ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέρων σαζροῖς ταύτην ζηρούοντες, as Nazianzen observes of the case of the church in his time.

SECTION XIX.

That there may be no Toleration of Doctrines inconsistent with Piety or the public good.

BUT then for their capital opinion, with all its branches, that it is not lawful for princes to put malefactors to death, nor to take up defensive arms, nor to minister an oath, nor to contend in judgment, it is not to be disputed with such liberty as the former. For although it be part of that doctrine which Clemens Alexandrinus says was delivered by private tradition from the apostles, 'that it is not allowable for Christians to go to law, neither before the heathen nor believers; and that a righteous man ought not to take an oath;'^{*} and the other part seems to be warranted by the eleventh canon of the Nicene council, which enjoins penance to them that take arms after their conversion to Christianity; yet either these authorities are to be slighted, or be made receptive of any interpretation, rather than the commonwealth be disarmed of its necessary supports, and all laws made ineffectual and impertinent: for the interest of the republic and the well-being of bodies politic is not to depend upon the nicety of our imaginations, or the fancies of any peevish or mistaken priests; and there is no reason a prince should ask John-a-Brunck whether his understanding will give him

* "Non licere Christianis contendere in judicio, nec coràm gentibus, nec coràm sanctis, et perfectum non debere jurare."—Lib. vii. Stromat.

leave to reign, and be a king. Nay, suppose there were divers places of Scripture which did seemingly restrain the political use of the sword, yet since the avoiding a personal inconvenience hath by all men been accounted sufficient reason to expound Scripture to any sense rather than the literal, which infers an unreasonable inconvenience, (and therefore the pulling out an eye and the cutting off an hand is expounded by mortifying a vice, and killing a criminal habit,) much rather must the allegations against the power of the sword endure any sense, rather than it should be thought that Christianity should destroy that which is the only instrument of justice, the restraint of vice and support of bodies politic. It is certain that Christ and his apostles, and Christian religion, did comply with the most absolute government, and the most imperial that was then in the world; and it could not have been at all endured in the world if it had not; for, indeed, the world itself could not last in regular and orderly communities of men, but be a perpetual confusion, if princes and the supreme power in bodies politic were not armed with a coercive power to punish malefactors. The public necessity and universal experience of all the world convinces those men of being most unreasonable that make such pretences, which destroy all laws and all communities, and the bands of civil societies, and leave it arbitrary to every vain or vicious person, whether men shall be safe, or laws be established, or a murderer hanged, or princes rule. So that, in this case, men are not so much to dispute with particular arguments as to consider the interest and concernment of kingdoms and public societies; for the religion of Jesus Christ is

the best establisher of the felicity of private persons and of public communities; it is a religion that is prudent and innocent, humane, and reasonable, and brought infinite advantages to mankind, but no inconvenience, nothing that is unnatural, or unsociable, or unjust. And if it be certain that this world cannot be governed without laws, and laws without a compulsory signify nothing, then it is certain that it is no good religion that teaches doctrine whose consequents will destroy all government; and therefore it is as much to be rooted out as any thing that is the greatest pest and nuisance to the public interest. And that we may guess at the purposes of the men and the inconvenience of such doctrine, these men that did first intend by their doctrine to disarm all princes and bodies politic, did themselves take up arms to establish their wild and impious fancy; and, indeed, that prince or commonwealth that should be persuaded by them, would be exposed to all the insolences of foreigners, and all mutinies of the teachers themselves; and the governors of the people could not do that duty they owe to their people of protecting them from the rapine and malice which will be in the world as long as the world is. And therefore here they are to be restrained from preaching such doctrine, if they mean to preserve their government; and the necessity of the thing will justify the lawfulness of the thing. If they think it to themselves, that it cannot be helped so long as it is innocent, as much as concerns the public; but if they preach it they may be accounted authors of all the consequent inconveniences, and punished accordingly. No doctrine that destroys government is to be endured; for although those doctrines

are not always good that serve the private ends of princes or the secret designs of state, which, by reason of some accidents or imperfections of men, may be promoted by that which is false and pretending; yet no doctrine can be good that does not comply with the formality of government itself, and the well-being of bodies politic: ‘Cato, when an augur, ventured to say that the omens were always in favour of what was for the public good, and against whatever was the reverse.’* Religion is to meliorate the condition of a people, not to do it disadvantage; and therefore those doctrines that inconvenience the public are no parts of good religion. The safety of the state is a necessary consideration in the permission of prophesyings; for according to the true, solid, and prudent ends of the republic, so is the doctrine to be permitted or restrained, and the men that preach it, according as they are good subjects and right commonwealth’s men; for religion is a thing superinduced to temporal government, and the church is an addition of a capacity to a commonwealth, and therefore is in no sense to disserve the necessity and just interests of that to which it is superadded for its advantage and conservation.

