



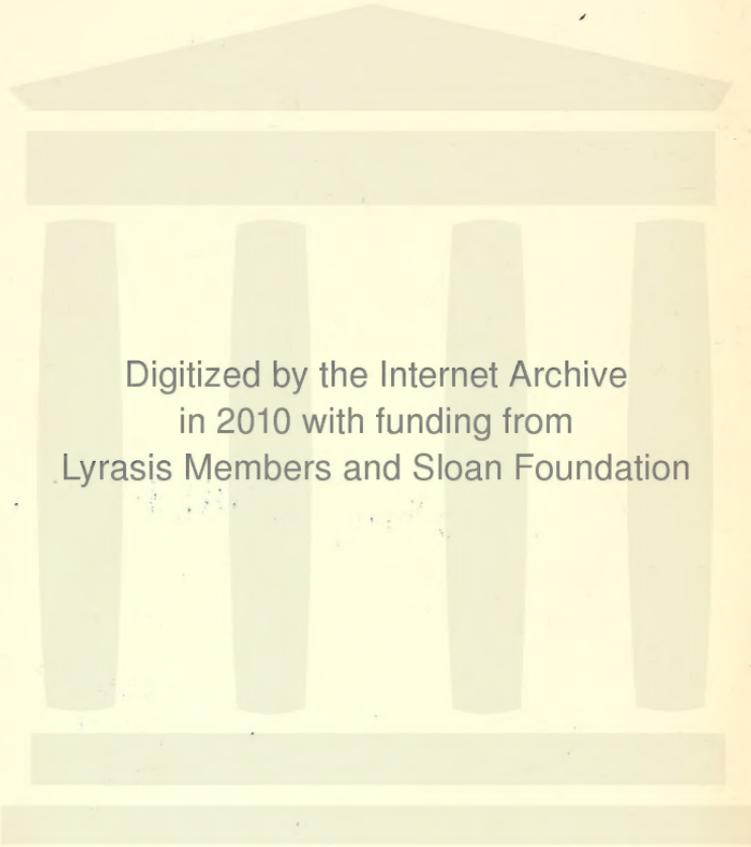


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EVIDENCES AND DOCTRINES  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



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THE  
EVIDENCES AND DOCTRINES  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

SHOWING

THAT THE FORMER ARE NO LESS CONVINCING THAN  
THE LATTER ARE PROPITIOUS TO THE  
HAPPINESS OF SOCIETY

BY THE

MOST REV. JOHN MACHALE, D.D.  
ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

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## P R E F A C E .

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To deduce the Evidences of the Catholic Church from the primitive source of Revelation, and illustrate the speculative truth of its doctrines, as well as their practical influence on the happiness of society, is the object of this volume. From the highest origin of religious knowledge, the reader is conducted along its varied course, as it descended through the land of Judea, or diverged among the other nations of the earth. As he traces it through the latter countries, he is enabled to mark the diminutions which it sustained by straying amidst the regions of ignorance or philosophy; whilst, among the former people, he may view the gradual accumulations of the stream, until it expanded into a majestic current, likened by the prophet to the sea pouring over the earth its salutary waters.

Though the Catholic Church be nothing else than Christianity continued, yet efforts have been recently made to separate objects, which are united by a necessary and indissoluble alliance. Hence some writers, who have successfully unfolded the evidences of the Christian, have at the same time displayed a strange and inconsistent enmity to the Catholic Church, and exemplified a celebrated classic story, by labouring to unravel the texture of their own hands. In the works

which these individuals have left us, they cautiously confine themselves to the first propagation of the Christian religion, aware that, if they ventured to descend lower, Christianity would present itself in the appalling form of the Catholic religion, no matter what period might be selected for the investigation. If the Christian and the reformed religion be connected, by any avenue however secret or circuitous, it may excite our wonder that those who were at once the zealous advocates of both have not pointed out to the view of mankind the line of mutual connexion. The reason, however, is obvious. From the first to the sixteenth century would have been a frightful disruption in the continuity of succession. It would have required much of historical research, and more of fanciful theory, to fill up the immense interval between Luther and the apostles, with a real or imaginary series of legitimate descendants. To lose sight of the channel through which Christianity has been regularly transmitted, and spring at once to the period of the Reformation, is a more summary method of controversy, than to lead us along the tedious line of lineal succession, by which Christianity and the Reformation are united. To discover the traces of a junction between the Christian and Protestant Churches—societies not more disconnected by time than dissimilar in nature, would mock the labours of the most ingenious; and if, from the despair of such a discovery, the champions of the Reformation should seek shelter in the supposition of an invisible Church—a supposition that has been seriously adopted, we may be permitted to inquire, when did the current of Christianity descend, like the fabled flood of Alpheus, into

a subterraneous channel, until in the sixteenth century it rose at such a distance from the place where it had first disappeared?

To close, therefore, the Evidences of the Catholic Church at the period of its establishment would be an imperfect labour, without showing that the same Divine Power, by which it was erected, has uniformly watched over its existence. The sectaries of every name shrink from the light of history, because it reveals the time when the cistern of Christianity was broken, and its waters troubled by the admixture of error. The advocate of the Catholic Church has no such dread, and therefore he courts a free and expanded investigation; he feels no desire to conceal the period that elapsed between the first and the sixteenth century. There is not a day in that interval, which, with Job, he would wish to have erased from the records of time; since every moment attests the continuity of the same Church and the uniformity of the same doctrine. I have therefore extended the evidences of religion beyond former examples, in order that the reader may perceive the identity between the Catholic Church of the *nineteenth* and the Catholic Church of the *first* century; as well as the identity between that Church and the primitive revelations, of which it has been the development and perfection.

The Catholic, who recites the apostles' creed to-day, believes in the same Catholic Church, as he who repeated it in the age in which it was composed; and by following up the same unbroken chain of doctrine, he may trace the regular succession of truth to the origin of the human race.

It would, however, be an unprofitable study to explore the origin, and follow the progress of religion, without contemplating the benefits of which it has been productive. The advantages of some of the institutions of the Catholic Church are beyond the reach of controversy. They have been felt and acknowledged by adverse writers, who have heaped on others of its doctrines and practices unsparing vituperation. It has been my aim to show, that not only those institutions, which are the theme of general eulogy, but others, which are objects of censure and abuse, have had an immense influence on the happiness of society. Among the tenets which are represented as most noxious in their effects, is the supremacy of the pope. In opposition to some of the most popular historians, I have undertaken to establish, that in the ages when it is supposed to have been most disastrous, the supremacy of the Roman pontiff was favourable to the liberties, as well as to the virtues, of mankind. In the sketches which I have exhibited of the contentions between kings and pontiffs, the reader may see that the mutual independence of both is the best safeguard of civil freedom; and that the union of the secular and ecclesiastical power in the same person is one of the surest symptoms of despotism. To those whose historical and theological knowledge has been exclusively imbibed from other sources, this position may wear the complexion of a paradox. But it is high time to rescue truth from the misrepresentations with which it has been covered. The tide of prejudice, which for three centuries has run against the Catholic religion, has nearly spent its force. The degree of public

favour that has been extended to writers who have had the manliness to combat ancient and inveterate errors, announces a sound revolution in the public taste ; and the human mind, sick of the poison of religious calumny, which has been hitherto mingled with every popular production, pants at length for a purer and more impartial literature.

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EVIDENCES AND DOCTRINES  
OF  
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

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CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY OF REVELATION.

Singular interest of the Jewish History.—Religious Indifference.—Primary Truths of Religion, the Relics of Primitive Revelation.—Social Destination of Man, not the result of choice or compact.—Authority, a principal source of knowledge.—Desire of Immortality.—Alliance of Truth and Virtue.—General corruption of the Ancient World.—Sketch of the sects and opinions of Pagan Philosophy.

AMONG the different nations, the policy of whose institutions, duration of empire, or remarkable fortunes may invite us to the study of their history or their religion, there is one which more peculiarly attracts our curiosity, and fixes our attention.\* In the uniformity that marks the destinies of every other people there is little that can be entitled to our more particular contemplation. Some have surpassed others, it is true, in the cultivation of the arts, as well as in the extent of their conquests. But in their history we find nothing that can excite our surprise; nay, we discover the operation of similar causes in producing their

\* “La rencontre de ce peuple m'étonne, et me semble digne d'une extrême attention, par quantité de choses admirables et singulières.”—Pensées de Pascal, p. 82. Avignon: 1818.

greatness or decline. No sooner, however, does this extraordinary people appear to our view, than we are as if forced to pause, and examine the singular phenomenon of their preservation. The study of their history is not a tribute to their religion : no, it is forced on the reflecting mind by those circumstances, which mark the Jews as an exception to all the nations of the earth. The peculiarity of their fate cannot fail to strike, at the first view, the most inattentive observer. The ancient empires, whose solidity seemed to promise an eternal duration, have long since crumbled into dust.\* The Persians, Greeks, and Romans, who successively swayed the sceptre of conquest have long since disappeared. Time has preserved no distinct remnants of the ancient inhabitants of Persia, Italy, or Greece. The tide of conquest which successively rolled over them blotted out their national features and blended them with their conquerors. How, therefore, does it happen, that, amidst still more destructive revolutions, the race of Abraham alone should have so preserved their distinctness, that, were he again to reappear upon earth, the features of the father might be traced in the most distant and degenerate of his posterity?† Incapable of incorporating with any other nation, yet bereft of those institutions that give each nation its peculiar character, they preserve their identity; and, like the three Hebrew confessors in Babylon,‡ they have come forth in safety from every furnace of persecution to which they have been consigned for destruction. To those, then, who account for moral

\* "On ne voit plus aucun reste ni des anciens Assyriens, ni des anciens Mèdes, ni des anciens Perses, ni des anciens Grecs, ni même des anciens Romains. La race s'en est perdue, et ils se sont confondus avec d'autres peuples. Les Juifs qui ont été la proie de ces anciennes nations si célèbres dans les histoires, leur ont survécu; et Dieu en les conservant, nous tient en attente de ce qu'il veut faire encore des malheureux restes d'un peuple autrefois si favorisé."—Discours de Bossuet, sur l'Hist. Univ. p. 298. Rouen: 1788.

† "Depuis quatre mille ans le sang d'Abraham coule dans leurs veines sans mélange et sans alteration: et si ce Patriarche revenait sur la terre il reconnaîtrait sa postérité marquée du sceau distinctif qu'il a laissé."—Du Voisin, Autor, des Livres de Moïse, p. 2.

‡ Dan. iii.

effects by human causes alone, it may appear a problem not unworthy of their ingenuity, to explain how the scattered fragments, nay, the very elements of a people, not bound by any principle of cohesion, save that of religion, could have resisted all the affinities of laws, of manners, of country, and of climate, and floated for eighteen centuries, on the surface of society, without mingling in its mass, or partaking of its qualities.\*

This problem, which has so often baffled the powers of philosophy, will find a satisfactory solution in the religion which they profess. Are we, however, to reject the religious systems of other nations on account of this peculiarity of the Jewish people? Notwithstanding the interest that still hangs over their history, and the charms that are spread over their literature, must we condemn, even without condescending to examine, the elegant mythology of Greece and Rome? To pass over the claims of more distant countries, are we required to believe, at once, in the inspiration of the prophets of Judea, without listening to the lessons of Plato or of Socrates; and to divert our attention from the admired sources of profane wisdom, to the history of an obscure people, whom the polished nations of antiquity despised? Often has the sincere votary of truth been checked in his career by observations such as these. Often has he been told, that amid the various claims to truth put forward by different nations, it is difficult to determine which are the best founded; and that as a wise man will not give a preference without an adequate motive, it is safer to reject the pretensions of all than to be exposed to the danger of being duped by imposture.†

Such is the summary method by which modern phi-

\* To the Christian the difficulty is easy of solution. "L'état où l'on voit les Juifs est encore une grande preuve de la religion. Car c'est une chose étonnante de voir ce peuple subsister depuis tant d'années, et de le voir toujours misérable; étant nécessaire pour la preuve de Jésus Christ, qu'ils subsistent pour le prouver, et qu'ils soient misérables puisqu'ils l'ont crucifié."—Pens. de Pascal, p. 127.

† "Parmi tant de religions diverses qui se proscrivent et s'excluent mutuellement . . . qui me guidera dans la choix? . . . Pour bien juger d'une religion il ne faut pas l'étudier dans les livres de ses sectateurs, il faut aller l'apprendre chez eux . . . D'où il suit que s'il n'y a qu'une religion véritable, il faut passer sa

losophers would fain dispose of the important subject of religion, abandoning it altogether as though it were unworthy of investigation. This affected indifference,\* which would confound it with error, is the most dangerous persecution which truth ever yet sustained. While it excites interest and opposition it is a proof that it is still valued. But that ignominious indifference with which some regard it is its worst enemy; for the mind will not stoop to investigate what it contemns, and doctrines, which are deemed alike unworthy of inquiry or contradiction, zeal can neither hope to diffuse nor defend. It was thus that the apostate Julian, the deadliest enemy of the Christian name, endeavoured to extinguish the ardour kindled to protect so precious a possession by abandoning religion to a contemptuous toleration, and denying its champions the opportunity of wearing the chains of the confessor or the crown of the martyr.

Such an indifference cannot be consistently defended but on either of the suppositions—that it is impossible to arrive at truth, or that it is so deeply encrusted with errors as to be scarcely worth the labour of extraction. If truth be the only path that leads to happiness we cannot suppose that this universal goal of man's desires is utterly inaccessible; and if one refuses to make any advance in the important inquiry, on account of the labour he may encounter, it is clear that this philoso-

vie à les étudier toutes, à les approfondir, à les comparer, à parcourir les pays où elles sont établies. Nul n'est exempt du premier devoir de l'homme, nul n'a droit de se fier au jugement d'autrui. L'artisan qui ne vit que de son travail, le laboureur qui ne sait pas lire, la jeune fille délicate et timide, l'infirme qui peut à peine sortir de son lit, tous sans exception doivent étudier, méditer, disputer, voyager, parcourir le monde . . . examiner par eux-mêmes les cultes diverses qu'on y suit."—Emile, tom. iii. p. 25.

Those who require of each individual, however ignorant, to arraign the universal Church before the tribunal of his individual reason, and to pass judgment on the doctrines of all ages and nations before he believes, well deserve the caustic irony with which the inconvenience of such a system is exposed in the preceding passage.

\* See the Introduction, and second and third chapters of the "Essai sur l'Indifférence en matière de Religion," par l'Abbé de la Mennais, vol. i. The whole volume is a profound and elaborate review of this cheerless and appalling opinion in all its varieties.

phical indifference, far from arguing a vigorous intellect, is a proof of its indolence and weakness: it is a disposition which participates more in the passiveness of matter than in the activity of a spiritual substance.\* The more careless one is in the important investigation the more he manifests the influence of that portion of his nature which is inert and unconscious; hence there cannot be a greater paradox than to ascribe to superior powers of understanding what is obviously the effect of sloth and sensuality. If, however, anything like original strength could be traced in this religious indifference, it might be termed the exhaustion produced by the repeated conflicts between truth and error.

Yes, it is the consequence of the defeats which infidelity has sustained. As long as the advocates of error can maintain certain positions they are as fierce and unyielding dogmatists as the most uncompromising votaries of truth; and hence the strong difference between the ancient enemies of the Christian Church and those by whom it has been recently assailed. Then, the worst systems of error were blended with much truth, which the pride of human reason found an interest in defending. Not so in the more recent assaults that have been directed against the whole edifice of religion. Forced from every hold into which it had been driven, a proud and imperious reason—which is not more ambitious of knowledge than desirous of its extinction, when mortifying to its pride—suddenly passes from one error to another, still persecuted by the triumphs of truth, which permits it not to repose until pushed to the extreme limit of the intellectual world; and, despairing of further retreat, it plunges into the abyss of infidelity, there to hide the

\* “Dieu n'est indifférent sur rien, parce qu'il connaît tout : la matière est indifférente à tout, parce qu'elle ne connaît rien. L'homme placé entre ces deux extrêmes est plus ou moins indifférent selon qu'il ignore ou connaît plus ou moins; c'est-à-dire, selon qu'il se rapproche des êtres purement matériels, ou de l'être souverainement intelligent.”—De la Mennais, Essai, tom. i, p. 47.

This is but another view of the profound doctrine of the apostle touching the animal, carnal, and spiritual man, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

shame and horrors of its discomfiture. This is the last stage to which the progress of error naturally conducts—a studied and systematic ignorance, a voluntary slumber of the soul, which, after exhausting its vigour in struggling with its own convictions, sinks at last, totally abandoned by the light of every doctrine, into the gulf of indifference, which may be termed the void and dreary sepulchre of the human intellect.

If reason forbids the adoption of this system of indifference, of which the disastrous effects have been but slightly glanced at, inquiry is the obvious duty of every intelligent creature; nor can investigation terminate in disappointment, since it cannot be supposed that God has not impressed on his own religion those characters of truth which will easily distinguish it from the systems of human error.\* Nor is the method of discovering it so tedious or intricate as some ingenious writers would fain make us believe. It is not necessary to make a voyage of religious discovery round the different countries of the world, nor explore the shrines of the idols which they worshipped. It is not necessary to subject to a laborious inquiry the different systems of religion that have prevailed in ancient or modern times in order to repose in the secure possession of the true one. The loose and clumsy fabrics of superstition and fanaticism, unable to resist inquiry, vanish at the touch of argument; while the solid edifice of truth, resting on a deep foundation, only furnishes fresh proofs of its strength from every abortive effort to subvert it.

Were we even to explore its most erroneous systems, the result would confirm us in the belief that the origin of religion was from heaven. However modified by the accidents of custom or education we discover some leading principles of religion pervading all mankind, and which are so deeply implanted in our nature

\* “Ainsi considérant combien il y a d'apparence qu'il y a autre chose que ce que je vois, j'ai recherché si ce Dieu, dont tout le monde parle, n'aurait point laissé quelques marques de lui . . . Je vois des multitudes de religions en plusieurs endroits du monde, et dans tous les temps. Mais elles n'ont ni morale qui me puisse plaire, ni preuves capables de m'arrêter.”—Pens. de Pascal, p. 80.

that they cannot be eradicated. Such uniformity among different nations on one subject alone, while they differ on every other, affords a strong presumption that those principles are the relics of an original inheritance, entrusted to the first families of the human race, and which was gradually impaired as their descendants were dispersed over the earth. These primary truths it is unnecessary to enumerate. They are familiar to every mind: they are felt by the savage as instincts to which he spontaneously yields; they are fixed by the philosopher as axioms, which he deliberately acknowledges; nay, they are inscribed on every monument of the human intellect, which has survived the wreck of time. Though we may deplore the superstitions that disfigure the history of mankind, still we find that the great truths of a presiding cause, the belief of another life, and the responsibility of human conduct, were never extinguished; and the traveller, who undertakes a pilgrimage to the fanes of other nations, will discover these pure and precious relics amidst all the rubbish of their idolatry.\*

The more extensively, then, we become acquainted with other countries the stronger will be our conviction that such uniformity of belief in the great truths of religion must have resulted from the same primitive revelation. Should it appear a tedious process to compare the religious opinions of other nations, in order to ascertain that such have uniformly and universally prevailed, we have only to observe that those who have never read a volume of philosophy or of travels are equally conscious of their existence: these truths are interwoven into the very texture of the society, of which each one is a member. From an obvious and striking effect one naturally passes to the contemplation of its cause; nor can we long survey the strange

\* "Jettez les yeux sur toutes les nations du monde, parcourez toutes les histoires. Parmi tant de cultes inhumains et bizarres, parmi cette prodigieuse diversité de mœurs, et de caractères, vous trouverez partout les mêmes idées de justice et d'honnêteté, partout les mêmes notions du bien et du mal."—Emile, tom. iii. p. 106.

composition of society, without becoming conscious of those principles by which it is cemented. In whatever age or climate man's birth may be cast, he finds himself, on arriving at the use of reason, incorporated into some social system, in the formation of which he had no share. The state, of which he is born a member, may in some countries have attained more perfection; in others it may be in a ruder form, progressively improving by the lights of experience; but in all it assumes some aggregate shape, from its infancy, under a single family governed by its parent, to the full maturity of an empire consisting of many provinces.

The perpetual and uniform existence of society, under some form, is a truth too palpable to be controverted; hence we are warranted by the universal experience of mankind in concluding that this is the state of existence for which man, in this life, was originally destined. If, then, man's social destination was anterior to his existence the principles by which society is connected must have been anterior to his choice. They must have been coeval with that society whose conflicting interests they bound together; and it is therefore from that society, rather than his own individual reason, that their knowledge must be derived. Hence the obvious reason why neither deep study nor extensive observation is necessary to become acquainted with those truths that have obtained the suffrages of mankind. They are the principles on which society reposes; nor can we be ignorant of the one while we contemplate the admirable structure of the other. Unless, therefore, we were to affirm that the aggregation of mankind into a settled form of society was the capricious result of accident, rather than a regular law of their nature, we cannot suppose that the fundamental laws by which they mutually coalesce are of man's institution.

If, unable to controvert the experience which attests that the interests of the individual have been uniformly bound up with those of others, the lovers of paradox

should assert that such union did not spring from any natural tendency to a social centre, the assertion is refuted by the adaptation of such a system to his wants and faculties. The frailty and ignorance of his youth, his obligations to others whilst he was yet at the mercy of every accident, the necessity of providing him with food before he could distinguish what might be poison from what might be nutriment, prove how necessary it is for man to be guided by hereditary knowledge, and how deplorable would be his lot were he left to the slow lessons of experience for direction. These, and many other circumstances, to which we are inattentive only because they grow with us, demonstrate that ordinary knowledge (though it may occasionally derive accessions from the labours of superior intellects), instead of being the result of our own experience, is, for the greater part, a fund transmitted by the society of which we are born members. Were the experience of man's senses alone to guide him he might perish before he could profit of their instruction. He might, for example, be swallowed up in a sheet of water, which appeared solid to the eye, before he was taught by gradual contact to correct the illusion; and thus, like the fruit of that tree whose first taste was death, every experiment might prove fatal to him who could follow only the suggestions of his own experience, and despise the traditional wisdom of the collected body of which he formed a member.