And thus, by a proportion to the rules of these instances, all their other doctrines are to have their judgment, as concerning toleration or restraint; for all are either speculative or practical; they are consistent with the public ends or inconsistent, they teach impiety or they are innocent, and they are to be permitted or rejected accordingly. For in

* “Augur cum esset Cato, dicere ausus est, optimis auspiciis ea geri quæ pro reipublicæ salute gererentur; quæ contra rempublicam fierent, contra auspicia fieri.”—Cicero de Senectute.

the question of toleration, the foundation of faith, good life and government is to be secured: in all others' cases the former considerations are effectual.

SECTION XX.

How far the Religion of the Church of Rome is tolerable.

BUT now, concerning the religion of the church of Rome, (which was the other instance I promised to consider,) we will proceed another way, and not consider the truth or falsity of the doctrines; for that is not the best way to determine this question concerning permitting their religion or assemblies; because that a thing is not true, is not argument sufficient to conclude that he that believes it true is not to be endured; but we are to consider what inducements there are that possess the understanding of those men, whether they be reasonable and innocent, sufficient to abuse or persuade wise and good men, or whether the doctrines be commenced upon design, and managed with impiety, and then have effects not be endured.

And here, first, I consider that those doctrines that have had long continuance and possession in the church, cannot easily be supposed in the present professors to be a design, since they have received it from so many ages; and it is not likely that all ages should have the same purposes, or that the same doctrine should serve the several

ends of divers ages. But, however, long prescription is a prejudice oftentimes so insupportable that it cannot with many arguments be retrenched, as relying upon these grounds, that truth is more certain than falsehood; that God would not for so many ages forsake his church, and leave her in error; that whatsoever is new is not only suspicious but false; which are suppositions pious and plausible enough. And if the church of Rome had communicated infants so long as she hath prayed to saints or baptized infants, the communicating would have been believed with as much confidence as the other articles are, and the dissentients with as much impatience rejected. But this consideration is to be enlarged upon all those particulars, which as they are apt to abuse the persons of the men and amuse their understandings, so they are instruments of their excuse; and by making their errors to be invincible, and their opinions, though false, yet not criminal, make it also to be an effect of reason and charity to permit the men a liberty of their conscience, and let them answer to God for themselves and their own opinions: such as are the beauty and splendour of their church; their pompous service; the stateliness and solemnity of the hierarchy; their name of Catholic, which they suppose their own due, and to concern no other sect of Christians; the antiquity of many of their doctrines; the continual succession of their bishops; their immediate derivation from the apostles; their title to succeed St. Peter; the supposal and pretence of his personal prerogatives; the advantages which the conjunction of the imperial seat with their episcopal hath brought to that see; the flattering expressions of minor bishops, which by being

old records, have obtained credibility; the multitude and variety of people which are of their persuasion; apparent consent with antiquity in many ceremonials which other churches have rejected; and a pretended, and sometimes an apparent consent with some elder ages in many matters doctrinal; the advantage which is derived to them by entertaining some personal opinions of the fathers, which they with infinite clamours see to be cried up to be a doctrine of the church of that time; the great consent of one part with another in that which most of them affirm to be matter of faith; the great differences which are commenced amongst their adversaries, abusing the Liberty of Prophesying unto a very great licentiousness; their happiness of being instruments in converting divers nations; the advantages of monarchical government, the benefit of which as well as the inconveniences (which though they feel they consider not) they daily do enjoy; the piety and the austerity of their religious orders of men and women; the single life of their priests and bishops; the riches of their church; the severity of their fasts and their exterior observances; the great reputation of their first bishops for faith and sanctity; the known holiness of some of those persons whose institutes the religious persons pretend to imitate; their miracles, false or true, substantial or imaginary; the casualties and accidents that have happened to their adversaries, which, being chances of humanity, are attributed to several causes, according as the fancies of men and their interests are pleased or satisfied; the temporal felicity of their professors; the oblique arts and indirect proceedings of some of those who departed from them; and amongst many other

things, the names of heretic and schismatic, which they with infinite pertinacy fasten upon all that disagree from them—these things, and divers others, may very easily persuade persons of much reason and more piety, to retain that which they know to have been the religion of their forefathers, which had actual possession and seizure of men's understandings before the opposite professions had a name; and so much the rather, because religion hath more advantages upon the fancy and affections than it hath upon philosophy and severe discourses, and therefore is the more easily persuaded upon such grounds as these, which are more apt to amuse than to satisfy the understanding.