Such is the argument furnished in favour of our social destination, by our dependence and wants. The consciousness of this dependence is strengthened as we advance through life by the development of our social faculties. The propensity of man to hold communion with his kind is manifested through the whole tenor of his life and conduct. It is impressed upon every feature of the human countenance; it speaks in every feeling of the human heart, and the most exalted faculties of our souls are only the mediums of its transmission. Hence that powerful sympathy with others' joys

and sorrows, which is obeyed even involuntarily by the organs of the human frame ; and hence that instrument of universal communication, human language, which, as it would be unnecessary without society, is the strongest link by which it is connected. Hence the continual improvements by which society is enriched, demonstrating that the progressive knowledge, which its members are continually unfolding, was intended for its perfection. While man avails himself of the accumulated knowledge with which the intellectual intercourse of society furnishes him, his faculties are expanding into a perfection for which they must have been destined, as they are susceptible of such improvement. But if he is once separated from the communion of his kind, his faculties, deprived of their usual nutriment, wither and become stunted ; and he sinks into an abject and savage state, exhibiting a melancholy evidence of his unnatural situation.\*

To show that a social state is the natural destination of man, it is not necessary to pursue these reflections further. Now, man's destination cannot depend upon himself. No creature's end can be left to his own discretion. Whatever it may be it is a law of nature. As well might he control his own creation as fix his own destiny. He may, it is true, by the abuse of the freedom with which he is gifted, refuse compliance with the laws which the Almighty has imposed. But to vary the law by which his nature is to be regulated, is no less beyond his power than to modify his own existence ; and therefore it follows that, as the end is not of his own choice, neither can the means be entirely arbitrary by which that end is to be secured. If, then, independently of his own choice, man was born for society, it is not in his own will alone that he must look for the source of those laws by which it is sustained. As truly might it be said that the laws of attraction, by which

\* "L'homme," says Montesquieu, "est né en société et il y reste." See also Ferguson's "Essay on the History of Civil Society."

planets move round their centre, originated with man, as that he is the sole artificer of those fundamental maxims which attract the members of society towards the centre in which the supreme authority resides. And hence the weakness, as well as the folly, of those theories which would trace not only the improvements of society—a position not controverted—but even the fundamental principles on which it reposes, to arbitrary institutions.\* To whatever period we choose to ascend in exploring the origin of human compacts, we must suppose the great principles of original justice to be agreed on as the common basis of their convention. If it should be observed that the public or common good was the only maxim that swayed their deliberations, then the public good was an idea predominant in the thoughts and familiar to the minds of men; and as the public good itself is a complex idea, resulting from the adjustment of many interests, the expression itself would be an evidence that men were already engaged in society; and thus the motive that is ingeniously assigned for its formation must necessarily suppose its previous existence. The very language which would be the medium of interchanging their thoughts would necessarily suppose ideas to which the parties had been formed by education. Though experience might point out the wisdom of extending to the chief of their own choice something like the respect which children give to their parents, it would be only the development of a principle founded on nature, and which they, by a retroactive influence, could neither establish nor destroy. The idea of many sharing mutual advantages under the protection of a common state might be naturally derived from the reciprocal happiness of brothers living under the same roof—a feeling altogether independent of philosophical precepts or political institutions. Thus the wisest codes that have

\* “Dire qu’il n’y a rien de juste ni d’injuste que ce qu’ordonnent ou défendent les loix positives, c’est dire qu’avant qu’on eût tracé de cercle, tous les rayons n’étaient pas égaux.”—De L’Esprit des Loix, liv. i. c. 1.

been formed by statesmen are only more enlarged transcripts of the law which the Almighty has written in the human heart; and the asserters of social compacts, entirely formed according to the arbitrary will of men, are driven from one principle to another more remote, pursuing the phantom of their own reason, which is still receding as they advance; or if they repose, it is the stupid acquiescence of the Indian, who imagined that the earth rested on the head of a serpent, which was again supported by a tortoise, without ever inquiring by what foundation the tortoise itself was sustained.

If, then, there be such a law, independent of our will to enact or annul, cementing society in every region of the earth, we must derive its knowledge chiefly from the unanimous testimony of mankind. It is principally on the credit of this universal society, extending to the remotest ages, and spread over the most distant parts of the world, that we confidently rest the truth of those principles of religion to which it has borne constant and unvaried attestation. We know them, it is true, as individuals by that moral sentiment which instinctively distinguishes between right and wrong, as well as by the light of reason which discovers the relations that bind us as well to our fellow-beings as to the supreme cause of our existence. The least attention to the inward testimony of our minds proves, by its accordance with the universal testimony of mankind, that there are certain maxims of moral rectitude anterior to all human conventions. Yes, in his rudest form, man bears the evidence of a noble destiny; and through every portion of the human species, however discoloured by ignorance or passion, we can still trace the features of an original, magnificent in its source, but degenerate in its fall. There are certain moral maxims that strike the understanding with evidence as irresistible as any mathematical truths, and that equally command its unhesitating acquiescence. There is a moral sense which, with the promptitude of instinct, approves of acts of

virtue, and recoils from the commission of crime with involuntary horror.\* This spontaneous and unreflecting perception of right and wrong is felt by every individual of the human species, though its force may vary according to the degree with which the sentiment is cultivated or neglected. Hence, even those who stray from the practice of virtue are obliged reluctantly to acknowledge that "her paths are peace." The worst individuals are glad to be complimented for virtues which they do not possess; and Nero, who was the object of its execration, would have felt flattered by the title of the delight of mankind, which the virtues of Titus had justly earned. Hence the extravagant encomiums with which orators and poets flatter the great, whose patronage they court: a clear evidence that vice is intolerable even to its own votaries, who would gladly view it softened with the colours of virtue, lest, like the beholders of the fabled head of Medusa, they should be appalled by the hideous portraiture. However men may disregard rectitude of conduct, all are eager to court its fame and its reward; and every act of hypocrisy of which the vicious are guilty is a reluctant homage to the majesty of virtue.

Besides the relations founded on nature, to which the understanding bears evidence, and which the moral sense of mankind instinctively approves, conscience attests the existence of a law that is paramount to every human convention. Conscience may be called the judge which the Almighty has seated in our hearts as the arbiter of our conduct; whose vigilance never slumbers, whose judgment seldom strays, and whose verdict is no less appalling to the humblest subject than to the despot who is placed beyond the reach of human laws. Even should secrecy conceal the culprit from the dread of punishment, or of mankind's detesta-

\* "Quis Pullum Numitorem, Fregellanum proditorem, quanquam reipublicæ nostræ profuit non odit? Quis urbis conservatorem Codrum, quis Erecthei filias non maxime laudat."—Cic. De Fin. Bon. et Mal. l. v. p. 407. Cantabrigiæ: 1728.

tion, conscience, with voice of thunder,\* arraigns him of his guilt; and his tortured fancy, like that of the first murderer, awakes a thousand avengers within him, and converts his visage into a mirror in which all may read the evidence of his crimes.

Such are the strong and consistent witnesses that bear testimony to "the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," and reveal to him the knowledge of those truths that have uniformly swayed the conduct of mankind. Their combined evidence is strong. But when to the interior sentiment and to the conviction of our reason is united the general suffrage of all mankind, then we arrive at a certainty which no scepticism can shake. Then we are no longer at issue with any individual who may oppose his sentiments or his convictions, or who may advert to some insulated or savage tribes which appear to retain but feeble vestiges of these impressions. Virtue is like every other seed, and must be productive in proportion to the richness of the soil and the assiduity of its culture. The finest shoot may be stunted in its growth through want of care, or warped to an unnatural direction. In like manner the principles of religion, if fostered, will grow into an abundant harvest; while they almost decay if totally neglected. Besides, virtue is not the only principle implanted in our nature. Passion appears as early entwined with our existence; and, if not controlled, becomes progressive with our years. The one necessarily thrives as the other is checked in its growth. Hence, when early virtue is not sustained

\* "Prima est hæc ultio, quod se  
 Judice nemo nocens absolvitur; improba quamvis  
 Gratia fallacis prætoris vicerit urnam.

· · · · · Cur tamen hos tu  
 Evasisse putes, quos, diri conscia facti  
 Mens habet attonitos, et surdo verbere cœdit,  
 Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?  
 Pœna autem vehemens, ac multo sævior illis,  
 Quas et Cæditius gravis invenit aut Rhadamanthus,  
 Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem."

JUVENAL, sat. xiii.

by the props and guarded by the enclosures, without which it cannot flourish, it languishes, and the passions soon spring up in its place. But though the passions may impede its growth they never can extinguish the seeds of virtue, and even when cast on the most ungrateful soil, and abandoned to the worst cultivation, there appear a vigour and soundness in its fibres which show that it is imperishable. Besides, among savage tribes, the channel of tradition by which these original truths were conveyed has been so often broken that some of them must have been lost; and, to use the fine allusion of the Psalmist, the original stock must have been impaired by such successive partitions.\*

But to such partial exceptions we may oppose the faith of the great body of mankind, among whom this traditionary fund of knowledge was preserved and improved. Contrasted with these exceptions, the universal consent of mankind ought to bring with it the most overwhelming certainty. To this testimony it is in vain that anyone would oppose his individual sentiments. A single individual may say that he feels no horror at certain actions, which are called crimes, or that his reason perceives not the clear relations that are said to strike every other mind. Perhaps so; and were there no ulterior tribunal it might be difficult to convince such an individual of his mistake. *His* feelings, he may pretend, are not affected by any striking difference between vice and virtue. It may be that the habit of disorder has blunted their sensibility, just as the sense of taste is worn away by habits of intemperance, and artificial tastes which first appeared unnatural are acquired by repeated indulgence. *His* reason may not discern the relations that are clearly seen by every other. It is no wonder, since if it is once disordered it is not in the power of man to refit it to its original functions. In any disputed question between

\* "Diminutæ sunt veritates a filiis hominum,"—Ps. xi. 1.

two intellects equally enlightened and independent, the confidence of either is justly fortified by every accession of authority; and should a disputant, relying solely on his own acuteness, proclaim the evidence of his proposition against the common sense of mankind, he would be supposed to labour under some mental infirmity. Hence, some of our strongest convictions are resolved into the faith which is derived from testimony, and hence the natural connexion between the sources of philosophy and religion. Though parted, as they descended, into two channels of different names, like the floods which arose in the garden of paradise, the original fountain which fed them is the same; and the truths of which we speak, prior to any known discovery which either faith or philosophy has conveyed, may be ultimately traced to the same common revelation.

Here, then, is a sure foundation of our knowledge, sufficiently deep and solid to sustain the edifice of religion to be erected on it: not the weak and solitary reason of one individual, which another might attempt to overturn by the adverse force of his own, but the general reason of mankind, strengthened by mutual accordance, and ultimately reposing on the eternal reason of the Divinity. It is not to be imagined that I wish to renew the justly exploded theory of innate knowledge. No; but though man is not furnished with knowledge as an innate inheritance, he still requires its aid long before he can attain it by his own experience; and this knowledge, of which he stands in need, is derived not from innate ideas, an absurd origin, because it supposes knowledge unnecessary and premature; not solely from experience, a dangerous one, because the knowledge it brings would be often tardy; but from the accumulated reservoir of the knowledge and experience of mankind, gradually poured into his infant mind according to his wants, and enlarged with his capacity, until he digests the nutriment received, and improves, by rational exercise, his intellectual con-

stitution.\* To dispute the certainty of this source of knowledge may happen ; to disbelieve it is impossible. Man can no more get rid of the primitive notions which he receives in his infant years, in common with the rest of his species, than he can divest himself of his nature. He may dispute, and what is it on which he has not disputed? But if he once controvert those traditional axioms, on which all mankind are agreed, there will be no end of disputation. While he talks Pyrrhonism, there is not an action of his life that is not the result of a settled conviction. He may therefore be a disdainful sceptic in speculation ; he is an humble believer in practice. If such an individual were consequent in his reasoning, he should, after renouncing all his hereditary notions, run on until he found some sure footing on which to take his stand. But no ; nature arrests the career of his wanderings, and a strong and invisible power, in spite of all his resistance, binds his proud and mutinous spirit under the yoke of the ordinary convictions of mankind.† Yes, these truths come not to capitulate with the pride of human reason, but with the dignity of conquerors, to subdue and take possession of all intellects, even those that are most impatient of their authority.

Hence the justness of the sententious and profound observation of Pascal, that reason confounds the dogmatist and nature confounds the sceptic :‡ an observation ; which, while it demonstrates the folly of those, who rely solely on the powers of reason, proves that there is a corrective which guards men against its excesses. In short, if the reason of one individual is

\* "Everyone," says Locke, "may observe a great many truths, which he receives at first from others, and readily affirms to be consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond his strength, to have discovered himself. Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine as we who have it ready dug and fashioned to our hands are apt to imagine."—Locke's works, vol. ii., p. 532. Lond., 1722.

† "Douterait-il de tout ? . . . On n'en saurait venir là ; et je mets en fait qu'il n'y a jamais eu de Pyrrhonien effectif et parfait. La nature soutient la raison impuissante, et l'empêche d'extravaguer jusqu'à ce point."—Pens. de Pascal, p. 149.

‡ Pens. de Pascal, p. 149.

capable of perceiving truth, will it not acquire more force from the union of more intellects? Like every other power, it must acquire strength in proportion as it is multiplied, and hence the security of those primary dogmas, round which, we behold the people of every age and nation arrayed, as if to protect them from violation.

It is in vain to obtrude here the errors of mankind, to weaken the force of this argument; since even among those errors a great deal of truth was mingled, as a fine ore is sometimes found among baser strata. These errors were the accumulation of time, by which the original brightness of truth was obscured. Besides, these errors were at best but opinions, and differed from dogmas because they were more loose in the hold which they had taken of the mind, more limited in their diffusion, and more recent in their origin. Like all fleeting opinions, which veer with the revolutions of fashion, these errors have yielded to the influence of time, which has only strengthened the authority of doctrines, and hence we may conclude according to the just observation of Cicero, that "in every subject the consent of all mankind is to be considered as the voice of nature."\*

Having thus developed an argument, which the more it is meditated the more it will appear conclusive, I shall not detain the reader by any tedious reference to the great truths, to which the voice of mankind has borne testimony—such as the existence of a Supreme Being, the necessity of public worship, the essential difference between right and wrong, and the existence of another life. They are all truths, which rest on the same common foundation. They are all derived from the same source, and so intertwined with the very frame of society, that without their binding influence, the finest social edifice that ever was erected would soon be reduced to a sightless mass, and dis-

\* "Omni autem in re, consensio omnium gentium lex naturæ habenda est."—Cic. Tusc. l. i. c. 13.

solved into its original elements. I shall not speak of the existence of God, who dwells in light inaccessible, and which therefore no mortal should venture to approach, without drawing, like Moses, a respectful veil over his intellect, lest it be dazzled by the oppressive splendour. I shall not therefore discuss that sovereign truth, which is the essential source of every other ;\* without which light and life would be equally impossible, and which cannot be extinguished without first annihilating the human understanding, which is but a partial reflection of its original brightness. It is a truth which has baffled all the efforts of error to extinguish ; and it has shone amidst all the darkness of idolatry. Yes, amid the wreck of all other dogmas, it stood unimpaired, like a lonely and majestic column in an ancient temple, a noble monument, to which all mankind, like the pilgrim of Mecca, turned with reverence ; and from every nation of the earth one universal voice of supplication has been ascending to the throne of heaven, drowning by its loudness the murmurs of the infidel, and attesting the claims of the Almighty to the public homage of every heart, by the number and the piety of his worshippers.

This sentiment of the adoration of a Supreme Being has been embodied in a variety of sacred and profane monuments, from the rude stone on which the patriarch poured oil and offered his morning worship, to the lofty temple of Jupiter Stator, or the more pure and splendid temple of Solomon. The feelings that are not expressed, may be reasonably distrusted, and hence the anxiety of mankind to convey through the medium of religious ceremonies and public worship, those sentiments of respect which they felt for the Divinity. This inward respect and outward expression, are in some measure identified ; and those who affect such indifference for the one, cannot be inspired with a

\* “Quæ est enim gens aut quod genus hominum quod non habet sine doctrina anticipationem quamdam Deorum ? . . . Sine qua nec intelligi quidquam nec quæri nec disputari potest.”—Cic. Nat. Deor., lib. i, p. 184.

sincere and lively sense of the other. As well might one pretend to feel the liveliest attachment to the person, and interest for the honour, of his sovereign, while he laboured to extinguish their public expression, as that he felt respect and gratitude for the Divinity, while he was anxious to suppress their external manifestation. This real disregard is but awkwardly disguised under an affectation of respect. While philosophers think that God, occupied in the contemplation of his own happiness, is careless about his creatures, they forget that they are transferring to him all the weakness of men, who, when unable to sustain singly the cares of government, consult their own indolence and ease, by abandoning their subjects to the rapacity or ambition of their ministers. Again, we are told that man is too insignificant an object for the solicitude of the Deity. Such is the consistency of some individuals ! at one time exalting reason into an object of idolatry, and again so debasing themselves as to look for impunity for their guilt, in the very abyss of degradation ; denying God's providence only because they are conscious of their crimes, flattering themselves that they shall elude by the excess of their littleness the vigilance of the Almighty, and striving to steal their fearful way through the world, like the wretches who infest by night the repose of a large city, and escape the vigilance of the municipal authorities, as well by their insignificance as the secrecy of their movements.

Of the vast fabric of natural religion, the belief of another life may be termed the corner-stone, a name which may not seem inapplicable, since it not only keeps the whole system of society together, but likewise connects us with the superior order of intelligences, with which we hope one day to be associated. Without the energy, which this consoling doctrine inspires, all the virtues of life would languish. Obligated, in the discharge of his religious duties, to combat the force of opposite desires, a man must be sustained by

some adequate motive in observing the one, and overcoming the other.

Virtue must be made more attractive by its rewards, and the deformity of vice must be rendered more terrific by its punishments. In the appreciation of either, the world is too capricious. The beauty of virtue may be heightened by the eloquence of panegyrists, but there is very little of sincere feeling in the stoicism, that would affect to court her without any other dowry; and those who are loudest in the praise of her abstract perfections, would be the last to attach themselves to virtue, without the attractions of some richer reward. Far, however, from offering an adequate prize in this world to her votaries, we find that vice has more ample possession of its honours. The applause of the world is too feeble a principle to give a steady impulse to virtue. It veers with every breath, and is often promiscuously bestowed on the worthless and the deserving. Besides, the success or failure of an action is often the erroneous standard by which the judgment of the world is swayed, and often has panegyric been exhausted on bold and successful villainy, which, if less daring or less fortunate, would have earned universal execration.\* The approval of an upright conscience is indeed a sweet consolation, *and a secure mind is like a continual feast.*† It is, however, too feeble to resist the importunity of lawless desire; and whatever may be the influence of an approving conscience, it is not a distinct nor an independent force, but is entirely reflected from the light and anticipation of future happiness. Take away but the hope and dread of futurity, and conscience will become as dark and silent as the grave—a proof that all the incentives to virtue, of which infidels boast, are only derived from a more

“ Multi  
Committunt eadem diverso crimina fato :  
Ille crucem pretium sceleris tulit, hic diadema.”

JUVENAL., sat. xiii.

† Prov. xv. 15

vigorous root, which if once destroyed, the branches could not survive for a moment.

It is therefore this anticipation of future happiness, that alone can sustain the struggles of man, in the conflict between vice and virtue. It is the dread of futurity alone, that can chain the tyranny of those passions, which, without such a powerful check, would become irresistible. Hence the belief of another life is coeval with the remotest era, to which we can ascend; and on this, as on the other fundamental truths of religion, there is a happy accordance between the consciousness of each individual, and the concurrent testimony of mankind. Having implanted in the human heart a clear and distinct knowledge of his law, God cannot be indifferent to its observance, unless we abandon him to the imputation of being careless about the noblest production of his omnipotence and wisdom. The justice of the Almighty, in scattering thorns over the rugged path of the righteous, has ordained, to use the language of the Redeemer, that it should be the avenue that conducts to heaven: and wealth and honours, far from being the rewards of the observance of the divine laws, are more frequently the prize of their violation. The inequalities of this life must therefore be corrected by the just dispensations of another, in which alone the ways of God to man can be vindicated.

Let man but reflect on that craving after happiness, which no enjoyment can appease, and in it, he will discover the evidence of his immortality. His life is nothing else than a constant succession of hopes and disappointments. Possession, instead of allaying the eagerness of man's desire only irritates it the more, and after having secured the object of some pursuit, instead of being inclined to repose, he becomes more restless, since his prospects expand with his elevation. "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity," is a truth that has been felt and confessed by the wisest and most prosperous of men. It is a truth, which, however dis-

regarded by the young and thoughtless, still brings conviction at the last and most solemn hour of life. Without, then, the existence of another world, which will realise man's hopes, his life would be a series of delusions. Mocked with the desire of unattainable felicity, he pants for the goal, while the vista still lengthens as he advances, and the hope which perched upon its extremity flits still farther as he proceeds: the distance is such as to irritate, rather than suspend the eagerness of pursuit; another reach, and he grasps the desired phantom, but the phantom still eludes his grasp, thus cheating him with hopes that are dashed as soon as they are indulged, until at length he reluctantly acquiesces in the truth of the fallacy of human life.\* God would not surely have thus given desires to his creatures, which cannot be satisfied; nor would he have so enlarged the capacities of our souls, unless he destined them for his own dwelling-place. Yes, the human soul is a mansion of such immensity that everything less than God shrinks into littleness and almost totally disappears, in the vast habitation.

The opinions, which spring from the accidents of transient customs, soon pass away; the truths which are founded on nature, are imperishable. Such is the belief of another life, which has descended from the primitive source of truth, corrupted, it is true, in the channels through which it passed, and modified according to the prejudices of those by whom it was adopted. But still it has survived every vicissitude of time, and the pure nucleus may be easily extracted from the covering of false opinions by which it is encumbered. The founders of false religions have moulded this important dogma to the passions of the unfortunate followers who were deluded by their imposture. The fierce votaries of the northern mythology believed, that in the halls of Odin they should be for ever indulging their favourite passion for war, and

\* "Fallentis semita vitæ."—HOR.

seasoning the horrid revel by quaffing cups fashioned out of the skulls of their vanquished enemies. The voluptuous inhabitants of the south were indulged by the crafty Mohammed with the hope of a paradise, where the most sensual pleasures were to reward the believers of the Koran. The more elegant mythologies of Greece and Rome were accommodated to a more refined and exalted taste for arts and arms, and the most philosophical of their poets represents the heroes of Elysium engaged in the same pursuits which agitated them upon earth.\* The belief of another life was blended with the religious institutions of the most polished, as well as with the coarse rites of the most barbarous nations; and the variety of the modes in which this truth has appeared, affords only a more convincing proof of the universality of the principle.

What must then be the infatuation of those† who would attempt to pluck out of the human heart a truth, on which not only our best hopes are engrafted, but on which the best interests of society repose. To say that religion has been invented as a state contrivance, because it was found necessary for the existence of society, would be to reason like a philosopher who should assert, that because air is necessary to the support of life, it has been therefore a human invention. Perhaps it is more conformable with reason to assert, that as the persuasion of another life is acknowledged to be necessary for the existence of society, the truth of the per-

\* "Quæ gratia curruum  
 Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes  
 Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repositos."

ÆNEID, lib. vi.

† The salutary influence of religion on society, by mitigating the despotism of monarchs, cannot be more forcibly expressed than in the following language of Montesquieu:

"Quand il serait inutile que les sujets exercent une religion, il ne le serait pas que les princes en eussent et qu'ils blanchissent d'écume le seul frein que ceux qui ne craignent pas les lois humaines puissent avoir.

"Un prince qui aime la religion et qui la craint, est un lion qui cède à la main qui le flatte, ou à la voix qui l'apaise: celui qui craint la religion et qui la hait, est comme les bêtes sauvages qui mordent la chaîne qui les empêche de se jeter sur ceux qui passent: celui qui n'a point du tout de religion est cet animal terrible qui ne sent sa liberté que lorsqu'il déchire et qu'il dévore."—De l'Esprit des Lois, liv. 24, chap. 2.

suasion is involved in its acknowledged influence. A God of infinite veracity and power would never have recourse to fallacious means for the accomplishment of his purposes. It is true that statesmen often recur to measures which moral rectitude cannot always approve. But such a necessity only affords a proof of the narrowness of their capacity, or the poverty of their resources; and had they a choice of expedients, even the most profligate would doubtless select the least exceptionable. To suppose, then, that God, out of the numberless means which his omnipotence could command to accomplish his wise purposes, would have selected one which was necessarily connected with error, would be to cast on him an imputation, which the worst of human politicians would not endure.