Secondly, if we consider the doctrines themselves, we shall find them to be superstructures ill built and worse managed, but yet they keep the foundation; they build upon God in Jesus Christ; they profess the apostles' creed; they retain faith and repentance as the supporters of all our hopes of heaven, and believe many more truths than can be proved to be of simple and original necessity to salvation; and therefore all the wisest personages of the adverse party allowed to them possibility of salvation, whilst their errors are not faults of their will, but weaknesses and deceptions of the understanding. So that there is nothing in the foundation of faith that can reasonably hinder them to be permitted. The foundation of faith stands secure enough for all their vain and unhandsome superstructures.

But then, on the other side, if we take account of their doctrines as they relate to good life, or are consistent or inconsistent with civil government, we shall have other considerations.

For, thirdly, I consider that many of their doctrines do accidentally teach or lead to ill life ; and it will appear to any man that considers the result of these propositions. Attrition (which is a low and imperfect degree of sorrow for sin, or, as others say, a sorrow for sin commenced upon any reason of temporal hope, or fear, or desire, or any thing else) is a sufficient disposition for a man in the sacrament of penance to receive absolution, and be justified before God, by taking away the guilt of all his sins and the obligation to eternal pains. So that already the fear of hell is quite removed, upon conditions so easy that many men take more pains to get a groat, than by this doctrine we are obliged to for the curing and acquitting all the greatest sins of a whole life of the most vicious person in the world ; and but that they affright their people with a fear of purgatory, or with the severity of penances, in case they will not venture for purgatory, (for by their doctrine they may choose or refuse either,) there would be nothing in their doctrine or discipline to impede and slacken their proclivity to sin. But then they have as easy a cure for that too, with a little more charge sometimes, but most commonly with less trouble. For there are so many confraternities, so many privileged churches, altars, monasteries, cœmeteries, offices, festivals, and so free a concession of indulgences appendant to all these, and a thousand fine devices to take away the fear of purgatory, to commute or expiate penances, that in no sect of men do they with more ease and cheapness reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of heaven, than in the Roman communion.

And, indeed, if men would consider things upon their true grounds, the church of Rome should be more reprov'd upon doctrines that infer ill life, than upon such as are contrariant to faith. For false superstructures do not always destroy faith; but many of the doctrines they teach, if they were prosecuted to the utmost issue, would destroy good life. And therefore my quarrel with the church of Rome is greater and stronger upon such points which are not usually considered, than it is upon the ordinary disputes which have, to no very great purpose, so much disturbed Christendom; and I am more scandalized at her for teaching the sufficiency of attrition in the sacrament, for indulging penances so frequently, for remitting all discipline, for making so great a part of religion to consist in externals and ceremonials, for putting more force and energy, and exacting with more severity the commandments of men than the precepts of justice and internal religion; lastly, besides many other things, for promising heaven to persons after a wicked life, upon their impertinent cries and ceremonials, transacted by the priest and the dying person: I confess, I wish the zeal of Christendom were a little more active against these and the like doctrines, and that men would write and live more earnestly against them than as yet they have done.

But then, what influence this just zeal is to have upon the persons of the professors is another consideration; for as the Pharisees did preach well and lived ill, and therefore were to be heard, not imitated, so if these men live well though they teach ill, they are to be imitated, not heard: their doctrines by all means, Christian and human, are to

be discountenanced, but their persons tolerated so far (*eatenis*); their profession and decrees to be rejected and condemned, but the persons to be permitted, because by their good lives they confute their doctrines; that is, they give evidence that they think no evil to be consequent to such opinions; and if they did, that they live good lives is argument sufficient that they would themselves cast the first stone against their own opinions, if they thought them guilty of such misdemeanours.