Besides, as truth and virtue are perfections in the Divinity, he must view them with complacency in his creatures. We cannot therefore suppose, that he would have instituted an order of things, in which these perfections would be unsociable. Such, however, would be the consequence of a principle that would render error essential to the interests of society.\* As the belief of another life is acknowledged to cherish those virtues on which the safety and happiness of society depend;—as knowledge is also a perfection in man, we should conclude that the more of knowledge he attains, he more would benefit society. We should consequently suppose, that the diffusion of virtue would keep pace with the progress of knowledge. But instead of this, the light of modern philosophy reveals the singular paradox that ignorance is the best auxiliary of virtue, and that the tendency of knowledge is to loosen every restraint that checks the commission of crime. Here then is the strange anomaly of the strongest alliance

\* “Those who attempt to disabuse them (men) of such prejudices (the belief of a divine existence, and the future rewards of virtue, and punishments of vice), may, for aught I know, be good reasoners, but I cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians; since they free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of society, in one respect, more secure.”—Hume's *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 150. Dub., 1779.

between truth and vice, between error and virtue: the more man is in darkness, the more forcibly its beauty flashes on his understanding, and the lower the point to which he is sunk in the intellectual scale, the higher will be his ascent in moral improvement!

Again, were the wonderful discovery, that there was no other life, to be cautiously whispered among the more favoured disciples of philosophy, it would soon find its way among the more profane and humbler classes. The higher order of society would not long enjoy the exclusive monopoly of a tenet, so favourable to the passions of the people. From the loftiest pinnacle of society, irreligion would gently descend to the next gradation. As the imputation of folly or of a weak understanding is not a distinction of which any would be ambitious, infidelity would soon spread among all who would fain be considered wise. And as wisdom is a common blessing, from which the labourer or mechanic does not think himself excluded, all would attempt to possess it by the profession of infidelity: until religion, successively driven from every class, would be at length exiled from the world; and like the divine messengers mentioned in Holy Writ, this daughter of heaven, excluded from every asylum of protection or repose, would be doomed to sit on the stones of the public places, surrounded by a scoffing multitude ashamed to offer her shelter, and aggravating their hard-heartedness by the outrageousness of their insults.

Let not the lives of infidels be contrasted with those of Christians, to show how little our conduct is influenced by speculative opinions. Such a contrast might not be deemed creditable to those who affect to court inquiry, nor would the tenets of philosophers derive much weight from their lives. But, waiving the invidious investigation, their conduct is under the control of other restraints, which would be but feebly felt by the generality of mankind. The coercions of law sometimes supply the place of moral obligation; a sense of pro-

priety is a powerful check upon those who move in more polished circles ; nor is the influence of that pride inconsiderable, by which they affect to prove that the tendency of their principles is not injurious to morality. Yet how many breaches of morality for which the civil law or the sense of society expresses but little abhorrence ! Slender is the influence of law or propriety in the recesses of domestic life, where religion alone spreads her shield for the protection of the domestic virtues. The mere ties of honour by which the higher orders are restrained, would instantly yield to the lawless force of passion in the multitude, if not controlled by the obligations of religion. And if, notwithstanding the fear of another life, which checks the force of desire, the current of immorality be so impetuous, it would become completely irresistible when impelled by the double force of passion and opinion.

Of the fatal influence of opinion in strengthening the tide of immorality we behold abundant evidence in the history of the pagan world. The leading truths of religion were not, it is true, utterly extinguished ; nor were its primary principles of moral conduct totally subverted. The evidence of the Divinity still broke forth through the image of the visible world ;\* and the voice of conscience sometimes awaked in the votaries of licentiousness the slumbering terrors of God's judgments. Some few gifted individuals kept lit the lamp of reason which passion had nearly put out, and enlarged by its feeble glimmerings the prospect of their duties. Yet with these few exceptions man seemed to have almost forgotten his high destiny : the loftier faculties entirely gave way to the animal propensities of his nature, and the virtues were obliged to retire before the universal dominion of vice and immorality. Science was soon enlisted in the service of the vices, which she could not subdue, and the arts were employed only to conceal their deformity by giving them artificial

\* "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of his hands,"—Psal. xviii. 1.

attractions. The honours which gratitude first bestowed on the benefactors of mankind, soon degenerated into religious worship,\* and was transferred by the perverseness of flattery to the scourges of the human race. The ceremonies which piety had used to honour any particular virtue were soon prostituted to the service of the opposite vice; and if health was personified and exalted to a divinity, disease was sure to be propitiated by prayer and sacrifice.† The men who ought to have checked the career of immorality gave to its current the impulse of their own example; education only exalted the grossness of vice into more fashionable refinement; in fine, a crowd of false and inferior divinities intercepted and obscured the glory of the One God, and human nature lay diseased under a universal and incurable corruption.

A reference to the writings of the ancients is sufficient to show that this description is not exaggerated; and an acquaintance with the best and wisest among them, will prove the justness of the conclusion. From this dismal abyss of sin and darkness mankind could have never emerged, without a supernatural guide to give light and strength to their footsteps. If human aid could have achieved the emancipation of mankind from the slavery of vice and error, it would have been surely accomplished by philosophy. Yet the inefficacy of philosophy is attested by the confession of her own disciples.

The history of philosophy is little else than a history of all that is extravagant in the opinions, and licentious in the practice, of mankind, and, instead of exalting our reverence for unassisted reason, is rather calculated to awaken our pity for its excesses. If we are to credit the testimony of Cicero, who knew them well, there was not a single error which some of the philosophers

\* "Et tot templa Deum Romæ, quot in orbe sepulchra  
Heroum numerare licet, quos fabula inanis  
Nobilitat, noster populos veneratus adorat."—Pruden. lib. 1.

† "Cupidinis et voluptatis et lubentiniæ veneris vocabula consecrata sunt."—Cic. Nat. Deor. lib. ii. c. 23.

did not adopt, nor a single vice which did not receive encouragement from their lives and writings. To enter into any discussion on the philosophy of the Celtic nations, would extend beyond the compass of the present work : nor is such a discussion necessary, since if it appear that the sages of Greece and Rome were unequal to the task of unfolding to mankind an unclouded prospect of their duties, we may conclude, that little could have been expected from the countries where philosophy burned with a feebler flame, or was utterly extinguished.

From Thales, the founder of the Ionian School, on whom the veneration of mankind has bestowed the name\* of father of philosophy, six centuries elapsed to the coming of Christ, during which time there was full opportunity for the development of its resources. Yet instead of making any advances in the science of morality mankind was gradually plunging into deeper and thicker darkness. In the opinions of the philosophers there was no certainty to produce conviction ; and in their lives there was little to insure respect. Destitute of authority, they possessed no influence save what they derived from the credit of their learning ; and that credit was narrowed by the opposition that reigned among the rival sects. A few interested followers might applaud the wisdom of their master, while the disciples of an opposite school were equally loud in commending the superiority of their own. Thus were the votaries of wisdom distracted between an endless variety of opinions, and every fruitless attempt to arrive at truth only terminated in some new road to error. Of the crowd of vain and licentious sophists, who aspired to the fame of superior learning, a few became the founders of celebrated schools. Yet if the systems of these masters have been so imperfect, we may conceive how deformed were the tenets of the

\* "Gloria ista fraudandus non est . . . ut primus diceretur qui philosophiam imprimis de rebus naturalibus tractaverit et de causis rerum quæsierit."—Bruckeri "Historia Critica Philosophiæ," tom. i. p. 458. Lipsiæ, 1742.

other obscure individuals, who were unable to emerge into similar reputation.

Among these schools the most celebrated were those of the Academicians, Peripatetics, Stoics and Epicureans. Plato, the founder of the academic school and a disciple of Socrates, after travelling through Egypt and returning into Greece, fraught with foreign wisdom,\* dispensed his philosophical lectures in the academy of Athens, from which his school of philosophy derived its name.† Though the applause of posterity has raised Plato to the first rank of philosophers, his precepts were ill-calculated to correct the errors of the people regarding their notions of the Divinity, or their own moral obligations. Though his commentators have expended much patience in explaining the sense of Plato, they have confessed that they toiled in vain, and that his subtle meaning eluded their comprehension. Enriched with a vast variety of knowledge and possessed of a vigorous imagination, he endeavoured to combine theological systems, which in their nature were irreconcilable; and, like Homer, he gave form and animation to the fleeting abstractions of his own mind. Yet Plato, assuredly one of the wisest among the ancients, confessed the necessity of a supernatural guide, and the evidence of his own weakness sufficiently appears from his sanctioning the inhuman practice of putting infants to death, and permitting a licentious intercourse between the sexes.‡

Of all the disciples of Plato, Aristotle was the most distinguished. He displayed early in life the same desire to form a new school of philosophy, which led

\* Euseb. contra Hieroclem., vers. fin.

† Laer. de Vitis Phil. lib. 3, p. 72. Londini, 1664.

‡ “Ουκ οίμαι (ην ὄεγω) περι γε του ωφελιμου αμφισβητεισθαι αν, ως ου μεγαιστον αγαθον, κοινας μεν τας γυναικας ειναι, κοινους δε τους παιδας.”—Plato de Rep. lib. v. p. 459.

I shall not offend the moral delicacy of my readers by pursuing the licentious theories of this prodigy of profane wisdom. Another passage in the same book (p. 461) will justify the charge conveyed in the text, that he authorised infanticide:

“Εαν δε τι βιασηται, οὕτω εκτιθεναι ως ουκ ούσης τροφης τῷ τοιαντῷ.”

his master to depart from the simple lessons of Socrates. His success corresponded with his most sanguine expectations, and, if it has not actually surpassed, his fame has equalled that, of Plato, in the opinion of posterity. Their merits were of a different order. While Plato indulged in all the luxuriance of diction, the language of Aristotle was simple and severe; and if the one sometimes confounded dissimilar objects by clothing them with the rich drapery of his fancy, the other might be said to have brought into metaphysics the anatomical science in which he excelled, and to have dissected and separated, by its aid, the most subtle ideas. He delivered his lectures in the Lyceum, and from his habit of walking during these philosophical exercises, he communicated to his sect the name of the Peripatetic School. Notwithstanding the alternations of eclipse and of light which have crossed over the reputation of the Stagyrice,\* we may venture to affirm, that if human reason could have brought to public view the hidden secrets of the nature of God and the origin and end of man, the task would have doubtless been performed by his active ingenuity. Yet though he explored the depths of philosophy, and traced, with nice precision, the operations of the human mind, though he displayed the powers of an intellect that could range over the vastest, yet analyse the minutest, objects in nature, and left to his successors only the task of literally repeating his categories, yet the science of ethics or theology is little indebted to his labours. With many of the reputed sages of his time, he believed the eternity of matter, or, as he terms it, nature,† though he admitted some plastic cause to give it shape and form; and his notions of the Divinity

\* See Brucker, page 794 and 795, who has balanced the accounts of praise and censure.

† Arist. Phys. l. ii, c. 1, p. 204. Ed. Lugduni, 1690.

‡ He discusses this subject more at length in this Treatise of Metaphysics, lib. i. c. 7, and after refuting the opinions of Thales and Anaximenes, and the other philosophers who held water, or air, or some other substance, to be the first principle, concludes without establishing any doctrines of his own.

would have dishonoured a less enlightened philosopher. Though Philip thanked the gods that the birth of his son coincided with the time of Aristotle, we, who have enjoyed greater blessings, must perceive what little efficacy virtue could have derived from the lessons of him, who disbelieved or doubted the immortality of the soul, and who adopted the unnatural doctrine of his master on the destruction of infants.\*

The Stoic philosophy, † which was extensively diffused, especially among the Romans, was formed out of the preceding systems, and dignified with a new name by the ingenuity of Zeno. Like the schools of Plato and Aristotle, which derived their names from the places where they were established, rather than from their founders, that of Zeno assumed its name from the Stoa or porch, in which his lectures were delivered. Having confined myself to the theories of the philosophers only as far as they have a reference to morality and virtue, it may be sufficient to remark that the opinions of Zeno were not less exceptionable than those of his predecessors. Nay, his doctrine on free will was less favourable to virtue, since, according to him, the world was a diffusion of the divine nature, and God and man were alike subject to an irresistible necessity—an opinion which is equivalent to a practical atheism.‡ He affected a lofty standard of virtue, of which the principle was pride; and recommended a haughty and unfeeling indifference under the pressure of misfortune. But his philosophy wore only the exterior of virtue. It was animated by no sufficient motive to sustain the elevation to which its disciples aspired. Unable to endure pain, Zeno put an end to his own life; thus destroying the efficacy of his own lectures, and proving how un-

\* Idem De Republ. l. vii.

† “Conquesti id sunt Academici Zenonem nihil novi reperiisse, sed emendasse tantum superiora, immutatione verborum.”—Brucker, p. 902.

‡ The doctrine of the Stoics on Providence is well expressed in the following lines:

. . . . “Sunt nobis nulla profecto  
Numina, cum cæco rapiantur singula casu  
Mentimur regnare Jovem.”—Lucan. l. 7.

equal he was to the task of reforming the lives of mankind.

The next celebrated system of philosophy was that of Epicurus, who derived the harmony of the world from the casual combination of atoms, plunged the Deity into a careless indifference\* about human affairs, and placed man's supreme happiness *in the indulgence* of sensual pleasures. I am well aware, that Epicurus has had modern apologists, who have laboured to rescue his memory from the charges of licentiousness heaped on him by the ancients.† But independently of the weight which the impeachment of such grave and well-informed men as Plutarch and Cicero‡ carries with it, the libertines and profligates of every age have been designated as the followers of Epicurus. Whether they may have abused the precepts of their master, is, as to our object, a matter of little importance. Whether Epicurus were a virtuous or profligate man, the philosophy which bears his name is of a licentious tendency, and must therefore have had a fatal influence on the interests of virtue. From these few systems sprung a number of others which were modified according to the caprices of their authors, who, by affixing pompous names to a new combination of ancient errors, imposed them on their followers as the result of more mature wisdom.

To close however the climax of their extravagance, we must not omit another celebrated sect of philosophers, known by the name of Sceptics or Pyrrhonists,

\* "Epicurus ille qui deos aut otiosos fingit aut nullos.—Min. Felix, p. 152. Lug. Bat. 1672.

† "Mirari possit quispiam" (says Brucker) "qui factum sit ut vir innocentis vitæ scelerisque purus tantis criminationibus diffamatus sit, nisi temporis quo vivebat circumstantiæ causas nobis expromerent apertissimas."

I am not surprised that Epicurus has found an apologist in this systematic traducer of the faith of the Christian Fathers. However, the signification of words varies with the latitude of countries, and *scelus* and *innocentia*, I am well aware, have a more recondite meaning in some of the German universities than our imperfect philosophy is able to fathom. The historian who could discover in Petavius an opponent of the Nicene faith might well transform Epicurus into a model of virtue.

‡ "Extremum et ultimum bonum Epicurus in voluptate ponit, summumque malum in dolore."—Cic de Fin. l. i., p. 30.

after the name of their founder. Wearied with the long and angry contentions that agitated the schools of the philosophers, the Pyrrhonists ridiculed the barren disputes of the dogmatists, and affected an indifference for the truth, in the despair of its attainment.\* Such a system was ill-calculated to fix the opinions, or dispel the doubts, of mankind.

Such were the boasted systems of philosophy that gained the ascendancy in Greece, until the curiosity of the Romans condescended to adopt them. The different systems enjoyed an alternate sway among the latter; but as the stern and austere tenets of Zeno fell in with the lofty character of the Romans, his philosophy attracted a greater number of followers, and derived much credit from the name of Marcus Antoninus. Still, with the growth of voluptuousness, the artificial austerity of his precepts was relaxed, a less dogmatical tone found its way into the schools; and a general indifference became the prevailing practice of the times. The strong lines of discrimination, that originally distinguished the other schools of philosophy from that of the Sceptics, were gradually approaching as they descended, until at length the spirit of dispute subsided in a slothful indifference to truth and virtue, uniting the modest scepticism of the Academicians with the loose and voluptuous philosophy of Epicurus.

Whatever therefore might have been the personal influence of the philosophers, and the extent of their authority, it is clear from their discordant and licentious doctrines, that they never could have conducted mankind to the knowledge of truth or practice of morality.† It is remarkable, however (and the remark

\* "Superba Sophistarum gens in utramque de argumento quovis partem disserens inter occasiones nascentes Pyrrhonismi merito referenda."—Brucker, tom. i. p. 1330.

† "Qui cum ætates suas in studio philosophiæ conterant, neque alium quemquam neque seipsos possunt facere meliores."—Lact. Div. Instit. l. iii. p. 294.

However ridiculous their opinion may appear, the dignity of the subject required that they should be treated with gravity. By some, however, the wit of Lucian might be deemed a better refutation of their errors than the eloquence of Lactantius; and to such readers I would recommend the dialogue between the

will illustrate what I have observed on the traditionary source of our knowledge), that those who attempted to discover truth by the force of their own individual and unassisted reason, were always the most unsuccessful; while those who were conscious of their own weakness, and sought it among the traditions of mankind, surpassed their contemporaries in wisdom and knowledge. Such was Thales, the father of philosophy; such too was Plato, who travelled to Egypt, and conversed with the sages of the East;\* nor can it fail to strike the reader, as a curious circumstance, that the stream of knowledge became more pure according as its votaries turned their steps towards the original seat of mankind. This observation proves that philosophy, such as was cultivated by the Greeks, was not favourable to the progress of moral improvement. Jealous of individual ascendancy, instead of labouring by their union to collect the truths that were dispersed among the people, they, on the contrary, broke and scattered them more by their contentions. Each, aspiring to a reputation for wisdom, disdained to adopt the maxims of another. Careless of the tendency of their opinions, provided they conferred eminence or fame, they framed an hypothesis, in which they looked for singularity rather than consistence, and thus among those disputing sophists there was scarce one truth or maxim of morality left unviolated. †

But in reality, the speculative opinions of the schools had but little influence on the bulk of mankind. The

Satirist and Hermotimos, in which he compares the opinions of the philosophers to a vessel full of all kinds of weeds, and the labours of a philosophical student to those of a fisherman who drags his sinking nets to the shore, and finds them filled with stones and sand instead of a copious draught of fishes.

\* Euseb. contra Hierocl., vers. finem.

† “Je consultai les philosophes, je feuilletai leurs livres, j'examinai leurs diverses opinions; je les trouvai tous fiers, affirmatifs, dogmatiques, même dans leur scepticisme prétendu, n'ignorant rien, ne prouvant rien, se moquant les uns des autres; et ce point commun à tous me parut le seul sur lequel ils ont tous raison. Triomphants quand ils attaquent, ils sont sans vigueur en se défendant. Si vous pesez les raisons, ils n'en ont que pour détruire; si vous comptez les voix, chacun est réduit à la sienne; ils ne s'accordent que pour disputer: les écouter n'était pas le moyen de sortir de mon incertitude.”—Emile, tom. iii. p. 27.

contempt with which the wise ones treated the people, was met by them with a similar disdain, and therefore their most elaborate lectures were regarded as the dreams of proud and contentious pedants. It was a maxim among the philosophers, that the mysteries of wisdom, which were whispered within the enclosures of the academy or the porch, should not be revealed to the uninitiated and profane; and therefore the great mass of mankind was necessarily excluded from the benefit of their instructions.\* While the schools of philosophy were inaccessible to the people, their notions of religion were derived from their poets and their pontiffs. From the writings of the former they were taught to associate every vice with the nature of their divinities, and the cruel and licentious ceremonies over which the latter presided, only tended to strengthen the fatal impression. The human heart was familiarised to vice from its infancy.† Education only extended its influence, by opening the guilty scene of the lust, the intemperance, and the contentions of their gods; and religion only confirmed its inveteracy, by converting the most unnatural crimes into the worship of the immortals. Thus immorality was embodied with religion, the vilest superstition was wrought into the frame of the public worship, and the clumsy system of theology that was introduced by the impure fancies of their poets found protection in the craft of their statesmen, and the avarice of their pontiffs.‡

\* "Quod de Diis immortalibus philosophi disputant, ferre non possunt: quod vero poetæ canunt et histriones agunt, quia contra dignitatem ac naturam immortalium facta sunt . . . non solum ferunt sed etiam libenter audiunt."—Aug. de Civ. Dei, l. vi. c. 5.

† "Sic videlicet Deos deformant ut nec bonis hominibus comparentur, cum alium faciunt furari, alium adulterare . . . tres inter se Deas certasse de præmio pulchritudinis, victas duas a Venere, Trojam evertisse: Jovem ipsum converti in bovem aut cygnum, Deam homini nubere; Saturnum filios devorare. Nihil denique posse conungi miraculorum atque vitiorum quod non ibi reperitur."—Ibid. l. iv. c. 27.

‡ The following words of Cicero will show that the picture of the ancient philosophers, drawn by the Apostle and the Christian Fathers, is not overcharged:

"Exposui fere non philosophorum judicia sed delirantium somnia: nec enim multo absurdiora sunt ea quæ poetarum vocibus fusa ipsa suavitate nocuerunt; qui et ira inflammatos et libidine furentes induxerunt Deos, feceruntque ut eorum bella, pugnas, prælia, vulnere videremus; odia præterea, dissidia, discordias,

This feeble and inadequate description of the melancholy state of the Pagan world, cannot be more appropriately concluded, than in the language of the inspired apostle: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those men who detain the truth of God in injustice: because, that which is known of God is manifest in them; for the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: his eternal power also and divinity, so that they are inexcusable. Because that when they had known God; they have not glorified him as God, nor given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened; for professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into a likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie: and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause, God delivered them up to shameful affections. For their women have changed the natural use into that use which is against nature. And in like manner, the men also, leaving the natural use of the women, have burned in their lusts one towards another, men with men doing that which is filthy, and receiving in themselves, the recompense which was due to their error. And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do these things which are not convenient: being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, covetousness, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity. Whisperers, detractors,

*ortus, interitus, quærelas, lamentationes, effusas in omni intemperantia libidines, adulteria, vincula, cum humano genere concubitus, mortalesque ex immortalibus procreatos.*"—Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. i. c. 16.

hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents. Foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. Who, having known the justice of God, did not understand, that they who do such things are worthy of death.”\*

\* Rom. i.

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## CHAPTER II.

## AUTHORITY OF THE BOOKS OF MOSES.

The Ancients safer guides than the Moderns in estimating the necessity of Revelation.—The Truths of Religion scattered and disordered rather than utterly lost in the Pagan World.—Mysteries of Religion: the evidence of its Miracles must supersede the obscurity of its Mysteries.—Peculiar harmony and consistence of the Mysteries of the Catholic Church.—Epitome of the Transactions recorded in the Pentateuch.—External and internal Evidence of the veracity of the Hebrew Historian.

FROM this slumber of sensuality, into which it was sunk, nothing but the impulse of God himself could awaken the human mind. After patiently examining the powers of human reason when left to its own guidance, and demonstrating the utter inability of man to know and discharge his duty, we must adopt the conclusion that a supernatural guide was necessary. In this inquiry, the errors of the philosophers taught me not to exalt too much the powers of human reason: yet, I should not wish to follow the theories of those who labour to depreciate its advantages. Such has been the fate of a modern writer of great eminence, the Abbé de la Mennais, to whom I am indebted for some valuable reflections in the preceding pages; and though I dissent from some of his philosophical speculations, no one is more ready to acknowledge and applaud the ingenuity and eloquence with which he has combated infidelity. I am not surprised at the tone of indignation, in which French writers indulge against the pretensions of human reason. The late awful revolution must long continue to give a complexion to their philosophical and religious creed; and after having witnessed a nation turned into brutes, by drinking the maddening cup, and realising the classic story of the

companions of Ulysses, it is no wonder that they should distrust the voice of the syren to which they ascribe such a humiliating transformation.