Fourthly: but if we consider their doctrines in relation to government and public societies of men, then, if they prove faulty, they are so much the more intolerable by how much the consequents are of greater danger and malice. Such doctrines as these—the pope may dispense with all oaths taken to God or man; he may absolve subjects from their allegiance to their natural prince; faith is not to be kept with heretics; heretical princes may be slain by their subjects—these propositions are so depressed, and do so immediately communicate with matter and the interests of men, that they are of the same consideration with matters of fact, and are to be handled accordingly. To other doctrines ill life may be consequent, but the connexion of the antecedent and the consequent is not (peradventure) perceived or acknowledged by him that believes the opinion with no greater confidence than he disavows the effect and issue of it; but in these the ill effect is the direct profession and purpose of the opinion; and therefore the man and the man's opinion is to be dealt withal, just as the matter of fact is to be judged; for it is an immediate, a perceived, a direct event,

and the very purpose of the opinion. Now these opinions are a direct overthrow to all human society and mutual commerce, a destruction of government, and of the laws, and duty, and subordination which we owe to princes; and therefore those men of the church of Rome that do hold them, and preach them, cannot pretend to the excuses of innocent opinions and hearty persuasion, to the weakness of humanity, and the difficulty of things; for God hath not left those truths, which are necessary for conservation of public societies of men, so intricate and obscure but that every one that is honest and desirous to understand his duty will certainly know that no Christian truth destroys a man's being sociable, and a member of the body politic, co-operating to the conservation of the whole, as well as of itself. However, if it might happen that men should sincerely err in such plain matters of fact, (for there are fools enough in the world,) yet if he hold his peace, no man is to persecute or punish him; for then it is mere opinion, which comes not under political cognizance; that is, that cognizance which only can punish corporally. But if he preaches it he is actually a traitor, or seditious, or author of perjury, or a destroyer of human society, respectively to the nature of the doctrine; and the preaching such doctrines cannot claim the privilege and immunity of a mere opinion, because it is as much matter of fact as any the actions of his disciples and confidants; and therefore in such cases is not to be permitted, but judged according to the nature of the effect it hath or may have upon the actions of men.

Fifthly: but lastly, in matters merely speculative, the case is wholly altered, because the body

politic, which only may lawfully use the sword, is not a competent judge of such matters which have not direct influence upon the body politic, or upon the lives and manners of men, as they are parts of a community, (not but that princes, or judges temporal, may have as much ability as others, but by reason of the incompetency of the authority;) and Gallio spoke wisely when he discoursed thus to the Jews: ‘ If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should hear you; but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.’* The man spoke excellent reason, for the cognizance of these things did appertain to men of the other robe; but the ecclesiastical power, which only is competent to take notice of such questions, is not of capacity to use the temporal sword or corporal inflictions. The mere doctrines and opinions of men are things spiritual, and therefore not cognizable by a temporal authority; and the ecclesiastical authority, which is to take cognizance, is itself so spiritual that it cannot inflict any punishment corporal.

And it is not enough to say, that when the magistrate restrains the preaching such opinions, if any man preaches them he may be punished, (and then it is not for his opinion but his disobedience that he is punished;) for the temporal power ought not to restrain prophecyings, where the public peace and interest is not certainly concerned. And therefore it is not sufficient to excuse him whose law, in that case, being by an incompetent power, made a scruple where there was no sin.

* Acts, xviii. 14.

And under this consideration come very many articles of the church of Rome, which are wholly speculative, which do not derive upon practice, which begin in the understanding and rest there, and have no influence upon life and government, but very accidentally and by a great many removes; and therefore are to be considered only so far as to guide men in their persuasions, but have no effect upon the persons of men, their bodies, or their temporal condition: I instance in two—prayer for the dead, and the doctrine of transubstantiation; these two to be instead of all the rest.