However, without dwelling on this event, to those who are confident in the unassisted efforts of reason, and who expatiate on the progressive perfectibility of human nature, we have been enabled to oppose the more sincere and convincing declarations of the best and wisest of the ancients. In vain will we be combated by modern philosophers, who have derived their lights from Christianity, without acknowledging their obligations. Those into whose minds the truths of revealed religion have been instilled, before the exercise or development of the powers of the understanding, could scarcely distinguish the complex effects and trace their respective shares to reason and revelation.\* The knowledge of truth anticipated error, and assisted the progress of the understanding in forming our opinions on the duties and destinies of man. We cannot, therefore, more safely estimate the powers of the understanding than by appealing to those who were guided by no other influence. The multiplicity of their errors will furnish a most triumphant refutation of the hollow speculations of modern philosophers, who would fain extinguish the lamp which has guided their inquiries. Surely they cannot pretend to more genius than Plato, or to more sincerity than Socrates; yet Plato and Socrates confessed the necessity of a supernatural guide.† The superiority of the moderns over the ancients, and the sublime views of God and

\* "A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles, and are notions grown familiar and, as it were, natural to us under the Gospel, we take for unquestionable obvious truths and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them had Revelation been silent."—Locke, "Reason. of Christian.," p. 535.

† The sentiments of both may be collected from the second of the dialogues of Plato, bearing the title of Alcibiades, a supposed conference between Socrates and his young disciple, and which has brought upon Socrates the suspicion of impiety, since he declares that the sacrifices of men might be displeasing to the immortals, unless their wishes regarding the nature of those sacrifices were first ascertained.

Providence which are found in their works—views which the ancients never contemplated—prove what a space has been travelled by the human mind during that interval of the reign of religion which has separated the modern from the ancient philosophy.

But though the moderns have distanced the ancients, we are not hence to conclude that among the latter, reason was utterly extinguished. In the description of the melancholy state of the pagan world, there is, it is true, enough to justify every epithet of pity for its errors, or of indignation for its crimes. Nay, the strongest picture would convey but a feeble impression of the sad reality, and in condemning its hideous enormities one must treat them like those great delinquents whose faces are covered with a veil when led to execution. Yet it may not be just to indulge in those indiscriminate imputations of vice and ignorance, by which it would appear, that the light of understanding was entirely extinct, and the balance of the will completely overturned. An understanding so disposed, would be but ill calculated to weigh the evidences of religion, or to distinguish between the pretensions of truth and imposture. Again, if every principle of virtue be wholly eradicated from the heart, it might be insisted on, that the imaginary precepts of morality are only the effects of education, or the crafty contrivances of statesmen to secure submission to their own authority. Thus, through the incautious zeal of disputation one may be driven from one extreme to another equally dangerous, and unconsciously hurried to consequences, which would take from morality its control, and strip science of its certainty. In insisting, therefore, on the necessity of revelation, it is not necessary to assert that the understanding had lost all its light, or that the will had lost its equipoise. The particles of light, to use the elegant illustration of a Christian apologist, were thinly scattered through the works of the ancients, but none was found possessed of

sufficient industry to collect, or skill to arrange, them.\* The master hand of a divine artist was necessary to unite the scattered elements, and restore to light and harmony the rude and discordant materials. The ancients had not then so utterly abandoned truth as to be wholly bereft of its influence; and though incapable of arriving at its discovery, they felt a longing for its enjoyment. Hence, instead of likening it to a phrenetic beyond the reach of recovery, and unconscious of his disorder, the world might be compared to a patient come to that stage of a disease in which he is conscious of his state, and feels at the same time that nothing short of supernatural aid can restore him.

After establishing the necessity of revelation, the next step naturally leads us to ascertain its existence. A conviction of its necessity disposes the mind to weigh with temper the arguments on which revealed religion rests, and subdues the prejudices which the pretensions of a particular people may have already awakened. We have glanced at the systems of philosophy that prevailed in Greece and Rome; and with the exception of those generally received dogmas that are found in the theology of every country, they do not exhibit any proofs, nor indeed do they prefer the pretensions, of any particular revelation. This circumstance fortifies still more the first presumption in favour of the Jews; and after having sought wisdom in vain among the most polished nations, we are more disposed to pause and listen to the Hebrew oracles. But before we enter

\* This thought is thus eloquently expressed by Lactantius: "Facile est autem docere pene universam veritatem per philosophorum sectas esse divisam. Non enim sic philosophiam nos evertimus, ut Academici solent, quibus ad omnia respondere propositum est, quod est potius calumniari et illudere. Sed docemus, nullam sectam fuisse tam deviam, nec philosophorum quemquam tam inanem, qui non viderit aliquid ex vero. Sed dum contradicendi studio insaniunt, dum sua etiam falsa defendunt; aliorum etiam vera subvertunt: non tantum elapsa illis veritas est, quam se quærere simulabant; sed ipsi eam potissimum suo vitio perdidierunt. Quod si extitisset aliquis, qui veritatem sparsam per singulos, per sectasque diffusam colligeret in unum, ac redigeret in corpus, is profecto non dissentiret a nobis. Sed nemo hoc facere," &c.—Lib. vii. Div. Instit. Edit. Oxonii, an. 1684.

this sacred ground of prophecy and miracles, it may be useful to hear the suggestions of the unbeliever, who would fain arrest our farther inquiries.

It is admitted that much of external evidence may be brought in favour of the Christian revelation. But we are told that the mysterious nature of its doctrines is sufficient to outweigh its external proofs, and that, therefore, it should be rejected without further examination. We may therefore be permitted to inquire, whether in the conflict that may arise between the external evidence and the internal difficulties of religion, the conviction that flashes on the mind from the splendour of its miracles, can we weakened or affected by the obscurity of its mysteries.

It must appear strange that religion should ever be combated on account of its mysteries, since those who attack it are forced to take their stand on mysterious ground. But waiving this consideration, if we take the ordinary principle of human science for our guides, they will teach us that the mysteries of religion are no motive for its rejection. If, on our entrance into this inquiry, we are deterred by the obscurity or apparent repugnance of the doctrines of religion, it is owing to an erroneous application of the most approved principles of human knowledge. Should we ever adopt the philosophy of Locke, who resolves our knowledge into experience, it would forbid us to reject revealed religion on account of its mysteries. If we listen to the traditionary wisdom of mankind, it conveys to us mysterious truths, and must convey them as long as the existence of a Supreme Being forms an article of religion—that mysterious truth which equally mocks the vain efforts of man to arrive at its source, or encompass its immensity, repulsing every grasp that strives to apprehend its vastness, and retiring before the mind that explores its origin; until after having travelled ages in the pursuit, it sinks exhausted under the toil which it had undertaken, while the Almighty, still at

the same unapproachable distance, remains embosomed in his own eternity.

In the investigation of truth we must submit to the toil of patient study, and resign every prejudice to the evidence to which we may be conducted. All the charms of theory must be laid aside as illusions that may mislead; whilst we must surrender our conviction to the more rude and palpable evidence of observation. However irreconcilable with our previous notions the phenomena of any science may appear, we easily admit them, when their evidence is demonstrated by witnesses whose veracity is unquestionable. That a smooth and even canvas, over which the hand can range without meeting any hollow or projection could excite the sensation of objects of various size and distance must surpass the comprehension of him, whose eyes have been closed from childhood against the mysteries which the laws of perspective unfold. Yet however the phenomena may startle him, he cannot close his ears and his reason against the unanimous testimonies of those who are blessed with a medium of knowledge, of which he has been deprived. If our organs of knowledge were enlarged or multiplied, our ideas should correspond with this capacity of our souls. And if one with the narrow measure of science which we possess were to refuse to believe others, whose capacity of receiving new ideas had been thus extended, he would exhibit the folly of the individual, who, deprived of the organ of vision, would deny those qualities of bodies which he could not ascertain by contact. Every science, particularly that of chemistry, furnishes phenomena which we cannot comprehend; yet, we yield an unhesitating assent when such facts are established by creditable testimony. Such an acquiescence is founded on wisdom, since experience attests that we are more liable to deception, by reasoning on matters beyond the reach of our observation, than by yielding to testimony of whose certainty we have the strongest assurance.

Provided, therefore, the credit of the medium by

which the account of such phenomena is conveyed, be satisfactorily established, it is immediately found to supersede the most fanciful as well as the most plausible theories. In discussing the evidences of the Catholic Church we require only equal weights and measures, and appeal to this principle of rigorous examination, which is generally admitted as a criterion of truth in the other sciences. We only demand that the prejudices which may have been suggested against mysteries should be subjected to the sober restraints of reason; and that the reader would condescend to examine, with all the severity of criticism, the facts recorded in the Pentateuch and Gospels, before he presumptuously rejects the doctrine with which these facts are intimately connected. If such a process of reasoning be sound, when applied to every other science, it cannot become dangerous when we discuss truths that are inaccessible to our individual observation, such as the nature of the Divinity, as well as the counsels which have been dictated by his wisdom, and the works which his omnipotence has achieved. Each one must feel conscious of his own incapacity to explore so vast a science as that which embraces a view of the counsels of the Deity, and the lofty destinies of man, and should therefore, like Plato or Socrates, be disposed to hail a supernatural guide that would offer to conduct him through the immense and mysterious way. If, therefore, any record purposing to unfold those lofty truths were put into our hands, we should examine with the utmost jealousy and caution, the genuineness of its claims; and should such an examination prove satisfactory, then we should receive it with gratitude, and yield our assent to its important communications.

On this process of reasoning, so much admired in other sciences, the external evidences of the Catholic Church are founded; yet, in combating its pretensions, this process is reversed by those who lay great claims to philosophical wisdom. Though every system of

philosophy must yield to the stubborn evidence of testimony and experience; yet, strange to say, a fanciful system of theology, because it flatters their pride, must sweep away the whole train of evidence which testimony and experience furnish in favour of religion. Without admitting any dogma in religion, contrary to reason, *we* suspend the subtle discussion in which, from our imperfect notions of such mysterious subjects, we might be easily misled, until we first examine the veracity of its witnesses. This is a task for which each one must feel himself more competent, since it is easier to examine the character of the herald than the nature of his communication. We examine the credential letters of Moses and the Apostles, and subject to a rigorous criticism the monuments of their delegation. In such examination we presume not to stand upon untrodden ground, but walk by the light of that experience, which guides us in every science, while those who reject all the evidence of religion on account of its mysteries, instead of inquiring into the characters of the witnesses of our faith, refuse to listen to their testimony on account of the doctrine which they convey. It is therefore clear that in yielding to the facts, which attest the truth of religion, a faith, which its mysteries cannot shake, we adopt a method that is neither unsafe nor unreasonable; whereas, by assailing these mysteries on account of their obscurity, the principles of philosophy are abjured by her own disciples.\*

Again, man cannot reject the belief of mysteries, without admitting a mystery, for which reason affords no solution. The alternate vicissitudes of a mind now towering to heaven and sunk the next moment to the pleasures of a brute, as well as the intestine war which reigns between the mutiny of the passions and the dominion of reason, reveal to every conscious mind a palpable yet a wonderful mystery.† The explanation

\* See Chalmers on Christianity.

† “Quelle chimère est-ce donc que l'homme? Quelle nouveauté, quel chaos, quel sujet de contradiction? Juge de toutes choses, imbécile ver de terre, dépe-

of this intestine discord by which human nature is distracted, and of the evils which afflict mankind, exercised in vain the ingenuity of the ancient philosophers. And though no well-instructed Christian can deny, that sorrow, and ignorance, and affliction, and death might be compatible with the primitive condition of man; yet this deplorable tendency to ill baffled human reason; nor can we forget that St. Augustine, in his controversies with the Pelagians, has even deduced, from the excesses of human nature, the evidence of its fallen condition.

The strange diversity of expedients, by which the ancients strove to restore the disordered balance of man's will, proved their lamentable ignorance of the cause to which it ought to be traced.\* Those who wished to cure man's weakness by improving his reason only kindled his pride; while those who placed his happiness in pleasure, only inflamed his sensuality.† This mystery of man's opposite inclinations, inexplicable in its nature, yet incontestable in its existence, affords a clue to lead us through the ample and mysterious labyrinth of the ways of God to man. Here is a mystery of which the existence cannot be questioned, because, all have felt it: here is the knot which, after having baffled the powers of men, it required the aid of the Divinity to unloosen. Original sin explains the frightful anomaly of the virtues and vices of human

sitaire du vrai, amas d'incertitude; gloire et rebut de l'univers. S'il se vante, je l'abaisse; s'il s'abaisse, je le vante, et le contredis toujours, jusqu'à ce qu'il comprenne qu'il est un monstre incompréhensible."—Pensées de Pascal, p. 154.

"Dieu pouvait-il," exclaims the eloquent Bossuet, "l'avoir fait avec ses perverses inclinations, qui se déclaraient, tous les jours, de plus en plus? Et cette pente prodigieuse qu'il avait à s'assujettir à toute autre chose qu'à son seigneur naturel, ne montrait-elle pas trop visiblement la main étrangère par laquelle l'œuvre de Dieu avait été si profondément altéré dans l'esprit humain qu'à peine pouvait-on y en reconnaître quelque trace?"—Bossuet, Disc. Hist. Univ.

\* "Δια τούτο γὰρ καὶ ἀγεννητόν εφησεν εἶναι τὴν ὕλην, ἵνα μὴ ᾤξῃ τὸν θεὸν τοῦ κακοῦ ποιητὴν εἶναι λέγειν."—Just. Mart. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 21. Ed. 1742.

Such is the apology which Justin Martyr offers for Plato, who, unable to account for the origin of evil, was compelled to rush into the absurdity of supposing matter eternal.

The strange systems of the ancients on this curious subject may be seen in *Beausobre Histoire du Manichéisme*, tom. ii. liv. v. c. 1, p. 144 et seqq.

† See Pascal, p. 152.

nature; and the mixture of discordant elements of which man seems to be composed ceases to excite our wonder when we know that he is stricken by God's vengeance for an original transgression. This original guilt, infecting every portion of the human species from its first parent to the last of its posterity, is a mystery which may startle our imperfect notions of justice. But let those who affect to feel such a shock consider that the state of man, without original sin, is a dark and solitary problem deduced from no remote principles and connected by no dependent consequences; while his condition, with the light which revelation throws around it, becomes the foundation of a majestic system of religion, mysterious, it is true, but harmonious in its mysteries, in which the attributes of the Divinity are reconciled through the medium of the redemption: the contrarieties of human nature are explained, and God and man appear without a shadow of contradiction.

Our knowledge of ourselves convinces us of our weakness, and our knowledge of mankind proves that they are incapable of affording a remedy. The mysteries which might deter us from embracing a supernatural are equally incorporated with a natural religion, with this difference, that truths which in the one are dark, solitary, and unconnected, in the other become lucid, dependent, and consecutive. Though the individuals who reject mysteries may appeal to the strength of reason, yet the mental presumption that would suppose no truth beyond its grasp, is the evidence of its weakness.\* They impose, it is true, a restraint upon the understanding, not, however, until it has indulged a freedom of discussion, which conveys the fullest evidence of their existence. Restraint in that case becomes rational, and submission a duty. Then restraint is only a wise counterpoise, regulating but not checking the

\* "La dernière démarche de la raison, c'est de connaître qu'il y a une infinité de choses qui la surpassent. Elle est bien faible si elle ne va pas jusque là."—Pascal, p. 68.

operations of reason; preventing it by the weight of mysteries from being unwound to its former disorders. Hence the compatibility between the freedom and obedience of reason, and hence the full accordance between the light and obscurity of religion. Were mysteries imposed on our belief without a motive, reason would revolt at such despotism.\* Were reason at liberty to deny every truth beyond the reach of its capacity, such a liberty would run into licentiousness. Hence we are permitted freely to explore the avenues that may conduct us to the true religion; and then if we are checked from farther inquiry, it is a salutary check to prevent us from going astray. In religion there is all the freedom compatible with that safety, which an immoderate licentiousness would endanger and destroy. The submission then exacted by faith, is not incompatible with the evidence which reason requires; and the reasonable obedience recommended by St. Paul, comprehends an enlightened conviction deduced from the external evidences, as well as a submissive acquiescence in the internal obscurity, of Christianity. After being conducted to the temple of truth, we ought to pause, nor venture presumptuously to cross the threshold of the sanctuary. Mysteries are a living fire, says a holy and learned writer, which forbids too near approaches. We ought therefore to beware of imitating the rashness of the Roman sage, whose impatient curiosity impelled him to explore the burning secrets of Mount Etna, until from an immoderate thirst of knowledge he fell a victim to his own temerity.†

\* "Si on choque les principes de la raison, notre religion sera absurde et ridicule."—Pascal, p. 69.

† To those who recollect the remarks of the Fathers on the Hebrews clothing themselves with the spoils of Egypt, no apology is necessary for quoting the following lines from an infidel:

"La raison te conduit, avance à sa lumière,  
 Marche encore quelques pas, mais borne ta carrière  
 Au bord de l'infini. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 Pourquoi donc m'affliger si ma débile vue  
 Ne peut percer la nuit sur mes yeux répandue.  
 Je n'imiterai point ce malheureux savant  
 Qui des feux de l'Etna scrutateur imprudent,  
 Marchant sur des morceaux de bitume et de cendre,  
 Fut dévoré du feu qu'il cherchait à comprendre."

Having prepared the mind for the reception of revealed religion, by unfolding the insufficiency of philosophy to instruct man in his duties, and removed those prejudices which might arise from the mysterious nature of its communications, we shall next turn our attention to that people, who are most likely to satisfy our farther inquiries.

It is unnecessary to repeat the singular and unexampled claims of the Jewish nation to the study of their religion. These claims have been already dwelt on; and whatever might have been the reader's reluctance to acquiesce in them at the commencement, he may be more reconciled to examine their pretensions after his frustrate efforts to find pure religion among the ancient philosophers. It may excite just surprise, that such a scattered body of people could have preserved any record to attest the truth of their ancient fortunes. They have, however, providentially preserved the books of Moses, their legislator, the only relic saved from the ruin of their country and their religion. The zeal with which the Pentateuch was snatched from the general wreck that involved every other monument, and the devout fidelity with which it has been guarded in spite of the rage of novelty which agitates mankind, together with the sad reverses which the Jewish nation endured, are a satisfactory test of its authenticity.

The authority of this book rests on argument unexampled in the history of past ages. Without half the evidence that accompanies the Pentateuch, we receive the writings of profane historians, and yield our assent to the events which they record. To attest the authenticity of the books of Moses, we have an unbroken chain of tradition, which reaches back to the origin of the Hebrew republic; and what is remarkable, there is scarcely an interval in that period which does not exhibit two hostile parties inflamed with such mutual jealousy, that the one would have indignantly rejected any alteration which might have been introduced by the other. The wars that were alternately waged be-

tween the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and the bitter antipathies that divided the Jews and Samaritans, have contributed to preserve the fidelity of a record which was equally revered by all. From the Jews, the Pentateuch has descended to the Christians, and though near two thousand years have been spent in mutual controversy about its meaning, yet Jews\* and Christians have equally escaped the censure of having corrupted the sacred volume. In vain shall we look for such powerful circumstances, founded on the momentous nature of its contents and the jealous vigilance of opposite parties, to vouch for the fidelity of any other ancient monument.

Again, the Pentateuch is not the only medium through which the early events of the Jewish history have been transmitted. These events were inscribed on the public monuments of the country: they were preserved in the recurrence of their solemn festivals; they were embodied with all the religious and civil observances of the Jews, and so wrought into the entire texture of their social and religious system, that by tearing away any portion, the whole frame of society would have been rent asunder. Nor can evidence of the truth of a simple historical record be equal to this. He who would assert the Pentateuch to be the work of a writer, who, subsequent to the time of Moses, forged the facts which it contains, must suppose that an impostor could have so far practised on the credulity of an entire nation as not only to impose upon them the belief of events, which never had occurred, but what is more strange, that a nation proverbially mutinous and turbulent, whose very obedience to the law was generally sullen and reluctant, would, on the faith of miracles which were never wrought, have tamely submitted to the most cumbrous ceremonial of laws and religion, which was ever imposed on any people.

\* “Ceux qui ont rejeté et crucifié Jésus-Christ, qui leur a été en scandale, sont ceux qui portent les livres qui témoignent de lui, et qui disent qu’il sera rejeté et en scandale.”—Pensées de Pascal, p. 92.

Independently of the connexion which exist between the civil and religious policy of the Jews and the antiquity of the Pentateuch ; the clearest marks of this antiquity may be traced in every page. That writer is sure to excite distrust, who in describing the manners of remote ages, expresses himself in general language without descending to those minuter circumstances, which may lead to detection ; or who so confounds the manners of different periods, as to omit the most discriminating features of one, and introduce the dissimilar customs of another. The unnatural union is exposed by the learned and judicious critic : and hence the writers of fiction are soon detected, who violate probability by engrafting on a remoter age, the manners of a more recent period, and by omitting those light and passing occurrences that can be seized and noted only by a living observer. It is this fidelity in the description of ancient manners, and the delineation of ancient characters, which, in spite of the learned dreams of Hardouin, stamps authenticity on the works of the ancients. And why should not similar evidence, stronger in degree, secure equal credit to the Pentateuch ? Were we to compare in detail, some of the descriptions of Homer and of Moses, the general coincidents of their manner would afford additional evidence of the authenticity of both. We find the patriarchs of the one and the heroes of the other, tending their flocks, preparing their own repasts, and exhibiting all the simplicity of the manners of primitive times. We discover their matrons sweeping the hearths, drawing water from their wells and discharging other domestic duties, which the pride of a modern matron would disdain. In fine, the more they are studied, the closer will be the resemblance, which may be discovered between the patriarchal simplicity as described in the Pentateuch, and the manners of the heroic times described in the Iliad and Odyssey, making allowance for the degree of refinement introduced in the interval. To this circumstance, founded on ancient manners, we may add the style of the historian, which is a proof of

his antiquity. Unlike the laboured compositions of more recent writers, his style is simple, his manner artless, and his narrative flows in the order of the events which he describes. His history is minute and circumstantial, indicating a confidence fearless of contradiction. No attention is paid to the symmetry of composition. Facts and laws, miracles and ceremonies, are all blended together, with no discrimination, save that of time : exhibiting in their artless form, an annalist who noted events in the order in which they arose, rather than a historian who was ambitious of producing effect by the artificial arrangement of his materials.

Though the Pentateuch may justly claim a higher antiquity than any other record that has reached us, the facts which it contains are not obscured through the remoteness of the period. If the events recorded in the books of Moses are true, the legislator of the Jews must have been the delegate of heaven, and his code of religion and of laws must have been the dictate of inspired wisdom. I shall not stop the current of the reader's thoughts while he peruses the wonders that were wrought by him, by any subtle disputation on the nature of miraculous powers. The miracles performed by him, if we were to credit his history, were such as no human power could achieve ; and consequently the truth of these miracles must establish his supernatural delegation, and the truth of his religion.