For the first, this discourse is to suppose it false, and we are to direct our proceedings accordingly; and therefore I shall not need to urge with how many fair words and gay pretences this doctrine is set off, apt either to cozen or instruct the conscience of the wisest, according as it is true or false respectively. But we find (says the Romanist) in the history of the Maccabees, that the Jews did pray and make offerings for the dead, (which also appears by other testimonies, and by their form of prayers still extant, which they used in the captivity:) it is very considerable, that since our blessed Saviour did reprove all the evil doctrines and traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and did argue concerning the dead and the resurrection against the Sadduces, yet he spake no word against this public practice, but left it as he found it, which he who came to declare to us all the will of his Father would not have done if it had not been innocent, pious, and full of charity. To which, by way of consociation, if we add, that St. Paul did pray for Onesiphorus, ‘That God would show him a mercy

in that day,* that is, according to the style of the New Testament, the day of judgment, the result will be, that although it be probable that Onesiphorus at that time was dead, (because in his salutations he salutes his household, without naming him who was the *major domo*, against his custom of salutations in other places,) yet, besides this, the prayer was for such a blessing to him whose demonstration and reception could not be but after death; which implies clearly, that then there is a need of mercy; and by consequence the dead people, even to the day of judgment inclusively, are the subject of a misery, the object of God's mercy, and therefore fit to be commemorated in the duties of our piety and charity, and that we are to recommend their condition to God, not only to give them more glory in the reunion, but to pity them to such purposes in which they need; which because they are not revealed to us in particular, it hinders us not in recommending the persons in particular to God's mercy, but should rather excite our charity and devotion; for it being certain that they have a need of mercy, and it being uncertain how great their need is, it may concern the prudence of charity to be the more earnest, as not knowing the greatness of their necessity.

And if there should be any uncertainty in these arguments, yet its having been the universal practice of the church of God in all places and in all ages, till within these hundred years, is a very great inducement for any member of the church to believe, that in the first traditions of Christianity and the institutions apostolical, there was nothing

* 2 Tim. i. 18.

delivered against this practice, but very much to insinuate or enjoin it; because the practice of it was at the first, and was universal. And if any man shall doubt of this, he shows nothing but that he is ignorant of the records of the church, it being plain in Tertullian * and St. Cyprian, † (who were the eldest writers of the Latin church,) that in their times it was of old the custom of the church to pray for the souls of the faithful departed, in the dreadful mysteries; and it was an institution apostolical, (says one of them,) and so transmitted to the following ages of the church; and when once it began upon slight and discontent to be contested against by Aërius, the man was presently condemned for a heretic, as appears in Epiphanius.

But I am not to consider the arguments for the doctrine itself, although the probability and fair pretence of them may help to excuse such persons who upon these or the like grounds do heartily believe it. But I am to consider that, whether it be true or false, there is no manner of malice in it, and at the worst it is but a wrong error upon the right side of charity, and concluded against by its adversaries upon the confidence of such arguments, which possibly are not so probable as the grounds pretended for it.

And if the same judgment might be made of any more of their doctrines, I think it were better men were not furious in the condemning such questions, which either they understood not upon the grounds of their proper arguments, or at least consider not, as subjected in the persons, and lessened

* De Corona Milit. c. 3. et De Monogam. c. 10.

† Ep. 66.

by circumstances, by the innocency of the event, or other prudential considerations.

But the other article is harder to be judged of, and hath made greater stirs in Christendom, and hath been dashed with more impetuous objections, and such as do more trouble the question of toleration. For if the doctrine of transubstantiation be false, (as upon much evidence we believe it is,) then it is accused of introducing idolatry, giving divine worship to a creature, adoring of bread and wine, and then comes in the precept of God to the Jews, that those prophets who persuaded to idolatry should be slain.*

But here we must deliberate, for it is concerning the lives of men; and yet a little deliberation may suffice, for idolatry is a forsaking the true God, and giving divine worship to a creature or to an idol; that is to an imaginary god, who hath no foundation in essence or existence; and is that kind of superstition which by divines is called the superstition of an undue object. Now it is evident that the object of their adoration (that which is represented to them in their minds, their thoughts, and purposes, and by which God principally, if not solely, takes estimate of human actions) in the blessed sacrament, is the only true and eternal God, hypostatically joined with his holy humanity; which humanity they believe actually present under the veil of the sacramental signs. And if they thought him not present, they are so far from worshipping the bread in this case, that themselves profess it to be idolatry to do so, which is a demonstration that their soul hath nothing in it that is

* Deut. xiii.

idololatrical. If their confidence and fanciful opinion hath engaged them upon so great mistake, (as without doubt it hath,) yet the will hath nothing in it, but what is a great enemy to idolatry; "and there is nothing damnable which is independent of the will."* And although they have done violence to all philosophy and the reason of man, and undone and cancelled the principles of two or three sciences to bring in this article, yet they have a divine revelation whose literal and grammatical sense, if that sense were intended, would warrant them to do violence to all the sciences in the circle; and, indeed, that transubstantiation is openly and violently against natural reason, is an argument to make them disbelieve, who believe the mystery of the trinity in all those niceties of explication which are in the school, (and which now-a-days pass for the doctrine of the church) with as much violence to the principles of natural and supernatural philosophy as can be imagined to be in the point of transubstantiation.