The first chapter of the history of Moses opens to us a scene worthy only of the Divinity to act, and of an inspired historian to record. Conducting his readers back to the creation, he unfolds to us the universe, rising into existence and developed into order at the word of the Omnipotent. Here we behold the only rational account of the formation of nature and of man, and contemplate the majestic foundation on which an immense and misshapen structure of fable was afterwards erected. From the formation of the inanimate, God passes to the animate world, still ascending in the scale of creation : as we advance, the scene assumes

more interest until we are struck with admiration at the awful council which meditated the creation of man "Let us make man according to our own image," was the expression of the Almighty; which impresses us with the twofold idea of the plurality of persons in God, and of the dignity of man, which seemed to require their solemn deliberation.\* Here we read the origin of our nature, the innocence of our first parents, the cause and progress of the temptation by which they were seduced from their fidelity to God; and we are no less struck with his justice, which entailed the sin of Adam on his posterity, than by the merciful assurance of a Redeemer, who should conquer the author of his fall. He tells us next of the piety of Abel, which provoked the jealous vengeance of Cain to imbrue his hands in his brother's blood; and the terrors of a guilty conscience, which sought some asylum from the vengeance of mankind. As we descend with the historian, the torrent of crime becomes more impetuous and more expanded; the number of those who inherited the faith and piety of Abel, gradually diminished; and God resolves to sweep the guilty race from the earth by a universal deluge. The holy family of Noah survived to propagate the species, and the knowledge of the true religion. The memory of the recent chastisement preserved the knowledge and fear of God among the near descendants of Noah. Yet, as if unawed by fear, and unreclaimed by punishment, his remoter posterity gradually relapsed into the guilt of their fathers. To preserve the true religion from utter extinction, God chose Abraham from amidst an idolatrous country,—proved his faith and obedience by repeated trials,—promised him a posterity which should exceed in number "the sands of the sea and the stars of heaven," and assured him that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. A son was born unto Abraham when his wife

\* "Dieu tient conseil en lui-même. Dieu s'excite lui-même, comme pour nous faire voir que l'ouvrage qu'il va entreprendre, surpasse tous les ouvrages qu'il avait fait jusqu'alors."—Bossuet Disc. p. 162.

was beyond the time of pregnancy ; and thus the patriarch saw, in the extraordinary birth of Isaac, a pledge of all the divine assurances. The Almighty, for a further proof of his faith, requires of him to offer up to him, as an holocaust, the son which he miraculously gave. Most fully knowing that whatsoever God has promised, he is also able to perform, the faith of the patriarch staggered not by distrust in the promise of God : " But accounting that God is also able to raise up even from the dead,"\* he offered up his only begotten son. The deed which was consummated by his will, " was reputed to him unto justice ;" and hence the Lord, speaking of the sacrifice as if accomplished, declares, after the solemnity of an oath, " Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake : I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea-shore : thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."†

The protection which God so visibly manifested to Abraham, was extended to his son Isaac, and again, transferred to Jacob, whose life was distinguished by extraordinary marks of the divine interposition. To Jacob were born twelve sons, who are honoured with the names of patriarchs ; of whom Joseph, one of the youngest, becomes the victim of the envy of his brethren, which, under the guidance of the Almighty, is the instrument of his elevation. Joseph is made the deliverer of Egypt from the miseries of famine ; and the gratitude of Pharaoh raises him to the first dignity of the empire.

He becomes the benefactor of his own race, and sends for his aged parent and his unnatural brethren, to share his exalted fortune. In the repose of prosperity, and under the protection of the Egyptian kings,

\* Heb. c. xi. 19.

† Gen. c. xxii. vv. 16, 17, 18.

the seed of Jacob multiplied to an amazing extent. At length, the services of Joseph were forgotten, and the Hebrew race subjected to the most cruel servitude. The miseries of his people, which could excite no compassion in the breasts of their persecutors, at length cried to heaven for vengeance; and God raised up Moses, who had been miraculously preserved from the waters, to be the deliverer of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. Moses remonstrates with Pharaoh to let the people go; and as the king is deaf to persuasion, he conquers his obstinacy by chastisements such as never yet afflicted a devoted people. Egypt is struck with ten successive plagues, which are invoked and averted by the prayers of Moses, till he extorts the reluctant consent of an infatuated tyrant to the freedom of a persecuted nation. Blinded by his fury, Pharaoh pursues their retreat; Moses stretches forth his arm, and the obedient sea opens a passage for the Israelites, and closes on the pursuing army of their enemies. Scarce are the people freed from foreign bondage, when they mutiny against their leader, and importune him to return to the land which they had just abandoned. For forty years he conducted them through a barren desert; while a pillar of cloud directed them by day, and by night assumed the form of a pillar of fire to guide their footsteps. During this sojournment, manna which descended from heaven was their food; and when they complained of want of drink, the rod of Moses brought water from a rock to slake the thirst of the entire army. From the top of Mount Sinai, God delivered his law to the people, struck with the majesty of the Divinity, which appeared in thunder and lightning on the mountain.

Whilst Moses was absent in communion with God, the people worshipped a golden calf, and of the multitude twenty-three thousand were slain, in punishment of their idolatry. To bend their stubborn spirit, and check their propensity to imitate the neighbouring nations, he imposed on them a code of laws, which they

bore with impatience. Whenever their discontent vented itself in acts of violence, their murmurs were generally appeased by the exhibition of new miracles; and when the ambitious Levites dared to contest with Aaron the honours of the priesthood, the authority of Moses was asserted by their miraculous punishment, which struck terror into the entire army. After giving his people a law, which embraced the minutest duties of every member of the community, and conducting them within sight of the promised land, which he was not permitted to enter, he resigned their conduct to Josue, and slept with his fathers.

Such is a brief and rapid epitome of the principal facts that are recorded in the Pentateuch; the sketch, however, exhibits sufficient evidence of the veracity of the historian.

To one, who has not reflected on his peculiar opportunities of accurate information, it may seem surprising that Moses could record with such minuteness, a series of events that embraced a period of more than two thousand years. It is not the number of years, but the number of generations, remarks Pascal, that throws obscurity over the transactions of ancient times.\* This profound reflection, founded on observation, may enable us to account for the precision and fidelity of Moses, in tracing the remote history of the Jewish people.† A century only intervened between the death of Jacob and the birth of the historian; who thus had an opportunity of conversing with those who had seen the venerable patriarch, and heard him relate the wonders wrought by the Almighty, in his own favour and that of his children. Jacob was familiar with the transactions that illustrated the life of Abraham; who had seen Sem, who had seen Lamech, who had seen Adam; and thus, the interval of time seems to be annihilated in the paucity of three or four generations, that reached back

\* *Pensées de Pascal*, p. 98.

† One hundred and nineteen years, according to Petavius. One hundred and eighteen years, according to Lenglet Dufresnoy.

to the origin of the world. It is remarked, that there is no history which people feel such a lively interest in preserving, as that of their own families. When more foreign transactions fade from the memory, those which may have distinguished our ancestors are clearly recollected. What wonder then, that the descendants of Noah and of Abraham should have bestowed particular attention in preserving the minutest circumstances of those miraculous events which ennobled the lives of their fathers, and blended their history with the most stupendous works of the Almighty. The lives of the patriarchs were long, their cares were few, and their habits simple; and the circumstances of their longevity and simplicity of manners afforded them the most easy means of preserving their domestic annals. The most superficial observer cannot fail to remark the striking difference between a simple and refined people, in what regards the powers of memory. Amongst those who are furnished with a variety of written records, seldom do you discover any prodigious extent of recollection. Their attention is distracted by the variety of their studies; and as necessity is said to be the strongest incentive to industry, those who are supplied with books can feel no painful anxiety lest they should lose what they can easily recover.

Not so, with respect to those who rely on the resources of their own mind. Every particle of knowledge is laid up with care, and preserved with veneration; and hence, among the older natives of Ireland or Scotland, you find living chronicles of the ancient annals of those countries, that would astonish our more refined and varied scholars, by the capacity as well as fidelity of their memories. The metrical structure of their compositions in which early events are recorded, soothes the ear; the simplicity of their metaphors, all taken from nature, delights the fancy: and the bold expression of passion, not weakened nor discoloured by affectation, takes a powerful hold on the attention. The primitive Hebrews, as is remarked by Bossuet,

availed themselves of all those natural aids which are found to characterise the annals of a simple people; and the canticles of Moses still attest, that he brought to his service all the strength and charms of poesy, to engrave more deeply on the hearts of the people the magnificent works of the Almighty.

Besides, when Abraham and Isaac inhabited the land of Canaan, they left numberless monuments to attest to their posterity, the favours which they received from heaven. Hence, when the Israelites took possession of the country, it still preserved the visible traces of the history of their progenitors. They still beheld the ruins of the habitations in which they dwelt; the wells in which their numerous flocks were watered were still open; the stones which they erected recalled to them the visions with which the patriarchs were favoured; the sepulchres pointed to where their ashes still reposed; and, in short, there was scarce a village or a mountain, which did not still reveal those visions and miracles by which God had confirmed the faith of the patriarchs.

Without insisting then on his claims to inspiration, which are sufficiently attested by the miracles he wrought, Moses might have derived the account of the creation and the flood, as well as of the lives of the patriarchs, from the relation of his own contemporaries. The same arguments that fortify his veracity, in the narrative of the miracles, of which he himself was the agent, equally protect him from the imputation of a wish to mislead the people, in recording their remoter history. Various circumstances combine to place his veracity in the strongest light, such as the severity of the law, the conduct of the legislator, and the restless and intractable dispositions of the Hebrew people. On the credit of the miracles, to which he frequently appealed, he established a law, which was the rule by which the civil and ecclesiastical administration was conducted. It formed the ritual of the priests, and contained the laws by which the judges were to administer

justice, and the generals to conduct the operations of war. It regulated the duties of the prince, and embraced the minuter observances of social and domestic life. All were to meditate on it, as they came in and as they went out; as they sat down, and as they walked in their fields: it was suspended from the posts of their doors; and in whatever sense we understand these expressions, it is clear that the law was placed before them as a mirror, from which the whole structure of their civil and religious polity was faithfully reflected.

Such a permanent monument is, in itself, a convincing attestation of the miracles on which it is founded. Yet they rest on other circumstances—the respective character of Moses and the people, together with the solemn festivals that were instituted to perpetuate their memory. The feast of the passover preserved the memory of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. Pentecost commemorated the promulgation of the law, amidst thunder and lightning; and the feast of tabernacles, their tedious wanderings in the wilderness. Nor were these monuments exclusively such as might flatter the pride, by exalting the glory of the people. If there were some which were the memorials of God's mercy, there were others which stood as the signals of his vengeance, and recorded the crimes and punishment of the Hebrews. Such were the golden plates, formed from the censors of the schismatical sons of Eliab and their associates, and fastened to the altar, as a warning to those whose sacrilegious ambition would fain usurp the dignity of the priesthood.\* Such was the rod of Aaron blooming with eternal verdure, and such the brazen serpent, which was, at the same time, a monument of the punishment inflicted on the mutiny of the Jews, and the interposition of Moses.

Had the Almighty permitted Moses to conduct the Israelites in triumph from Egypt to the promised land, without proving their fidelity, by the hardships of a

\* Numb. c. xvi.

long and dreary sojournment in the wilderness, we would have been deprived of that evidence which their conduct, during that time, has furnished. Had no prodigies been wrought, but such as might exalt the character of God's chosen people, we might have been told that all had willingly acquiesced in fictions, that redounded to the national honour. But when we reflect that the authority of Moses was exercised in inflicting the sharpest chastisement on some rebellious tribes, who were impatient of control, and that the signals of their punishment were preserved as a terror to their posterity; such circumstances place the credit of his miracles beyond the suspicion of imposture. However strong the links that bind the members of the same community, seldom are they found to be such as not to be loosened by the jealousies of narrower and more particular interests. The influence, then, of those particular views, must always operate to counteract the general circulation of a fraud, especially if it should entail reproach on some particular members. We have heard of many generously sacrificing property, nay, life itself, in support of their country or their religion. By such a sacrifice, they bequeathed to their descendants the fame of their virtues, and not the infamy of their crimes. But I know of no principle of human nature, which could patiently submit to an imputation, from which nought could result but dishonour, and make an entire tribe not only suffer without a murmur, for crimes which they had never committed; but, by tolerating a disgraceful monument of their guilt, expose their posterity to be insulted with the shame of their progenitors.

Though Moses, on every occasion, showed a tender regard for his people, yet his manner was not such as to conciliate those who might feel jealous of his authority. His general character was, doubtless, meekness and condescension—while remonstrance was listened to, he generously stood between the vengeance of the Lord and the sins of his people. But when their crimes

cried more loudly to heaven than the prayers of their pastor, no one was more capable of rising to a dignified assertion of his own power and of avenging the divine Majesty, which was insulted in his person. Hence, we do not discover in his conduct, any of those arts, by which crafty impostors seduce a number of proselytes, securing their attachment by an unbounded licence to gratify their corrupt desires.

Though the severity of the law which he imposed, the fearless confidence with which he appealed to the wonders he had wrought, and the signal vengeance with which he punished the revolt of the disaffected, place the character of Moses above impeachment; still the strongest impression of his veracity, is inscribed upon his own writings. Were the Pentateuch a monument of Pagan antiquity, which had not reference to religion, it would have been, doubtless, esteemed as the most valuable relic which had survived the wreck of ages. In tracing the progress of population from its primitive stock; in ascertaining the respective countries that were inhabited by the first colonies; in fixing the extent and determining the duration of ancient empires, the history of Moses furnishes a mass of consistent evidence, which the united labours of Pagan writers cannot supply. Learned leisure has toiled in vain, to remove the difficulties with which these subjects are interwoven, in endeavouring to dissipate, by the feeble lights of festivals, monuments, traditions and etymologies, the darkness that hangs over the remote events of antiquity. Were such studies pursued as objects of literary curiosity, without a view to discredit the most ancient, the most authentic, and the most precious monument, which time has left us, their authors might deserve the praise of innocent, perhaps useful, ingenuity. But when every real or imaginary record of antiquity is diligently sought, and triumphantly contrasted with the narrative of Moses; when the wildest and clumsiest fictions\* are

\* Those pretending scholars seriously talk of the chronological dreams of

forcibly exalted to the dignity of history, and the most genuine of historical monuments abandoned to suspicious imputations, one must lament the strange perversion of criticism, to which a hatred for religion is able to reconcile the human mind.

Were the enemies of religion able to oppose to the authority of the Pentateuch, a contemporary and contradictory narrative; were they able to exhibit the unanimous but independent accounts of later writers, or the self-evident consistency of a solitary historian, then we might be inclined to pause and balance their doubtful pretensions. But when we find them flip-pantly quoting writers of whom time has scarcely left a vestige but the name, and contrast their broken incoherent fragments with the most connected and best sustained history that has reached us; the reader must smile at the ignorant presumption that would attempt to evoke from their obscurity, such incompetent witnesses, to depose against the authority of the Hebrew historian. The learned may therefore amuse themselves in exploring the origin of writing, in constructing theories about the formation of the earth, in calculating astronomical observations, or unravelling the intricacies of chronology, without the authority of the Pentateuch being affected by the result of their labours. Its materials are too solid, and too strongly cemented, to yield to inquiries that bear on it at too remote a distance. In all these inquiries there is a mixture of probability and conjecture; but no rational mind would submit the whole train of moral evidence by which its conviction is fortified, to difficulties of a remote and extrinsic nature, by which that moral evidence can never be affected.

Yet, instead of sustaining any diminution of its authority, the Pentateuch has derived, from those inquiries, new accessions of internal evidence. The more deeply it is studied, the more it will reward the dili-

Sanchoniatho the Phenician, and Berosus the Chaldean, and Manetho the Egyptian priest, fragments of whose works have been preserved by Josephus and Eusebius.

gence, and enrich the knowledge, of the antiquarian, by disclosing to his view a mine, which may be continually wrought, without ever being exhausted. The truth of the Mosaic history may be dimly seen through the fictions with which it has been obscured, by the ignorance or fancy of the Greek and Roman mythologists. The primeval innocence of man suggested the fable of the Golden reign of the Gods,\* whilst the Silver and Iron ages characterised his gradual degeneracy, after the melancholy epoch of his fall. The tradition of the primitive chaos, animated by the Spirit and moulded by the plastic hand of the Omnipotent, is evidently founded on the first chapter of Genesis. The memory of the deluge, which furnished Ovid with the amusing fable of Deucalion and Pyrrha, was diffused over the world, and is still attested by the monuments of the earth. If, however, universal tradition should prove evidence too feeble for modern infidelity, philosophy furnishes arguments which no sophistry can shake. Elephants, the inhabitants of eastern or western climates, are found buried in the regions of the north; the crocodiles of Egypt are dug up in the uncongenial soil of Germany; and the bones of fishes, which solely inhabit the American seas, are mingled with the sand of our continent. The loftiest mountains of the Alps and the Andes contain fossil remains of the animal and vegetable kingdoms; and thus, the earth itself, in the living language of its monuments, attests the truth of this simple fact, which was disfigured by the ancient poets. Moses and Abraham were transformed into the sages and gods of antiquity, and the history of Nimrod bears a close resemblance to the life and labours of Hercules. The pride and punishment of those who attempted to erect the tower of Babel, have been metamorphosed into the fable of giants piling mountains on each other, to storm Olympus; the rod of Moses has been changed into the magic wand of Mercury;†

\* "ΘΕΟΣ ΕΝΕΜΕΝ."—Plato Polit.

† Huet. *Demonst. Evangelica*, Propos. iv. p. 258. Lipsiæ, 1694.

nor should I dread to stray among the ingenious conjectures of Huet, by asserting that Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt, furnished Ovid with the beautiful story of the transformation of Niobe.

All the knowledge that can be derived from an acquaintance with Pagan writers, only strengthens our conviction of the truth of the Pentateuch. The rude form of society, such as it is described by the Greek and Latin writers, and the imperfect state of the arts, correspond with the account which Moses has left of the comparatively recent creation of the world. In the legitimate pretensions to antiquity, to which the proudest people may lay claim, there is nothing to which the period assigned by Moses may not bid defiance. It is a trite, but a true observation, that the origin of nations is involved in much obscurity. National vanity has been everywhere loud in exclusive pretensions to the highest origin. There is scarcely a country that does not exhibit some traces of this national pride. But it operates with strongest influence on the most obscure and oppressed, who, to mitigate the sense of their present suffering, listen with devout rapture to the tale of their ancient greatness.\* It is to this prejudice we may trace the crude inventions of some of the Egyptian annalists, who, by contrasting their own antiquity with the recent origin of the Greeks, vainly imagined they were insulting their conquerors. Though all are desirous to stretch the continuous line of their ancestry where history cannot trace them, there is still a period beyond which all is conjecture. The peculiarities of nations which are now strong and prominent, become gradually more faint and indistinct as we ascend; following them higher, they are deepening still in distance, until every distinct feature is obliterated in the darkness that in-

\* Without adverting to the fondness of our own people for those compositions, which celebrate and deduce certain families from the second father of mankind, the Sicilians may be cited as a remarkable instance of the attachment of nations to the traditions of former renown. If we credit their antiquarians, Palermo was built by the grandson of Esau, and the foundations of Messina were laid as early as the days of Nimrod.—See the *Min. Philosopher*, vol. ii. p. 84, et seqq.

volves the remote events of antiquity. It is then, with the absence of light, that objects lose their natural dimensions; men are magnified and distorted into giants; and our credulity is amused, with the legends of heroes and of gods, with which the fancy of the ignorance of poets and historians has peopled these remote regions.\* The period of the Trojan war may be fixed as the extreme limit of historical certainty;† though the extraordinary circumstances with which that event has been embellished, have led some critics to annex it to the empire of fable. Now, the Trojan war is, by five hundred years, more recent than Moses; no genuine historical record can therefore contradict his authority. Nor are his accounts of the colonization of the earth, incompatible with the description found in the Greek writers, of the flourishing condition of the Assyrian empire. Herodotus and Xenophon are the only general historians previous to the reign of Augustus, who have left us an account of the empires of the earth. Yet Herodotus, who is followed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, contracts the first Assyrian monarchy, which expired with Sardanapalus, to the moderate term of five hundred and twenty years. Diodorus of Sicily, it is true, who is followed by Justin, makes the first Assyrian monarchy commensurate with the duration of fourteen centuries. But sound and impartial criticism must give the preference to Herodotus and Xenophon. The latter historians lived nearer the age and scene of the events which they describe; while the former, living more remote from both, had less certain sources of information. It is therefore clear, if we credit the accounts of Herodotus, who would not endure a comparison with

\* As a specimen of this singular credulity, it may be remarked, that the Greek historians copied the fables of the Egyptian priests, regarding the reigns of the gods who ruled over Egypt. To Vulcan was assigned the term of  $724\frac{1}{2}$  years and four days; and it must be confessed that such longevity was favourable to the antiquity of any people.—See Marsham's *Chronicus Canon*, p. 11. Yet how much more flattering still the chronology of Manetho, who extends the sovereignty of this god to the period of 9000 years?

† “ Cette époque est donc propre pour rassembler ce que les temps fabuleux out de plus certain et de plus beau.”—Bossuet, *Disc. p. 21.*

the more recent and doubtful authorities of Diodorus or Justin, that there is nothing in ancient history which may not be placed within the chronology of the vulgate. Should one, however, be disposed to give the preference to the latter writers, and imagine the period of the vulgate too contracted for the lengthened series of the Assyrian kings, he may range them at pleasure, by adopting the Greek computation. By stretching the period that elapsed between the flood and the vocation of Abraham, beyond the limits assigned by the vulgate, there will be full time for the growth of the empire of Nineve, and the full development of those extraordinary energies, which it is said to have put forth under Ninus and Semiramis. Yet, instead of recurring to the Greek computation, we shall find the chronology of the vulgate sufficiently reconcilable with the truth of history. It is true, that were the narratives of Justin and Diodorus admitted, the reigns of Ninus and Semiramis would ascend beyond the time of Abraham. But the state of manners as described by Moses at that time, is utterly inconsistent with the flourishing state of any eastern empire. We find the patriarchs employed in those homely offices, which characterize an infant state of society, and which would be offensive to the pride of men, refined or corrupted by later civilization. Whence this immature state of improvement best accords with the short interval which the vulgate fixes between Abraham and the flood. In those days of primitive simplicity, the title of king differed but little from the parental or patriarchal authority. Each chieftain erected his own power into an independent sovereignty. The name of king was bestowed upon him whose valour protected the fortunes, or whose wisdom moderated the disputes, of his followers; and the victory of Abraham, and his three hundred domestics, over the confederate power of four kings, gives us no exalted idea of the number of their forces or the extent of their dominion.\*

\* Genesis, xiv.

To illustrate and disentangle a subject, at once so obscure and intricate as ancient chronology, must be as hopeless, as it would be presumptuous to impeach the truth of the history of Moses, on account of such unavoidable difficulties. The discrepancy\* of opinions that has prevailed amongst the most learned, upon this perplexed subject, may excite a reasonable distrust of ever arriving at certainty. There are serious difficulties to be encountered by every writer, which neither the most patient industry nor the acutest penetration will be ever able to remove. The remoteness of time, the distance of countries, the migration of tribes, the revolutions of nations ; the imperfect and various modes of computation, the fugacity of languages, the vicissitudes of manners and the scantiness of ancient records, must ever present insurmountable obstacles to the writer, who would fix with precision the events of ancient history. Yet, there is a singular agreement among the most distant nations, about the great eras of historic certainty ; a circumstance well worthy of our attention. After the awkward texture of fable, with which the Chinese history was covered, had been unravelled and stript off by the ingenuity of Europeans, there was left of authentic annals but seven or eight centuries before the coming of Christ.† It is therefore singular, that notwithstanding the obscurity in which ancient history is involved, the great landmarks by which we are directed are nearly the same : and that the building of

\* On the year of the world in which the Christian era commenced, there are no less than ninety-two grave opinions. They vary from the year 3740 to 6948, and all the degrees from the lowest to the highest point in this scale of computation are marked with the names of Petau and Buxtorf, and Bellarmine, and Usher, and Vossius, and Kepler, and others of eminent celebrity.—See the chronological tables of Tournemine annexed to the Commentaries of Menochius. Venetiis, 1771, p. 318.