1. But for the article itself, we all say that Christ is there present some way or other extraordinary; and it will not be amiss to worship him at that time, when he gives himself to us in so mysterious a manner, and with so great advantages; especially since the whole office is a consociation of divers actions of religion and divine worship. Now, in all opinions of those men who think it an act of religion to communicate and to offer, a divine worship is given to Christ, and is transmitted to him by mediation of that action and that sacrament; and it is no more in the church of Rome,

“Et nihil ardet in inferno nisi propria voluntas.”

but that they differ and mistake infinitely in the manner of his presence; which error is wholly seated in the understanding, and does not communicate with the will. For all agree that the divinity and the humanity of the Son of God is the ultimate and adequate object of divine adoration, and that it is incommunicable to any creature whatsoever; and before they venture to pass an act of adoration, they believe the bread to be annihilated or turned into his substance who may lawfully be worshipped; and they who have these thoughts are as much enemies of idolatry as they that understand better how to avoid that inconvenience which is supposed to be the crime, which they formally hate, and we materially avoid: this consideration was concerning the doctrine itself.

2. And now, for any danger to men's persons for suffering such a doctrine; this I shall say, that if they who do it, are not formally guilty of idolatry, there is no danger that they whom they persuade to it should be guilty; and what persons soever believe it to be idolatry to worship the sacrament, while that persuasion remains will never be brought to it, there is no fear of that: and he that persuades them to do it by altering their persuasions and beliefs, does no hurt but altering the opinions of the men, and abusing their understandings; but when they believe it to be no idolatry, then their so believing it is sufficient security from that crime, which hath so great a tincture and residency in the will that from thence only it hath its being criminal.

3. However, if it were idolatry, I think the precept of God to the Jews, of killing false and idolatrous prophets, will be no warrant for Christians so

to do. For in the case of the apostles and the men of Samaria, when James and John would have called for fire to destroy them, even as Elias did under Moses's law, Christ distinguished the spirit of Elias from his own spirit, and taught them a lesson of greater sweetness, and consigned this truth to all ages of the church, that such severity is not consistent with the meekness which Christ by his example and sermons hath made a precept evangelical; at most it was but a judicial law, and no more of argument to make it necessary to us than the Mosaical precepts of putting adulterers to death, and trying the accused persons by the waters of jealousy.

And thus, in these two instances, I have given account what is to be done in toleration of diversity of opinions; the result of which is principally this: let the prince and the secular power have a care the commonwealth be safe. For whether such and such a sect of Christians be to be permitted, is a question rather political than religious; for as for the concernments of religion, these instances have furnished us with sufficient to determine us in our duties as to that particular, and by one of these all particulars may be judged.

And now it were a strange inhumanity to permit Jews in a commonwealth, whose interest is served by their inhabitation, and yet, upon equal grounds of state and policy, not to permit differing sects of Christians; for although possibly there is more danger, men's persuasions should be altered in a commixture of divers sects of Christians, yet there is not so much danger when they are changed from Christian to Christian, as if they be turned from Christian to Jew, as many are daily in Spain and Portugal.

And this is not to be excused by saying the church hath no power over them *qui foris sunt*, "who are without," as Jews are. For it is true the church in the capacity of spiritual regiments hath nothing to do with them, because they are not her diocess: yet the prince hath to do with them, when they are subjects of his regiment; they may not be excommunicate any more than a stone may be killed, because they are not of the Christian communion, but they are living persons, parts of the commonwealth, infinitely deceived in their religion, and very dangerous if they offer to persuade men to their opinions, and are the greatest enemies of Christ, whose honour and the interest of whose service a Christian prince is bound with all his power to maintain. And when the question is of punishing disagreeing persons with death, the church hath equally nothing to do with them both, for she hath nothing to do with the temporal sword, but the prince, whose subjects equally Christians and Jews are, hath equal power over their persons; for a Christian is no more a subject than a Jew is; the prince hath upon them both the same power of life and death, so that the Jew by being no Christian is not *foris*, or any more an exempt person for his body or his life than the Christian is. And yet in all churches where the secular power hath temporal reason to tolerate the Jews, they are tolerated without any scruple in religion; which thing is of more consideration, because the Jews are direct blasphemers of the Son of God, and blasphemy by their own law, the law of Moses, is made capital, and might with greater reason be inflicted upon them who acknowledge its obligation, than urged upon Christians as an authority, enabling

princes to put them to death who are accused of accidental and consequentive blasphemy and idolatry respectively, which yet they hate and disavow with much zeal and heartiness of persuasion. And I cannot yet learn a reason why we shall not be more complying with them who are of the household of faith; for at least they are children, though they be but rebellious children; (and if they were not, what hath the mother to do with them any more than with the Jews?) they are in some relation or habitude of the family, for they are consigned with the same baptism, profess the same faith delivered by the apostles, are erected in the same hope, and look for the same glory to be revealed to them, at the coming of their common Lord and Saviour, to whose service, according to their understanding, they have vowed themselves: and if the disagreeing persons be to be esteemed as heathens and publicans, yet not worse, 'Have no company with them,' that is the worst that is to be done to such a man in St. Paul's judgment: 'yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.'

SECTION XXI.

*Of the Duty of particular Churches in allowing
Communion.*

FROM these premises we are easily instructed concerning the lawfulness or duty respectively of Christian communion, which is differently to be

considered in respect of particular churches to each other, and of particular men to particular churches: for as for particular churches, they are bound to allow communion to all those that profess the same faith upon which the apostles did give communion; for whatsoever preserves us as members of the church, gives us title to the communion of saints; and whatsoever faith or belief that is to which God hath promised heaven, that faith makes us members of the Catholic church. Since, therefore, the judicial acts of the church are then most prudent and religious when they nearest imitate the example and piety of God, to make the way to heaven straiter than God made it, or to deny to communicate with those whom God will vouchsafe to be united, and to refuse our charity to those who have the same faith, because they have not all our opinions, and believe not every thing necessary which we overvalue, is impious and schismatical; it infers tyranny on one part, and persuades and tempts to uncharitableness and animosities on both; it dissolves societies, and is an enemy to peace; it busies men in impertinent wranglings, and by names of men and titles of factions it consigns the interested parties to act their differences to the height, and makes them neglect those advantages which piety and a good life bring to the reputation of Christian religion and societies.

And therefore Vincentius Lirinensis, and indeed the whole church, accounted the Donatists heretics upon this very ground, because they did imperiously deny their communion to all that were not of their persuasion; whereas the authors of that opinion for which they first did separate and make a sect, because they did not break the church's

peace, nor magisterially prescribed to others, were in that disagreeing and error accounted Catholics. "Division and disunion makes you heretics, peace and unity make Catholics,"* said St. Austin; and to this sense is that of St. Paul: 'If I had all faith and not charity I am nothing.' He who upon confidence of his true belief denies a charitable communion to his brother, loses the reward of both. And if pope Victor had been as charitable to the Asiatics as pope Anicetus and St. Polycarp were to each other in the same disagreeing concerning Easter, Victor had not been *πληκτικώτερον κατατιθέμενος*, so bitterly reprov'd and condemn'd as he was for the uncharitable managing of his disagreeing, by Polycrates and Irenæus.† True faith, which leads to charity, leads on to that which unites wills and affections, not opinions.‡

Upon these or the like considerations the emperor Zeno published his *ἐνώτικον*, in which he made the Nicene creed to be the medium of Catholic communion; and although he lived after the council of Chalcedon, yet he made not the decrees of that council an instrument of its restraint and limit, as preferring the peace of Christendom and the union of charity far before a forced or pretended unity of persuasion, which never was or ever will be real and substantial; and although it were very convenient if it could be had, yet it is therefore not necessary because it is impossible; and if men please, whatever advantages to the public would be consequent to it, may be supplied by a charitable com-

* "Divisio enim et disunio facit vos hæreticos, pax et unitas faciunt Catholicos."

† Euseb. lib. v. c. 25, 26.

‡ "Concordia enim quæ est charitatis effectus est unio voluntatum non opinionum."—Aquin. 22 æ. q. 37, a. 1.