† “ Par rapport aux différents historiens sur le rapport desquels on s’est appuyé pour l’histoire de la Chine et pour ses antiquités, M. de Guignes fait voir combien leur témoignage est peu recevable sur les anciens temps. Sematsien, qui a composé un corps d’histoire vers l’an 97 avant J.-C., est le premier historien de la Chine, le père de l’histoire parmi les Chinois . . . et qui ne commence à mettre des dates qu’à l’an 841 avant l’ère chrétienne.”—Les Leçons de l’Histoire, tom. i. p. 313. Paris, 1787.

Rome;\* the institution of the Olympiads† among the Greeks, the era of Nabonasser‡ among the Chaldeans, and the commencement of the astronomical calculations of Confucius among the Chinese§—the epoch fixed by the most celebrated nations, all nearly commenced at the same period; as if to confound the vain hope of exploring more ancient dates, and to point out the legitimate boundaries between the regions of history and fiction.

In closing this chapter, it may not be deemed a departure from the subject, if I should solicit the reader's attention to a work which will not fail to strengthen his conviction of the veracity, and exalt his veneration for the character, of Moses. From the merited reputation of its distinguished author, the reader already anticipates Bossuet's Discourse of Universal History; a work which need only be named, to convey some idea of its value. Those who are in the habit of estimating compositions by their mass, may be attracted by works of bulkier size and larger compass. But in vain will they look for the sublime conceptions, and majestic narrative of Bossuet. Never did uninspired writer condense so many facts, with such little confusion, nor dispose of such dissimilar materials with so much skill and regularity. Instead of a laborious antiquarian, who at a remote distance is obliged to grope his way, by the dim and partial light he has successively collected, he seems rather contemplating, from a lofty elevation, the shifting fortunes of fleeting empires, as they rose and passed in review before him; seizing and sketching their prominent features, with the spirit and fidelity of a living observer. But his is not a cold and uninteresting picture. There breathes through the whole, the spirit of the great artist informing and invigorating every portion; unlike the ponderous and inert works whose heaviness is unanimated by a single spark of his genius. ||

\* 753.

† 776 from the victory of Corælus.

‡ 747.

§ 776.

|| . . . . . "Totas infusa per artus  
Major in exiguo regnabit corpore virtus."

But what is it, we may be permitted to inquire, that has given Bossuet his unrivalled ascendancy? he has had many fellow-labourers in the path of history, yet he has distanced competition. The most eminent have been content to admire, with a sort of superstitious wonder, the work they despaired of rivalling. I have no hesitation in ascribing his excellence to the direction which his mind received from the impulse of religion. Naturally possessed of talents that would confer eminence on any individual, they derived dignity from the cause to which they were devoted. Gifted with a genius, which seldom falls to the lot of the religious, and filled with a spirit of religion, that does not often accompany men of genius, the rare union of these qualities produced an irresistible effect. Though his mind was stored with a vast accumulation of knowledge, which a splendid eloquence could adorn, the ardent zeal for religion by which it was exalted, rendered his natural sublimity more sublime. In his discourse on universal history, he was far from imitating those writers, who draw chiefly from profane historians, thus preposterously commencing at the extremities. But he chose rather to take his station in Judea, thus seating himself “fast by the oracle of God.” Thence he surveys the subordinate interests of the universe, making religion the centre to which every event is referred, and by which, on his historical map, its relative position is graduated: and if the universal history of Bossuet, be unquestionably one of the most luminous and symmetrical pieces of human genius, it is because the history of Moses formed its centre, and became to him a land of Gessen, from which he drew and flung his lights over the most distant portion of the surrounding darkness.

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## CHAPTER III.

## WISDOM OF THE LAWS OF MOSES.

The preservation of the pure and primitive religion, the peculiar object of the Jewish law—Nature of the Theocracy.—The chief duties of man towards God, his neighbour, and himself, developed in the laws of Moses.—Apparent folly of some laws, a proof of his inspiration.—Superiority of the laws of Moses over those of the legislators of Greece and Rome.

THE character of Moses may be viewed in the twofold relation of historian and lawgiver. In the character of historian, we have vindicated his veracity, by showing the absence of all those circumstances that could fix the suspicion of enthusiasm on himself, or the charge of credulity on his followers. We shall now contemplate him as the lawgiver of the Jews; insisting that natural causes are as inadequate to explain his miracles, as natural wisdom to account for the perfection of his legislation.

This is a point of view, under which, the character of Moses will stand the test of the most rigid and hostile criticism. We are well aware that his existence preceded, by a long period, the infancy of those states, the fame of whose legislators is familiar to every scholar. Yet, if we divest ourselves of those prejudices which we have been taught to entertain for their institutions, we will be obliged to acknowledge that they are surpassed by those of Moses, not more by priority of time than by superiority of wisdom. To form a fair estimate of ancient institutions, we should divest ourselves of the influence of modern opinions, and presume that some laws, which to us may appear trivial and unmeaning, might have originated in circumstances with which we are totally unacquainted. That the laws of Moses had principally for their object the preservation of his

religion from the infection of idolatry, may be clearly collected from several passages of the Pentateuch. And therefore we are to conclude that those ordinances, which may now appear frivolous, were framed to arrest the growth of superstitions, of which the memory has long since disappeared.

In the laws of every other legislator, religion was introduced as a state engine, and made subservient to the civil policy; while in those of Moses, religion was the leading point, to which every other object had a subordinate reference. To account for this difference, it must be remarked, that God had condescended to assume towards the Jews the more accessible form of a tutelary divinity or temporal king. Such was the force of the tide of idolatry that threatened to overspread the whole earth, that, to arrest its course, the Deity visibly interposed, by assuming the name of the God of a particular people. Hence, religion was the basis on which the entire structure of the Jewish law was erected.

The accomplishment of the promises made to the patriarchs of old was its end; the law itself was the means by which this end was to be secured. These promises were of a spiritual nature; and as the patriarchal religion was not different from that of Moses, they were consequently incorporated with the latter. This is a truth so clearly established, that nothing but the dogmatical fierceness of the genius of Warburton, which delighted in the dangerous paths of paradox and hypothesis, could have excluded from the law of Moses the influence of religion. Abraham was frequently consoled with the promise that, in his seed, the nations of the earth should be blessed. This is a prediction, of which we ought to look for the accomplishment. If it means not the spiritual blessings of the Messiah, by which the minds of the Jews were to be exalted, it must mean the temporal advantages of wealth or conquest. But whatever might have been the temporal happiness of the Jews, it was entirely confined to themselves. It could not mean the extent of their conquests, since

the genius of their laws was better adapted for defending, than enlarging the boundaries of their empire. It is certain that Isaac was the heir of the promises; but if they should be understood of a temporal rather than a spiritual conquest, Ismael, and not Isaac, inherited the benediction. He was the founder of the warlike race of the Arabs, who preserved their freedom, when the surrounding nations yielded to the dominion of Rome; and at length, under Mohammed and his successors, overturned the throne of the Cæsars.

As the Almighty took the Jews under his special protection, by condescending to become their king; every part of the Jewish legislation was framed with a reference to this peculiar form of government. The civil and religious institutions of the country were thus blended together; and every act of idolatry by which the Israelites recognised the dominion of strange gods, became, at the same time, an act of treason against their own. The whole code of the Jewish laws, worthy of such a legislator, bears still the strongest impression of its divine origin. In describing the nature, and unfolding the perfections of the Divinity; in regulating the extent of the moral and social duties of man; in arranging the minutest details of civil policy, by which the peace of society may be protected; and in fixing salutary restraints to control and mitigate the ferocity of war, the laws of Moses are without a parallel. He represents to us the Divinity as an eternal, spiritual, and self-existent Being, creating the world by his will, and directing it by his providence.—The sovereign Lord of creation, jealous of his authority because there is no other to share in his dominion—exactng from his creatures an undivided homage, and a strict obedience to his laws; and proposing rewards and punishments as the alternative of their observance or infraction. Though he often describes the Divine Majesty as a terrible avenger of the sins of the guilty, yet we as often see his mercy interpose, and his justice disarmed by the seasonable prayers of an humble and repentant people. Thus

instead of those monstrous opinions, by which the Pagan philosophers dishonoured the notion of God, he is represented to us by Moses clothed in all the attributes which inspire reverence and affection.

To check the disordered affections, by which man transfers to the creature that homage which is due to God alone ; he is commanded by the law of Moses to love God with his whole heart and his whole soul, and with all his strength.\* As God is without a rival in his authority, it is reasonable that he should suffer no rival in the affections of his creatures. Yet to show that our duties to man are not neglected in the law, we are commanded by the same precept, to love our neighbour as ourselves. Unlike the Pagan legislators, whose punishment reaches only the actual crime, Moses checks even the desire of violating our neighbour's wife or property—a law worthy of the sanctity of him to whom the secret desires of our hearts are revealed. The ten commandments given on the mount form a comprehensive epitome of the moral duties of man ; and though reduced to a few simple expressions, yet they display a wisdom and sanctity, not to be found in the collected writings of all the ancient lawgivers.

To convey to the reader an adequate idea of the wisdom of the laws by which the civil and religious polity of the Hebrew republic was regulated, would be to transcribe a great portion of the Pentateuch. As the Almighty assumed the character of temporal sovereign of the Jews, the tabernacle became, at once, the temple of his worship and palace of his residence. Thence he issued the orders, when consulted on the interests of his people. Whoever reflects how the ministers of religion rose in regular gradation, from the humblest Levite that carried the furniture of the tabernacle, to the sons of Aaron, who were invested with the plenitude of the priesthood, and that the slightest corporal blemish excluded from the sanctuary,† cannot but admire the

\* Deut. vi. 5.

† Lev. xxi. 21, 23.

wisdom which presided over the ordinances of divine worship. The high priest was prohibited from going out of the holy places, because the oil of holy unction of his God was upon him ;\* and only once a year was he permitted to cross the threshold of the sanctuary, where the majesty of God himself visibly resided.

The administration of public justice was secured with such cautious jealousy as removed those impediments by which its course is often intercepted. As Moses was unequal to the task of adjusting all the disputes that might arise among such an immense multitude, he adopted the advice of Jethro,† who counselled him to associate with himself wise men out of all Israel, who might judge lighter causes, while the weightier concerns were reserved for his own tribunal ; a form which was afterwards perpetuated in the Jewish republic. “ Provide, out of all the people, able men such as fear God, in whom there is truth and that hate avarice, and appoint of them rulers of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens who may judge the people at all times.” Such an institution facilitated the administration of justice : while the check of superior tribunals secured the integrity of the judges. The inferior tribunals of the smaller states were called Judgments, while the supreme assembly of Jerusalem was dignified with the appellation of Council of Sanhedrim.‡ As the course of justice is often perverted, either through the indolence or dishonesty of the judge, or the malice of the witnesses ; the latter inconvenience was obviated by a law that annulled the testimony of a single witness ; and the former by removing those occasions that might tempt the judge’s integrity.§ He was advised to examine the cause and bring the circumstances under his own observation ; because, as Philo remarks, the eyes are less liable than the ears to deception. He was prohibited from receiving presents, which have the effect of

\* Lev. xxi. 12.

† Exod. xviii.

‡ See Sigonius de Republica Hebr. lib. vi. c. 5, p. 246. Bononiæ, 1582.

§ Ibid. lib. vi. c. 5, p. 250.

blinding the eyes of the prudent, and shaking the decisions of the just. He was to have no respect to persons, lest he should be influenced by the feelings of hatred or affection ; and he was cautioned even against compassion towards the poor, lest the stern impartiality of the judge should melt away in the softer impulse of humanity.\*

The punishments rose in regular gradation from mere restitution of property to the heavier punishments of fines, banishment, and death, according to the measure of each one's delinquency. Their rigour was generally tempered with a merciful feeling ; and if some seem to us too severe, we should remember that they were generally inflicted on those only who attempted to corrupt the national faith, by a profane mixture of idolatry. Thus, the religion of the Jews was preserved pure amidst the errors by which they were surrounded. Yet, it was not against idolatry alone that the heaviest penalties of the law were denounced. The sanctity of the marriage bed was equally protected by its severity. Not only was female virtue defended by its rigorous enactments, but the severest punishments were likewise inflicted on every species of that crime which the apostle forbids us to utter.

In the history of the most polished nations, we find no laws more calculated than those of Moses to subdue the destructive rage of conquest, and mitigate the ferocity of war. The generals were ordered to spare the fruits and harvests of the conquered country. With the exception of those devoted cities, which they were commanded to destroy ; they were ordered to offer terms of capitulation, and it was only in the case of refusal of such conditions, that they were justified in commencing hostilities. Moderation to the female captives would have been extolled among the Pagans, as a prodigy of virtue ; among the Jews it was secured by the wise provisions of the law ; and if anyone was found to have

\* Sigonius de Republica Hebr. lib. vi. c. 5, p. 270.

humbled the virtue of his captive, he was obliged to atone for the injury by taking her in marriage.

It would be endless to detail those sumptuary regulations, which are as remarkable for their wisdom as their variety. The difference of meats, so religiously prescribed, had a twofold object; the one, the preservation of the health, and the other, of the religion of the people. Of those animals that were prohibited from being eaten, by the Mosaic law, there are some unwholesome in every country, and others that would have been particularly noxious to the Jews. The leprosy to which that people had such a tendency, might have been stimulated by those meats; and the frequency of the lustrations, by which they were obliged to purify their persons and their houses, was likewise intended to arrest its malignant progress. These ablutions may seem trifling to the careless reader, who is ignorant of their object; but in them the more serious will discover a proof of the legislator's attention to the important objects of decency and health. As social and convivial intercourse is one of the strongest mediums by which mankind are connected, Moses, to prevent an intercourse with the Pagans, wisely prohibited some meats that were used by them. The mutual aversion thus generated to each other's society, strengthened their mutual religious prejudices: nor ought those regulations to be deemed unimportant, which so powerfully contributed to preserve the purity of religion.

From the arbitrary power with which the Roman laws invested parents over the lives of their children, the latter sometimes experienced all the evils of domestic tyranny. The family of a Roman senator was not unfrequently extinguished in the blood of his son; and the inheritance transferred to a stranger. The laws of Moses sufficiently protected the parental authority; but to guard against the cruelty of a capricious father, the punishment of a disobedient child was always reserved for the wisdom and justice of the Sanhedrim. Among the Romans the inhuman practice of slavery

became so extensive an abuse that it was deemed dangerous to distinguish the slaves by a peculiar habit, lest, becoming conscious of their strength, they might endanger the safety of the empire. The wisdom of Moses, who ordained that at the end of every jubilee, they should be entitled to their freedom,\* obviated this evil; and even during the term of their servitude, the humanity of his laws mitigated the hardness of their condition.

In some of the great outlines of their legislation, a close resemblance might be traced, between Moses and the legislators of Greece and Rome†—a resemblance which may well be ascribed to imitation. But of all the ancient lawgivers, Lycurgus is he whose laws have the closest affinity to those of Moses. The institutions of both contributed much to preserve freedom, by an equal partition of land among the people; thus preventing some from rising to overgrown fortunes, and others from naturally sinking into servitude. Both severely prohibited indiscriminate converse with other nations, and preserved the austere simplicity of the national character untainted by foreign intercourse. Both enforced, on the youth of their respective republics, a submissive reverence to old age. “Rise up before the hoary head and honour the person of the aged man,” is one of the first precepts of the Jewish lawgiver. We may read its just comment in the conduct of the young men of Sparta, who, on rising to offer their seats to the elderly strangers, at the public games, were hailed by the loud acclamation of the Athenian people.

If the laws to which I have already adverted, establish, beyond dispute, the superior wisdom of Moses; the apparent repugnance of others to the welfare of the people, is a proof that he was under the guidance of

\* Lev. xxv.

† Earum legum quas (ex Græciæ civitatibus) tulerunt Decemviri reliquias collegerunt horum temporum viri; quas si quis evolvat, Mosem in plerisque capitibus agnoscat.”—Huetii *Demonst. Evang.* p. 273.

supernatural intelligence. In the prosecution of the public weal, a wise and judicious statesman will always select such measures, as experience has ascertained to have most influence on the happiness of the people. Yet, in the laws of Moses, we find a complete departure from this obvious maxim of human policy. The encouragement of agriculture, and a vigilant jealousy of hostile and neighbouring nations, have ever entered into the views of enlightened legislators, in order to avert the evils of famine or invasion. Yet Moses seems to have shown an indifference for these considerations, such as no man could have exhibited, who had not a strong reliance on the divine interposition. On every seventh year, the Jews were released from the labours of agriculture; the works of husbandry were suspended; the fields lay untilled; and the people were supported by the produce of the preceding seasons. To save them from the effects or apprehension of famine, he assured them that on every sixth year, they should be blessed with a more abundant harvest: and though the land should have been naturally exhausted by the produce of five harvests, the uniform luxuriance of the sixth was a standing proof of the truth of his prediction. On the great festivals of Pentecost, the Passover, and the Tabernacles, all the people of Judea of either sex, were obliged to repair to the temple of Jerusalem. At those times, the country lay in a defenceless posture exposed on all sides to the insults of its enemies. Yet Moses, with a confidence secure of the event, promised that during the days that were consecrated to the celebration of those feasts, no enemy should appear on their borders; and notwithstanding the temptations to aggression, afforded by those frequent intervals of security, no hostile force ever attempted to take advantage of them to violate the territories of Judea.\*

In the age of Moses the science of legislation was rude and imperfect. Athens, and Sparta, and Rome,

\* Exodus, xxxiv. 23-24.

were yet unknown, and many centuries elapsed before Solon, or Lycurgus, or Numa, formed those states to the arts of civil life. During this period the science of government was better studied; and these legislators naturally availed themselves of the accumulated improvements of the long interval. Their admired institutions were the mature result of patient study, and an attentive observation of the laws of other nations. In their intercourse with the Egyptians and Phenicians, we may presume they acquired some knowledge of the Jewish laws, from which they, doubtless, adopted some portion into their own. The resemblance which I have pointed out between some of the laws of Sparta and Judea, justifies this presumption, a resemblance, which will be found closer on a more strict examination. Yet with all the boasted wisdom of the Greeks and Romans, and the advantages of a more recent age, their laws can sustain no comparison with those of the Jewish people. In the one, we find the justest views of the nature and attributes of the divinity: in the other, we find it dishonoured by the absurdest opinions. Among the Jews the worship of the one God, was enjoined by the most solemn sanctions; among the Greeks and Romans, it was suffered to be usurped by senseless idols. Among the former, the duties of continence were enforced, and incest was severely prohibited; among the latter, a shameless licentiousness of public morals was permitted. In short, all the duties of individual sanctity or regularity of life, seem to have been totally neglected by the Greek and Roman legislators, who often sacrificed the domestic virtues to mistaken views of public interest: while the laws of Moses not only embrace the general welfare of society, but descend with the minutest precision, to those private actions by which the virtue of individuals is promoted. It is in the minuteness and comprehensiveness of his laws that Moses remains unrivalled. In them, nothing is vague and undefined. From the king to the humblest individual, the precise line of duty was chalked out by

the laws, from which each was commanded not to stray to the right or to the left. The laws thus formed the standard, by which every individual was to regulate his conduct; they prescribed the exact measure of each one's duties and prerogatives, and prevented the angry contentions arising from undefined rights, which often shook the commonwealth of Rome. Moses knew human nature well, and deemed nothing unimportant that contributed to uphold public order. Nothing was left to the arbitrary or capricious regulations of any individual; and hence he may justly be entitled to the praise of realising the excellent theory of Plato, who deemed that republic the most perfect, in which the laws rule the magistrates and not magistrates the laws.

Nor were these laws liable to be abrogated by the caprice of succeeding rulers, nor at the prospect of contingent advantages. Fixed and immovable, they survived every revolution of the Jewish republic, which flourished under the same laws during a longer period than any other ancient empire. Unlike those cumbrous codes, in which the progress of legislation is varying with the changes of society, thus requiring the labour of a whole life to ascertain the laws which are still in force, and those that have become obsolete by more recent enactments, the laws of Moses, struck off in a heat, and with a prospective wisdom unexampled in any legislator, embraced every contingency that occurred amongst a numerous people, during fifteen hundred years.

Such was the character of Moses, such the stupendous wonders which he performed, and such the laws which he established and which still remain a standing attestation of his wisdom. The sublimest of poets, the most accurate of historians, and the sagest of legislators—he astonishes us by his mature excellence in the rarest acquirements of man, whilst the arts were as yet rude, and science only in its infancy. He was skilled, it is true, in all the wisdom of Egypt; but her boasted

wisdom was folly, and her religious worship superstition, when compared to the science and religion of Moses. That his knowledge was not derived from that impure source, is evident from the opposition between the Jewish and Egyptian worship : nay, many of its enactments were expressly enjoined to divert the attention of the Hebrews from the idolatry of Egypt. How then shall we be able to account for the appearance of such a moral phenomenon, amidst the general ignorance in which mankind was involved? It is one which will baffle human ingenuity to explain. It would be presumption to stray in search of any other cause than that which is assigned and demonstrated in his own writings. Aided by the light of divine inspiration, he explores the primitive history of the world, and leads his readers to the very source of the origin of mankind. His narrative is simple, artless, and unlaboured; but when he describes the majesty of the Divinity, or records those wonders of which himself was at once the witness and the instrument, his style kindles into a strain of fervent and elevated poetry, which human composition would in vain attempt to rival.\* In tracing the plan, and adjusting the different parts of his commonwealth, his prophetic view comprehended the various revolutions of time; and hence the peculiar fitness of his laws to promote, under every circumstance, the ends of public happiness.

From the midst of a wilderness issues forth a code of laws and of religion, which the combined wisdom of philosophers could never improve. Its perfection, independently of the assurance of the inspired historian, fully reveals the divinity of its origin, and proves that it was framed according to the "model which had been shown him on the mountain."†

\* "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified," &c.—Exod. xv. See also the beautiful Canticle for the remembrance of the Law, Deut. xxxii.

† Exod. xxv. 40.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE HEBREW PROPHECIES.

The Jewish religion, the shadow of a more perfect covenant.—The authenticity of the prophetic books proved by the joint veneration of Jews and Christians.—Various predictions regarding the abolition of the ancient law, the establishment of a new covenant, and the vocation of the Gentiles.—Weight of the argument deduced from prophecy, illustrated in the striking difference between those, which regarded the fortunes of the Israelites, and those of other nations.—The Providence of God fully displayed in the rise and fall of the ancient Empires.—Cessation of prophecy at the approach of the Messiah.

YET however excellent that model,\* it was only the shadow of a more perfect covenant. The Jewish dispensation was limited in its extent, nor was it to be imagined that the Deity would always reside among the descendants of Jacob manifesting towards them an exclusive predilection. The slow and gradual growth of religion, from its infancy under the Patriarchs, spreading under the Jews, and developed at length to its full perfections under Christ, is perfectly analogous to everything in nature. If Jehovah had therefore always confined himself to Judea, such a monopoly of the divine favour might startle the infidel, and appear utterly unworthy of the general providence of God. But as the Jewish religion was preparatory and subordinate to the general manifestation of the counsels of God, to arraign that dispensation is to arraign the wisest adaption of the means to the end. Mankind was not yet ripe enough for the precepts of a less carnal religion; reason was not sufficiently refined to comprehend the impotence of its endeavours to ascertain the truth, nor was the human mind sufficiently open for the full flood of light, which was poured upon it by the

\* Vide supra.

Christian revelation. This was the work of time, and though we discover the first faint appearance of that light, in the promise of a Redeemer made to Adam ; yet a long interval elapsed, during which it was expanding in each succeeding prophecy, until it broke forth, at length, in the full splendour of the Sun of Justice.

Of the prophecies contained in the Pentateuch, the authenticity is proved by the general arguments by which we establish the genuineness of that volume. Subsequently to the death of Moses, a succession of inspired men arose among the Jews, who sustained their languishing hopes in the coming of the Messiah, by adding some striking circumstances to the former predictions. In the long protracted dispute between the Jews and Christians, these prophecies are triumphantly referred to by the latter, in support of their own religion ; while the former, who never questioned their antiquity or authority, have contented themselves with contesting their interpretation. This single circumstance, puts beyond contradiction the early date and authenticity of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Could the Jews entertain any reasonable doubts of the genuineness of those books, they would have long since preferred the charge of forgery against them, rather than leave their enemies to the quiet possession of an instrument, which they have used to the unceasing annoyance of the descendants of Jacob. We cannot therefore admit any suspicion of their integrity or veracity, without supposing that two rival parties, actuated by a mutual hostility, have conspired to uphold a common fabrication ; and that the Jews, though repeatedly provoked by the frequent appeals of the Christians to their own books, have never revealed the secret of their forgery, during a controversy, as unexampled for the length of its continuance, as for the acrimony with which it has been conducted.

During the long interval of fifteen hundred years, a series of predictions was issued among the Jews, which

foretold the abolition of their law, and the rise of a new legislator. Of the events alluded to in these prophecies, some are among the most splendid in history; and are foretold with a minuteness and precision not unworthy of an historical narrative. If, therefore, the gift of foreknowledge and prophecy be among the exclusive and incommunicable attributes of the Divinity, we have only to exhibit the interesting chain of prophecy, in order to conduct the reader to the truth of that religion, in which it terminates.

The knowledge of events depending on free agency, yet buried in futurity, is far beyond the reach of human intelligence. An astronomer may calculate with certainty, the regular return of a comet through its orbit; the politician may conjecture, with probability, the result of those plans of government which he has been instrumental in forming. But to determine those events, which depend on the free agency of wills over which we have no control, is a science so profound that the Almighty alone can penetrate its obscurity.\* This is a principle on which sacred and profane writers are agreed. Nay, so mysterious is the knowledge of the free events of futurity, that it perplexed the wisest of the ancients, who hesitated whether they should not deny to the Divinity a knowledge which seemed to violate the freedom of man's will. Yet we find this power of God displayed in so stupendous a manner, and the character of the Messiah so clearly portrayed in the Old Testament, as to force the enemies of Christianity to the desperate and untenable charge of forgery and imposition.

The direful punishment that was inflicted on the transgression of Adam, was thus mitigated by the consoling assurance of its expiation. "I will put enmities

\* "Show the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods."—Isaias, c. xli. v. 23.

"Prudens futuri temporis exitum

Caliginosa nocte premit Deus."—Hor. Od. iii.

"Et Genus humanum damnat caligo futuri."—Juv. Sat. vi.

"Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futuræ."—Stat. Theb. iii.

"Rerum igitur futurarum nulla est præsentio."—Cic. de Div. l. ii.

between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head:"\*—a sentence which promises the redemption of man from the dominion of his deceiver. This promise assured our first parents merely of the event, without specifying the time or circumstances of its accomplishment. This hope of a future Redeemer descended with the primitive patriarchs, and cheered them in their sojournment, until Abraham was favoured with a fuller explanation of a prophecy, not less merciful than it was mysterious. After his virtue had been proved by a series of trials, which he endured with amazing fortitude, the Almighty declared to him, that "in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed."† This was a circumstance that awakened still more the expectation of the promised redemption, by interesting in its fulfilment the hopes of a particular people. Still the time of its accomplishment was undefined, and though the Redeemer was promised to arise from a certain seed, mankind remained still ignorant of the period of his appearance. The stock of Abraham had not yet sufficiently spread, to connect the time of the coming of Christ with the fortunes of his posterity. Isaac, who was the fruit of the promise, by which God confirmed the vocation of Abraham, was likewise the heir of the benedictions. But by a mysterious decree of the Almighty, which shadowed the future vocation of the Gentiles to the faith, and the reprobation of the Jews, Esau, the eldest son of Isaac, was disinherited, and the blessing transferred to Jacob, the younger brother. Jacob was favoured with twelve sons, who were destined to be the twelve patriarchs, from whom the tribes of Israel should derive their name and origin. At the close of his eventful life, which had been marked by special instances of the divine interposition, the dying patriarch blesses his assembled children, and in the spirit of prophecy, foretells the fortunes of their descendants.

\* Gen. iii. 15.

† Gen. xxii. 18 and xxvi. 4.

Among the mysterious predictions which refer to the other children, he thus addresses himself to Juda :—  
 “Juda is a lion’s whelp : to the prey, my son, thou art gone up : resting thou hast couched as a lion, and as a lioness, who shall rouse him ? The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of nations.”\* Hitherto the promise of the Messiah, which was vague, or explicit only in the circumstances of the people among whom he was to rise, becomes now more definite in the term of its accomplishment. The words in which this prophecy is conveyed, are too clear for ambiguity : but whatever may be the nature or extent of the power which the word sceptre may signify, the Messiah was to come before every remnant of that authority had fallen out of the hands of the posterity of Juda. The people from among whom he was to spring, and the limits of time within which he was to appear, formed the striking outlines of the prophetic canvas, on which the Redeemer’s character was to be portrayed by the delineation of succeeding prophets. Accordingly, Moses, under the influence of divine inspiration, thus traces the first great feature of his character : “I will raise them up a prophet out of the midst of their brethren, like to thee ; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I shall command him : and he that will not hear his words which he shall speak in my name, I will be the avenger.”†

Here we discover the Messiah was to bear a striking resemblance to Moses, who was not only a prophet but also the founder of a new law and religion. During the existence of the Jewish covenant, the people were cautiously and repeatedly reminded of the necessity of its observance. But lest this attachment to the law of Moses should divert their attention from the new prophet who was to rise among them, the Almighty declares that if any shall refuse to hear his words, he shall avenge the insulted authority of his own messenger.

\* Gen. xlix. 9, 10.

† Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

As yet the picture is only sketched, and appears too indistinct for the striking accordance between it and the original for which it was designed. But henceforth, it begins to be filled up with such a variety of striking and characteristic colours, that as it would be impossible to exhibit them without transcribing a great portion of the Old and New Testament, the judgment is perplexed by the difficulty of selection.

To confirm the prophecy of Moses, and wean his followers from an obstinate adherence to a law which was to be superseded by that of the Messiah, we find their attention roused by frequent predictions of the abolition of the one and the substitution of the other. The first of these events is thus foretold by Jeremias and Malachi: "Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made *void* and I had dominion over them, saith the Lord."\* "Who is there among you who will shut the doors, and kindle the fire on my altar gratis? I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."†

In those passages we find a striking contrast between the old and new covenants; of which the one was made void through the prevarication of the Jews; and the other, without limit of place or country, was to extend to the Gentiles. The vocation of the nations to the faith appears almost in every page of the prophetic writings, as an event immediately connected with the abolition of the Jewish worship. "All the ends of the earth," says David,‡ "shall remember and shall be

\* Jerm. xxxi. 31, 32.

† Malach. i. 10, 11.

‡ Psal. xxi. 28, 29.

converted unto the Lord. And all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he shall have dominion over the nations." "The Lord hath made known his salvation, he hath revealed his justice in the sight of the Gentiles. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."\* The coming of Christ to bring salvation to mankind is the idea that most frequently breaks forth in the inspired effusions of this penitent king, who sighed for the general diffusion of that mercy which he felt in the remission of his own sins.

Isaias and the other prophets are equally clear in their predictions. "And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say: Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem: and he shall judge the Gentiles and rebuke many people."† And again: "Give praise, O thou barren that barest not; sing forth praise and make a joyful noise, thou that didst not travail with child: for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles; lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt pass on to the right hand and to the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and shall inhabit the desolate cities. Fear not, for thou shalt not be confounded, nor blush: for thou shalt not be put to shame, because thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and shalt remember no more the reproach of thy widowhood."‡

Like the royal Psalmist, the vocation of the Gentiles seems to have been continually before the prophetic

\* Psal. xcvi. 2. 3.

‡ Isaias, liv. 1-4.

† Isaias, ii. 2. 3.

view of Isaias, and to have occupied his sublimest inspirations. "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising—thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee. Because thou wast forsaken and hated, and there was none that passed through thee, I will make thee to be an everlasting glory, a joy unto generation and generation."\*

The language of Jeremias is equally clear and conclusive: "O Lord, my might and strength, and my refuge in the day of tribulation: to thee the Gentiles shall come from the ends of the earth, and shall say: surely our fathers have possessed lies, a vanity which hath not profited them. Therefore behold I will this once cause them to know, I will show them my hand and my power: and they shall know that my name is the Lord."† Among the many other passages which might be cited from the prophetic writings, I shall content myself with those of Sophonias and Zachary: "The Lord shall be terrible upon them, and shall consume all the gods of the earth: and they shall adore him, every man from his place, all the islands of the Gentiles."‡ "And he shall speak peace to the Gentiles, and his power shall be from sea to sea, and from the rivers even to the end of the earth."§

That the individual, who was to accomplish this revolution by the abolition of one form of religion, and by the extension of another to the extreme limits of the earth, should be clearly pointed out by the prophets, is what must be naturally expected. As the coming of the Messiah had a close and necessary connexion with those events, it was of the utmost importance that

\* Isaias, lx.

‡ Sophon. ii. 11.

† Jerm. xvi. 19, 21.

§ Zach. ix. 10.

mankind should clearly discern and recognise the character of him, who was to have such a powerful influence on their destinies. Accordingly we perceive that his attributes are as strongly defined as the functions for which he was destined were important in their consequences. His birth, his life, his labours, his sorrows, and his triumphs, are so clearly marked in the writings of the prophets, that if the testimony of the Jews themselves did not assure us of their antiquity, we might suppose them to be a history of the past, rather than the prediction of future ages. His eternal generation from the Father, is thus announced by the Psalmist: "The Lord hath said to me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."\*—"With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength; in the brightness of the saints: from the womb before the day star I begot thee."† To the testimony of his eternal generation, Micheas adds the circumstances of his temporal birth and the place of his nativity: "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be the Ruler in Israel: and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."‡ The promise which was hitherto extended to the whole tribe of Juda, is, by the prophet Isaias confined to the royal house of David: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him . . . him the Gentiles shall beseech, and his sepulchre shall be glorious."§ Thus we discover, at every step, some new feature of the Messiah, and find that the prophecies are gradually narrowing, as they descend, while they name the individual family from which he is to spring, and fix with precision the spot of his nativity. The place and time of his birth being thus accurately defined, we next look out for those peculiar and characteristic features,

\* Psal. ii. 7.

‡ Mich. v. 2.

† Psal. cix. 3.

§ Isaias, xi. 1, &amp;c.

which marked the individual, and distinguished him from his contemporaries. Were I to draw out the full portrait, as it might be presented from the prophetic writings, I should be anticipating the history of our Redeemer's life. I shall, therefore, reserve it for the next chapter, where, in describing the actions and character of Christ, it will appear, that in copying the history of the Evangelists, I am only reflecting the collected splendour of the ancient prophecies.

In discussing the important argument, which is furnished by the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, we may be permitted to pause and notice the difficulties that might perplex the reader, through the dim and mysterious way. As the foreknowledge of distant events is a peculiar attribute of the Divinity, that religion must be divine which is sanctioned by this attestation of the Almighty. Such is the religion of Christ, of which all the circumstances are foretold in a remote age, with a minuteness and precision that would baffle the most daring reach of human sagacity or conjecture. Although this principle is readily conceded, yet there is often a lurking hostility to religion, which after the admission of obvious truths, inconsistently revolts at their equally obvious application. Hence, while some affect to regret the obscurity of the ancient prophecies, others fancy they have found, in their perspicuity, their surest refutation. One, because they are clear, denies their authenticity; and another controverts their evidence, because they are obscure. To those who live before their accomplishment, prophecies, we are told, are totally useless; and after their accomplishment, their force must be much diminished by the flexibility of their application to different events, or by the possibility of a merely fortuitous fulfilment. Such are the scruples which some feel, or affect to feel, in surrendering their conviction to the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Whatever might be the weight of each of these reasons, on the reader's mind, instead of seeing himself

oppressed by their union, he must find himself relieved by their opposition. If there be any truth in the view which the one takes of the subject, there must be none in the other, which is founded on an opposite supposition. If the prophecies be too vague and obscure for a definite object, there is surely no reason to distrust their authenticity. And if they be sufficiently perspicuous for historical composition, their adaptation to different events is a mere unfounded conjecture. Thus the force of the argument remains untouched between opposite systems, that neutralize each other. But, on a nearer and more distinct view of this interesting question, it will appear that the whole force of the evidence of the prophecies, depends on this mixture of obscurity and light; and that even before their accomplishment, they contributed, in no inconsiderable degree, to uphold the true religion.

Had the holy men, who foretold the rise of the Christian religion, uttered no predictions except those which bore a direct reference to its author, the Jews might have had but a faint expectation of their accomplishment. If they had witnessed no proofs of the prophetic gifts, which were so confidently claimed, their minds might have been but little excited by remote predictions, of which they could never hope to see the failure or the fulfilment. But, if they became once assured, by any striking event, that such predictions were the genuine inspiration of heaven, then their hopes were sustained; and the accomplishment of one prophecy strengthened their confidence in the fulfilment of another. Now, the entire of the Jewish history presents little else than a series of events, foretold as well as accomplished; which naturally conducted and supported the hopes of the Jewish people, to the most important events that formed the last link in the chain of prophecy. Those, whose prophetic view took the boldest range over the remotest events of futurity, did not hesitate to stake their credit on nearer facts, which might fall under the observation of their contempo-

raries. The division of the Jewish kingdom; the fate of its rulers; the apostasy and punishment of its people; with some of the leading circumstances by which they were accompanied, were often clearly foretold and fulfilled, during the same generation. The facts which all could attest, bore splendid testimonies to the divine mission of the prophets. If some were more remote, their distance only furnished proofs of stronger inspiration. Such were the predictions that regarded the fortunes of Tyre, of Ninive, and of Babylon. Those, who heard the threats that were denounced against their inhabitants, watched with anxiety the term of their accomplishment; and beheld, in the fate of those devoted cities, the surest pledge of the truth of all the prophecies. Passing over the predictions by which Moses and Josue foretold the prosperous or adverse fortunes of the Jews, as they should observe or violate the laws; which we behold literally accomplished in their varied and eventful history; we find that Osee and Amos clearly foretold the captivity and dispersion of that people. "As the morning passeth, so hath the king of Israel passed away. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they would not be converted."\* "Hear you this word, which I take up concerning you for a lamentation; the house of Israel is fallen . . . The virgin of Israel is cast down upon her land . . . The city out of which came forth a thousand, there shall be left in it a hundred; and out of which there came a hundred, there shall be left in it ten, in the house of Israel . . . I hate and have rejected your festivities; and I will not receive the odour of your assemblies; but judgment shall be revealed as water, and justice as a mighty torrent . . . And I will cause you to go into captivity, beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, the God of Hosts, is his name."† Such is the clear and explicit language, in which those inspired

\* Osee, xi. 1, 5.

† Amos, v.

writers announced the approaching misfortunes of the Jews. Their condition during their dispersion in the East, will furnish the commentary.

One hundred and thirty years before the captivity of the Jews, the sceptre of Juda was swayed by Ezechias, a pious monarch, who yet was prompted by vanity to display the extent of his wealth, to the messengers of the king of Babylon. No symptoms of the ruin, which was to come upon the kingdom, were then discernible. Yet Isaias, in the spirit of prophecy, thus glances at the punishment with which the Almighty was to avenge the king's ostentation: "Hear the word of the Lord of Hosts: Behold the days shall come, that all that is in thy house, and that thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried away into Babylon: there shall not any thing be left, saith the Lord. And of thy children that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, they shall take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."\*

If human sagacity could have foreseen, in the internal state of Judea, any symptoms of its decline; or in the hollow professions of friendship that might have been exchanged by the two monarchs,† any latent jealousy, from which future hostilities might arise; the duration at least of the captivity together with the name of the individual who was to achieve the deliverance of Juda, are circumstances, which place above suspicion the claims of the prophets to divine inspiration. "Give praise, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath shown mercy; shout with joy ye ends of the earth: ye mountains resound with praise . . . for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and Israel shall be glorified. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer . . . I am the Lord . . . that raise up the word of my servant, and perform the counsel of my messengers, who say to Jerusalem: thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Juda: you shall be built, and I will raise up the wastes thereof;

\* Isaias, xxxix. 5, 6, 7.

† 4 Kings, xx. 12, et seqq.

... who say to Cyrus : thou art my shepherd, and thou shalt perform all my pleasure : who say to Jerusalem: thou shalt be built, and to the temple : thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to my anointed Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of to subdue nations before his face, and to turn the back of kings and to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut ; I will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth.\* While the name of their deliverer is thus clearly foretold by Isaias to the Jews, Jeremias defines the term of the captivity : “And all this land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment : and all these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And when the seventy years shall be expired, I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans ; and I will make it perpetual desolations.”†

Whatever might have been the influence of the prophets on the fate of their own country, to which however it would be absurd to ascribe the events which they predicted, they were, doubtless, incapable of bringing about those revolutions in Ninive, in Tyre, in Babylon and Egypt, which they foretold with no less confidence.

In the seventh century before the Christian era, we are assured by profane, as well as sacred writers, that Nabopolasser having formed a confederacy with Astyages‡ king of the Medes, attacked the city of Ninive, subdued its king, and finally, reduced to ashes this rich and flourishing city, which had long been the capital of the Assyrian empire. This calamitous event was distinctly foretold by Nahum, more than a hundred years before, when the kingdom of Assyria was yet in the most prosperous condition : “Woe to thee, O city

\* Isaias, xlv. 23, &c., and xlv. 1, &c.

† Jerem. xxv. 11, 12.

‡ Others say, with Cyaxares, the father of Astyages. Ancient writers, though agreed as to the fact of the destruction of Ninive, are divided as to the respective shares of the confederated monarchs in its overthrow.

of blood, all full of lies and violence, rapine shall not depart from thee. The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the neighing horse, and of the running chariot, and of the horsemen coming up: and of the shining sword, and of the glittering spear, and of the multitude slain, and of a grievous destruction: and there is no end of carcasses, and they shall fall down on their dead bodies. Because of the multitude of fornications of the harlot that was beautiful and agreeable... that sold nations through her fornications, and families through her witchcrafts: Behold I come against thee, saith the Lord of Hosts: and I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms. And I will cast abominations upon thee, and will disgrace thee and will make an example of thee. And it shall come to pass, and every one that shall see thee shall flee from thee, and shall say: Ninive is laid waste, who shall bemoan thee? Whence shall I seek a comforter for thee?... Thy shepherds have slumbered, O king of Assyria, thy princes shall be buried: thy people are hid in the mountains, and there is none to gather thee together. Thy destruction is not hidden, thy wound is grievous: all that have heard the fame of thee, have clapped their hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?"\*

If the fall of Ninive furnished a melancholy proof of the prophetic veracity of Nahum, the credit of Ezechiel was not less strikingly established by the ruin which was brought upon Tyre by Nabuchodonosor. While she ruled as the empress of the seas, attracting, by the wealth of her commerce, all the nations of the world, he thus foretells the woes with which God determined to punish her iniquities. "And it came to pass... that the word of the Lord came to me saying: Son of man, because Tyre hath saith of Jerusalem: Aha, the

\* Nahum, iii.

gates of the people are broken, she is turned to me : I shall be filled, now she is laid waste. Therefore, thus saith the Lord : Behold I come against thee, O Tyre, and I will cause many nations to come up to thee, as the waves of the sea rise up. And they shall break down the walls of Tyre, and destroy the towers thereof : and I will scrape her dust from her and make her like a smooth rock. She shall be a drying place for nets in the midst of the sea, because I have spoken it, saith the Lord God : and she shall be a spoil to the nations. For thus saith the Lord God, behold I will bring against Tyre Nabuchodonosor, king of Babylon, the king of kings from the North, with horses, and chariots, and horsemen, and companies, and much people . . . Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones ; and take off their robes, and cast away their broidered garments and be clothed with astonishment : they shall sit on the ground and with amazement shall wonder at thy sudden fall. And taking up a lamentation over thee, they shall say to thee : How art thou fallen that dwellest in the sea, renowned city that was strong in the sea, with thy inhabitants whom all did dread . . . And they shall take up a mournful song for thee and shall lament thee. What city is like Tyre which is become silent in the midst of the sea ? Which by thy merchandize that went from thee by sea didst fill many people : which by the multitude of thy riches and of the people didst enrich the kings of the earth. Now thou art destroyed by the sea, thy riches are in the bottom of the waters, and all the multitude that was in the midst of thee is fallen. All the inhabitants of the islands are astonished at thee : and all their kings being struck with the storm have changed their countenance. The merchants of people have hissed at thee : thou art brought to nothing, and thou shalt never be any more.”\*

Such were the menaces, which, through the ministry

\* Ezech. xxvi. and xxvii.

of Ezechiel, God denounced against the Tyrians: Nabuchodonosor became the unconscious agent of their fulfilment. We are assured by Josephus that the siege of this city employed and baffled the force of Nabuchodonosor during the space of thirteen years.\* Reduced at length to the last extremity, the inhabitants transported their wealth to a neighbouring island; thus mocking that hope of plunder, which had sustained so long the courage of the assailants. The conquest of Egypt, which soon succeeded the capture of Tyre, might seem to be an isolated event unconnected with the destinies of that city. However, the same prophet assures us that the spoils of Egypt were given to Nabuchodonosor, by the Almighty, as a reward for his unrequited services in the destruction of Tyre.

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: the land of Egypt shall become a desert and a wilderness: and they shall know that I am the Lord: because thou hast said: the river is mine, and I made it. Therefore, behold I come against thee, and thy rivers: and I will make the land of Egypt utterly desolate, and wasted by the sword from the tower of Syene, even to the borders of Ethiopia... And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the lands that are desolate, and the cities thereof in the midst of the cities that are destroyed... And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. For thus saith the Lord God: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the people among whom they have been scattered. And I will bring back the captivity of Egypt, and will place them... in the land of their nativity, and they shall be there a low kingdom. And it came to pass... That the word of the Lord came to me saying: Son of man, Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon, hath made his army to undergo hard service against

\* Joseph. Antiq. lib. x. c. 11.