But then men would do well to consider whether or no such proceedings do not derive the guilt of schism upon them who least think it; and whether of the two is the schismatic, he that makes unnecessary and (supposing the state of things) inconvenient impositions, or he that disobeys them because he cannot, without doing violence to his conscience, believe them: he that parts communion because without sin he could not entertain it, or they that have made it necessary for him to separate, by requiring such conditions which to man are simply necessary, and to his particular are either sinful or impossible.

The sum of all is this: there is no security in any thing or to any person, but in the pious and hearty endeavours of a good life; and neither sin nor error does impede it from producing its proportionate and intended effect; because it is a direct deletery to sin, and an excuse to errors, by making them innocent, and therefore harmless. And, indeed, this is the intendment and design of faith; for (that we may join both ends of this discourse together) therefore certain articles are prescribed to us, and propounded to our understanding, that so we might be supplied with instructions, with motives and engagements to incline and determine our wills to the obedience of Christ. So that obedience is just so consequent to faith, as the acts of will are to the dictates of the understanding. Faith therefore being in order to obedience, and so far excellent, as itself is a part of obedience or the promoter of it, or an engagement to it, it is evident that if obedience and a good life be secured upon the most reasonable and proper grounds of Christianity, that is, upon the apostles' creed, then faith

also is secured. Since whatsoever is beside the duties, the order of a good life cannot be a part of faith, because upon faith a good life is built; all other articles, by not being necessary, are no otherwise to be required but as they are to be obtained and found out, that is, morally and fallibly, and humanly: it is fit all truths be promoted fairly and properly, and yet but few articles prescribed magisterially, nor framed into symbols and bodies of confession; least of all, after such composures, should men proceed so furiously as to say all disagreeing, after such declarations, to be damnable for the future and capital for the present. But this very thing is reason enough to make men more limited in their prescriptions, because it is more charitable in such suppositions to do so.

But in the thing itself, because few kinds of errors are damnable, it is reasonable as few should be capital; and because every thing that is damnable in itself, and before God's judgment-seat, is not discernible before men, (and questions disputable are of this condition,) it is also very reasonable that fewer be capital than what are damnable, and that such questions should be permitted to men to believe, because they must be left to God to judge. It concerns all persons to see that they do their best to find out truth, and if they do, it is certain that let the error be never so damnable, they shall escape the error or the misery of being damned for it. And if God will not be angry at men for being invincibly deceived, why should men be angry one at another? For he that is most displeased at another man's error, may also be tempted in his own will, and as much deceived in his understanding; for if he may fail in what he can choose, he may

also fail in what he cannot choose; his understanding is no more secured than his will, nor his faith more than his obedience. It is his own fault if he offends God in either; but whatsoever is not to be avoided, as errors which are incident oftentimes even to the best and most inquisitive of men, are not offences against God, and therefore not to be punished or restrained by men. But all such opinions in which the public interests of the commonwealth, and the foundation of faith, and a good life are not concerned, are to be permitted freely: 'Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind,' was the doctrine of St. Paul, and that is argument and conclusion too; and they were excellent words which St. Ambrose said in attestation of this great truth: "The civil authority has no right to interdict the liberty of speaking, nor the sacerdotal to prevent speaking what you think."*

I end with a story which I find in the Jews' books:—When Abraham sat at his tent door, according to his custom, waiting to entertain strangers, he espied an old man stooping and leaning on his staff, weary with age and travel, coming towards him, who was an hundred years of age; he received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, and caused him to sit down; but observing that the old man eat and prayed not, nor begged for a blessing on his meat, asked him, why he did not worship the God of heaven? The old man told him that he worshipped the fire only, and acknowledged no other God; at which answer Abraham grew so zealously angry, that he thrust the old man out of his tent, and exposed him to all the evils of the

* "Nec imperiale est libertatem dicendi negare, nec sacerdotale quod sentias non dicere."

night and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to Abraham, and asked him where the stranger was? he replied, I thrust him away because he did not worship thee: God answered him, I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonoured me, and couldst thou not endure him one night, when he gave thee no trouble? Upon this, saith the story, Abraham fetched him back again, and gave him hospitable entertainment and wise instruction: "Go thou and do likewise," and thy charity will be rewarded by the God of Abraham.

"Αγιος ἰσχυρος.

THE END.

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