Tyre: every head was made bald and every shoulder was peeled. And there hath been no reward given him, nor his army for Tyre, for the services that he rendered me against it. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Behold I will set Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon in the land of Egypt: and he shall take her multitude, and take the booty thereof for a prey, and rifle the spoils thereof: and it shall be wages for his army, and for the service that he hath done me against it: I have given him the land of Egypt, because he hath laboured for me, saith the Lord God.”\*

The calamities which the prophet details at full length through the two subsequent chapters, were all literally realised in the sufferings of Egypt. While we read in those sufferings, the surest attestation of the truth of his predictions, they forcibly impress upon our minds, a striking illustration of the providence which directs the counsels of the Almighty. To the profane, the rise and fall of nations may appear to be the natural effect of the wisdom or folly of their rulers. Their victories may be ascribed to superior discipline or valour; and their defeats to some unfortunate circumstances that are called the chances of war. But we learn from the inspired writings, that God ruleth the counsels of kings, and determines the fate of empires. Statesmen may gravely deliberate on the measures that will best promote the public happiness: without the sanction of the Almighty, they are but the deliberations of folly. He thwarts in a moment the best concerted enterprise, and sports with the deep-laid resolves of human sagacity. Thus the ruin of Tyre, of Ninive, and Egypt were the effect of the counsels of the Almighty; and the wisdom of kings and the valour of armies were only the instruments of his decrees. Ninive, now the object of God’s vengeance, is devoted to destruction, and this end is accomplished by the unexpected union of two nations hitherto divided.† The iniquity of Tyre, fills up the

\* Ezech. xxix. 8, &c.

† See before, p. 96

measure of God's forbearance, and Nabuchodonosor is chosen to execute the divine will. The riches that might reward the toils of the soldiers, are transferred to another place by the active diligence of the citizens. Egypt is then doomed to destruction, and the sufferings which are inflicted for her iniquities, become at the same time the just reward of the services of Nabuchodonosor. Nor did Babylon escape the same just retribution. She too was fated to endure the evils which she inflicted. Her wealth attracted the ambition, and rewarded the virtues of Cyrus: and thus we behold, that in the revolutions of the world, the punishment of the iniquities of one nation, becomes the just recompense of the virtues of another.

The chastisement of the capital of Chaldea is distinctly announced among the prophecies of Isaias, in the vision which was seen by the son of Amos concerning the burden of Babylon. "Upon the dark mountain lift ye up a banner, exalt the voice, lift up the hand, and let the rulers go into the gates. I have commanded my sanctified ones, and have called my strong ones in my wrath, them that rejoice in my glory. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, as it were of many people, the noise of the sound of kings, of nations gathered together: the Lord of Hosts hath given charge to the troops of war, to them that come from a country afar off, from the end of heaven: the Lord and the instruments of his wrath to destroy the whole land. Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is near; it shall come as a destruction from the Lord. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every heart of man shall melt. Every one that shall be found shall be slain: and every one that shall come to their aid shall fall by the sword. Behold I will stir up the Medes against them, who shall not seek silver, nor desire gold: But with their arrows they shall kill the children, and shall have no pity upon the sucklings of the womb, and their eye shall not spare their sons. And that Babylon, glorious among kingdoms, the famous pride of the Chaldeans, shall be even

as the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha: it shall no more be inhabited for ever, and it shall not be founded unto generation and generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch his tents there, nor shall shepherds rest there. But wild beasts shall rest there, and their houses shall be filled with serpents, and ostriches shall dwell there, and the hairy ones shall dance there: And owls shall answer one another there in the houses thereof, and serpents in the temples of pleasure.”\*

In this passage, the future destruction of Babylon is clearly described. The prophecy of Jeremias is still more circumstantial: “O thou that dwellest upon many waters, rich in treasures, thy end is come for thy entire destruction. The valiant men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have dwelt in holds: their strength hath failed, and they are become as women: her dwelling places are burnt, her bars are broken. . . . In their heat I will set them drink: and I will make them drunk, that they may slumber and sleep an everlasting sleep and awake no more, saith the Lord. . . . The sea is come up over Babylon, she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. . . . The noise of a cry from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans. Because the Lord hath laid Babylon waste, and destroyed out of her the great voice: and their waves shall roar like many waters: their voice hath made a noise. . . . And I will make her princes drunk, and her wise men, and her captains, and her rulers, and her valiant men; and they shall sleep an everlasting sleep, and shall awake no more, saith the King whose name is Lord of hosts.”†

I shall not fatigue the patience, nor detain the attention of the reader, by farther quotation; never was event more clearly or circumstantially foretold than the fall of Babylon; and never was event more circumstantially or awfully accomplished. Independently of

\* Isaias, xiii.

† Jerem. li.

the testimony furnished by the Jewish writers, Xenophon\* will attest the veracity of Jeremias. The narrative of the Greek historian might be almost considered a transcript of the Jewish prophet; so minute is the correspondence between the event and its prediction. The Euphrates on which the Babylonians depended for their security became the occasion of their destruction. Its waters were diverted into another channel: Cyrus and his army availing themselves of the confusion that was occasioned by the drunken festival of Baltassar, entered the city by the bed of the river, now rendered fordable; and surprised its inhabitants, who were all sunk in the most fatal security. At the moment when the blasphemous insanity of its king was at its height, he was seized by the divine vengeance; and he and his wicked courtiers expiated, in punishment as signal as it was unexpected, the frantic indignities which they were offering to the God of Israel. Babylon was accordingly levelled with the dust; and its surviving inhabitants were attracted to the neighbouring city of Ctesiphon, which was founded by the successors of Cyrus.†

Alexander, it is said, contemplated to restore the Euphrates to the channel from which Cyrus had diverted it, and to make Babylon the seat of his empire. But a premature death defeated his project, and, like the abortive attempt of Julian, sealed the truth of the prophecy. From the night of its capture by Cyrus the malediction of heaven was visible on the city of Babylon. A portion of it was destroyed by the Persians, and the remainder was either wasted by time or languished under the neglect of the Macedonian kings, who founded the city of Seleucia, which soon eclipsed the fame of the ancient capital.‡ Consigned to ruin and decay, its existence has not only disappeared, but its site is uncertain; and the spot where once stood the

\* Cyroped. l. vii.

‡ Strab. l. xvi.

† S. Hieron. in c. xiii. Isai. Plin. l. vi. c. 26.

proud and imperial Babylon is a problem which has long exercised in vain, and is still likely to elude the inquiries of the curious traveller.

If I have observed, that even to those who preceded the coming of the Redeemer, the prophecies which announced that event were not useless : those I have just transcribed at some length will show the force and justness of the observation. Those intermediate predictions, so clearly uttered and so literally verified, contributed to keep alive the faith and worship of successive generations. The accomplishment of one prophecy sustained the credit of others more remote ; the fulfilment of those added fresh links to the chain, and gave new support to their authority ; and thus they account for a phenomenon, otherwise inexplicable—the existence and preservation of the true religion, amidst the general prevalence of Polytheism.

On comparing the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, I have been struck by the difference that is discernible between those that are exclusively confined to the internal state of Judea, and those that announced the fortunes of other nations. In the latter, there is a distinctness almost bordering on the perspicuity of history. In the former, there is a studied mixture of light and shade, half revealing the future event, but throwing a veil over its circumstances which time alone could remove.

The events of which the agents were not likely to be influenced by the authority of the prophets, were generally laid open to their view in cloudless effulgence. Hence, the perspicuity of these predictions which denounced the fall of Ninive and Babylon ; of which, those were the instruments by whom these predictions were unknown or disregarded. When the fortunes of Judea depended on the agency of foreigners, they were generally foretold with a similar perspicuity, for a similar reason. But when the events were national, and brought about through the instrumentality of national

agents then they were more darkly shadowed, lest the brightness of the prediction should defeat its own accomplishment. This one reflection will account for the mixture of evidence and obscurity that is alternately diffused over some of the prophetic writings. In vain will it be concluded from this obscurity, that they are flexible to different events. Although ingenuity may be exhausted in twisting the meaning of a prophecy to some other fact, yet some striking difference will be still discoverable, which will show the unfitness of the application. Besides, should one solitary prediction be thus disposed of by ascribing it to accident; when we behold a number of unconnected prophecies, delivered at different periods, and all bearing an application to the same event, it is impossible to resist the conviction, that they were dictated by an intelligence superior to that of man.

As to the obscurity, then, on which the enemies of religion seemed to fasten, it may be remarked, that the present argument would be weakened, if the prophecies by which an event is foretold were as clear as the history in which it is described. If they had been delivered in clear, precise, and intelligible terms, it might be said that the agents, who were interested in their accomplishment, were guided by the predictions. Nay, this has been said, and such has been the blasphemous hardihood of some infidels, as to assert (I blush to transcribe the passage), that Christ brought on his own death by preconcerted measures studiously accommodated to the ancient prophecies, that his disciples might triumphantly appeal to their fulfilment. How singular then is the inconsistency of our adversaries: if prophecy be obscure, that obscurity becomes a convenient cloak to conceal the shame of failure; and if it be clear, that clearness furnishes an impostor with a clue to bring on its fulfilment by a train of the most refined and laboured adaptation. The most favourable form of prophecy, then, and that which is best adapted to obviate cavil, and secure its own accomplishment, is that by

which in its announcement, it is unintelligible in some circumstances, and in its fulfilment so clear as to convince us that these circumstances were fully involved.

Besides those prophecies which have a direct and primary reference to the Christian religion, there are others still more mysterious and obscure, under which the chief features of that religion are represented. Of these, the direct and literal meaning is referable to some other event; but under the cover of their natural import is often conveyed a deeper meaning, obviously intended to apply to the new dispensation. There are few of the striking events of the Old Testament in which we do not contemplate an easy and natural accommodation to the principal mysteries of the Church. Although an active ingenuity unrestrained by discretion may sometimes have abused this argument, yet there is, in the analogy between the Jewish and Christian religion, sufficient foundation for the mystical resemblance.

From the locality of its rites and ordinances, we have been led to the just conclusion, that the Jewish religion was but temporary, and preparatory to another. Hence, the necessity of attending to this twofold relation of the prophecies; as well to weaken the obstinate attachment by which the Jew is wedded to the more flattering interpretation, as to fortify the faith of the Christian by the argument furnished by the accumulation and obvious bearing of such circumstantial predictions. Yet, the premature disclosure of the nature of the Christian religion might have defeated God's intermediate purpose, which was to train the Jews by a long course of discipline, preparatory to the new dispensation. As their own was a religion encumbered with a tiresome ritual; had they a clear foresight of that covenant, founded on better promises, they might perhaps have shaken off their subjection to the law, before the fulness of time was to bring about their deliverance from its bondage. While they were, therefore, through the

direct prophecies, informed of the establishment of a new religion, the nature of that religion was cautiously conveyed under the history of their own economy.

The supposition of the history of the Jews being the vehicle through which the mysteries of the new religion are conveyed is not fanciful. It is founded on a practice familiar with profane, as well as sacred writers, of imparting some maxims of deep moral import through the medium of an apologue. Of this popular form of instruction we have a beautiful example in the speech of Joatham to the men of Sichem, in which, under the fable of the trees and the thorn, he upbraids the Sichimites for having chosen Abimelech to be their king.\* As the Almighty therefore wished to convey to the Jews some knowledge of the future mysteries of his Church, a great portion of the Old Testament becomes one continued apologue, in which, through the historical narrative, there runs an under-current of secondary import, bearing a reference to those mysteries. Sometimes it rises to the surface and becomes discernible to every reader; and again, it disappears and flows in a deeper channel. These alternations of the primary or historical, and the secondary or allegorical images, are so irregular, that after appearing together with an even and equable light, either becomes suddenly involved, and as suddenly breaks out with new splendour from the cloud which concealed it. To ascertain exactly where either sense is interrupted is impossible, as the prophets sometimes ascend from the one to the other, by slow and imperceptible gradations, and again soar to the sublimest subject with the most abrupt rapidity of transition. Of this class of composition, are evidently many of the psalms, in which the Royal Prophet passes from the temporal felicity of Judea under Solomon to the more exalted happiness of the Church under Christ. Such quick and unconnected transitions

\* Judg. ix.

must necessarily produce obscurity. In compositions of ordinary elevation, our knowledge or our fancy may fill up the vacant intervals by the connecting links. But when the flight is high and rapid, the most active fancy is left to toil in unavailing exertion. And when the descriptions become so magnificent that the most audacious exaggeration could not justify them as applied to mortals, it is natural to transfer them to the Messiah.

It must be confessed, however, that some discredit has been brought on the argument furnished by the mystic resemblance between the Old and New Testament, by the idle fancies of some writers who have laid out their minds on the discovery of occult comparisons which probably never were intended. But the abuse of an argument can never affect its legitimate application; nor ought we to reject the obvious and designed analogy between the paschal lamb and the Eucharist; or between Isaac and our Redeemer, both bearing the wood on which they were destined to become victims, because we may smile at the solemn trifling of those who construct diagrams and acrostics from the letters of the Old Testament, in which they fancy they discover the profoundest mysteries. Even the number of fanciful, proves the original existence of real and purposed resemblances: else, were it a barren field, it never would have invited or occupied such a crowd of mystics, who hoped, by their own industry, to improve on the labours of their predecessors. To impress this truth more forcibly on the mind of the reader, let the most ingenious exhaust their attention in discovering those striking analogies between the Christian religion and any other religious or political system of the Pagan world; or again, between the Jewish religion and any system of imposture that has appeared since that time, and they will soon discover that the barrenness of the subject repels their most active exertions. Casual analogies may be discovered between things the most dissimilar; and these of course may be multiplied in proportion to the

stock of materials and fertility of the imagination. But whoever thought of comparing such casual coincidences with the regular and continuous likeness between two religions resembling each other, not only in the outline, but in the minutest parts of the picture? That such analogies depend mostly on the observer is manifest from the ridicule which he excites if they are forced; or the admiration if they are natural. Hence, it is to the creation of the artist, rather than to the materials of the *Æneid*, that we trace the picture of Christ's life which has been fashioned out of that poem. This is so evident, that notwithstanding our knowledge that the materials of the *Æneid* are susceptible of such a combination, we feel that perhaps not another could mould them to a similar form. This observation evidently proves the absence of the secondary design in the original writer, and that such a picture is entirely owing to the most refined habits of allusion, and the most laboured process of accommodation. Not so with the analogy between the Old and New Testament; all the parts so exactly correspond with each other, that without the aid of any previous admonition, one would immediately discover the resemblance; and could not but consider the Old Testament as a mirror, in which he dimly beholds the feeble but faithful image of the Christian dispensation.

However, it is not on these mystical prophecies that we rest the chief force of our argument, but on those clearer and more unequivocal predictions, that have a direct and necessary reference to the Christian religion. While the Jews languished in captivity under the Eastern despots, and sighed for their return to their own country, the promises of a Redeemer were frequently mixed up with the assurances of their deliverance. Lest, however, they should confound their redemption from sin with their freedom from the bondage of Babylon, and forget those promises which were so explicitly made in the early part of their history, their attention is again more powerfully turned

to the hope of the Messiah, and the circumstance of his coming more fully unfolded. Towards the close of the seventy years, which God had fixed for the punishment of his people, Daniel offered up his fervent supplication to heaven not to protract the term, which the prophets had assigned for the liberation of the children of Juda. His prayers were interrupted by an apparition of the angel Gabriel, who thus consoled his affliction, by renewing the assurance and fixing the time, of the coming of the Redeemer:—"O Daniel, I am now come forth to teach thee, that thou mightest understand. From the beginning of thy prayers the word came forth: and I am come to show it to thee, because thou art a man of desires: therefore do thou mark the word and understand the vision. Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, that transgression may be finished; and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought; and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled; and the Saint of Saints may be anointed. Know thou, therefore, and take notice: that from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ the prince, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: and the streets shall be built again and the walls in straitness of times. And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain: and the people that shall deny him shall not be his. And a people with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. And he shall confirm the covenant with many in one week, and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and to the end."\*

Though Jacob had connected the coming of the

\* Dan. ix, 22, et seqq.

Messiah with the continuation of the sceptre in the tribe of Juda, still the time was indefinite; and it was reserved for Daniel to determine with chronological precision the period of his arrival. Scarce are the Jews returned from Babylon, when they are again reminded of the Redeemer. Afflicted at the melancholy contrast between the second temple and that of Solomon, whose splendour was heightened in the venerable tradition of the ancients, the people are disheartened. But the Almighty raises their drooping hopes, by the ministry of Aggeus, who reveals the future glories of the temple of Zorobabel, which shall eclipse the splendour of the temple of Solomon. "Yet one little while," says the prophet,\* "and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea and the dry land. And I will move all nations: and the desired of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory; saith the Lord of Hosts . . . great shall be the glory of this last house, more than that of the first, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The various prophecies that were hitherto uttered, sufficiently marked the future character of the Messiah; the various events which occurred during the Jewish history, sufficiently verified the prophetic predictions. The dispersion of the Jews gradually diffused some faint notions of their religion; and the expectation of a deliverer was mysteriously rumoured among the nations of the earth.† The end of the prophetic ministry being thus fulfilled, its functions ceased, and all looked forward with excited hope to the period of its accomplishment. It only yet remained to announce the precursor, who was to usher into the world the mighty personage who was so long and so ardently expected. "Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently, the Lord whom you seek, and the Angel of the Testament,

\* Agg. ii.

† Suet. in Vespas. Tacit. Hist. lib. v. &amp;c.

whom you desire, shall come to his temple.”\* With this important announcement, the last of the prophets closed the chain of prophecy which stretched back to the earliest period of the world; and the accents which preceded the utter extinction of the prophetic ministry expired on the lips of Malachy.

\* Malach. iii. 1.

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## CHAPTER V.

## THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The fulfilment of the prophecy of Jacob.—Nativity of the Redeemer.—Coincidence of the Prophets and the Evangelists, in describing the principal circumstances of his birth, miracles, and death.—Descent of the Holy Ghost.—First preaching of the Gospel.—Vision of St. Peter.—Conversion and labours of St. Paul.—Authenticity of the apostolic writings.—The fact of the Resurrection—not affected by the incredulity of the Jews, nor the silence of pagan writers.—Christ's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem—its accomplishment.—Project and failure of rebuilding the Jewish Temple.

FROM the extinction of the prophetic ministry to the full accomplishment of the great prediction, more than three centuries elapsed; and in the midst of the universal stillness, undisturbed by the sound of prophecy or war, the Redeemer of the world descends upon earth, to realise the expectation of the nations. After the return of the Jews from captivity, the sons of Mathathias long protected the freedom of their country and their religion against the impious attacks of the kings of Syria. But after the death of Jonathan and Simon, the independence of the Jewish nation gradually declined, and the sceptre, which fell out of the feeble hands of the Asmonean princes, and passed into those of a stranger of Idumea, revealed the full accomplishment of the prophecy of Jacob.

John the Baptist—the angel,\* who was to be his precursor, announced, in the wilderness, the coming of the Messiah. And in the mysterious birth of the Son of Mary,† Bethlehem was illustrated beyond all the cities of Palestine. The wise men of the East were attracted to Bethlehem by the splendid appearance of the star of Jacob; and offered the choicest gifts of Saba and Arabia, as a homage to the King of the Jews.‡ Herod,

\* Isaias, xl. 3; Malach. iii. 1; Matt. xi. 10; Mark, i. ii.

† Isaias, vii. 14; Luke, i. 27.

‡ Isaias, lx. 6; Matt. ii. 1; et seqq.

who apprehended that the reign of the Messiah would interfere with his own usurped authority, made the most diligent inquiries about the birth of the Child; concealing his insidious purpose of destroying it, under the pretence of doing it homage; but the Almighty baffled his iniquitous designs. The wise men returned into their own country, by another way; and the Child was providentially withdrawn from the cruelty of Herod. Disappointed in his hope of singling out the devoted victim of his vengeance, he consigns to indiscriminate slaughter, all the infants under two years; and fills Rama\* with the lamentations of mothers, who wept over their murdered children, and would receive no consolation. When the rage of the tyrant was spent in unavailing cruelty, and the apprehension of any future danger removed by his death, the Almighty brought back his Son from Egypt, through the ministry of an angel.† After the term prescribed by the law had elapsed, the Blessed Virgin went up to Jerusalem to observe the rite of purification, and present her offering in the temple; where the holy Simeon, taking it in his arms, poured out his soul in ecstasy, because his eyes had seen the salvation of Israel.‡ After complying with the precepts of the law, Mary and her spouse returned, with Jesus, to their native city of Nazareth, where he passed the greater part of his life in subjection to his mother and reputed father;§ and meditated on that plan of redemption which he was soon to accomplish in favour of mankind. In the solitude of the country, far removed from the noise and contention of the world, he led a retired and hidden life; nor are we acquainted with the peculiar features of the character of the Man-God, until the commencement of his mission, which was ushered in with the most solemn attestation of heaven. Scarce did Jesus ascend from the stream of the Jordan, where he had been baptized by John,

\* Jerem, xxxi. 15; Matt. ii. 16.

† Luke, ii. 28.

+ Matt. ii. 19, 20.

§ Matt. ii. 23; Luke, ii. 51; Jud. xiii. 5-7.

when the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended in the mild form of a dove, on Him\* who was to bring consolation to the bruised in spirit and freedom to those who were in captivity. Filled with the ample Spirit of his Father, which rested on him, invested with his commission, which spoke from the clouds and bore testimony of him, Jesus opened that series of wonders which marked his benevolent career during the space of three years. He condescended to honour the marriage feast of Cana with his presence; and, at the request of his blessed mother, performed his first miracle, by converting water into wine.† Many of his miracles are recorded by the Evangelists. The enumeration of them all, they confess, would mock the power of utterance. Sometimes a few are mentioned, and the circumstances which attended them are detailed with minute precision. But more frequently they are recorded in general terms, without specifying their number, or the mode of their operation. Should the biographer of our Redeemer's life attempt to collect a methodical account of the miracles he wrought, the words by which the Evangelist concludes his narrative, should teach him how fruitless and impracticable would be such a design.‡ I shall, therefore, only exhibit an outline of those stupendous wonders which followed the footsteps of our Redeemer; and by telling those authentic facts in the language of the prophets, as well as of the evangelists, they must derive additional splendour from the circumstance of their prediction.

While the holiness of his doctrine dissipated the spiritual blindness of the people, and brought light to those that sat in darkness,§ he was not unmindful of their temporal miseries. At the word of his mouth the blind saw, the dumb spoke, the deaf heard; and the lame, restored to agility and strength, bounded like the

\* Matt. iii. 16, 17; Isaias, lxi. 1.

† John, ii. et seqq.

‡ “But there are also many other things which Jesus did: which if they were written every one, the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written.”—John, xxi. 25.

§ Isaias, ix. 1, 2; Matt. iv. 16.

roe on the mountain.\* Multiplied by his benediction, five loaves and two fishes fed the thousands who followed him into the desert, hungering for the bread of life.† At one time he rebuked the waves of the sea, and they were still; and again, to the astonishment of his disciples, he walked on the bosom of its waters.‡ When the pressure of the multitude rendered it difficult to approach his divine person, virtue went out from him, and the touch of the hem of his garment cured the most inveterate diseases.§ There was no infirmity under which his benevolent virtue was not felt: all nature acknowledged the authority of her Creator; and in raising Lazarus from the tomb, even death itself was subjected to his dominion.|| He selected from the humblest class of the Jewish people, those who were to be the organs of his doctrine, and the depositaries of his authority. They, too, wrought miracles in the name of their divine master, exhibiting in their borrowed virtue the richness of that source from which it was derived.¶

The sanctity of his doctrine corresponded with the splendour of his miracles. Its mysterious sublimity subdued the pride of the understanding, while its salutary severity checked the disordered passions of the heart. The priests of the Jewish religion, alarmed at the ascendant which the Redeemer derived from the united influence of the sanctity of his life, the beauty of his doctrine and the splendour of his miracles, resolved to get rid of the dangerous individual, who threatened to annihilate all their influence. As they were determined on his condemnation,\*\* they easily devised matter of impeachment; and as the tenor of his whole life set the most malignant scrutiny at defiance, calumny was

\* Isaias, xxxv. 5, 6; Matt. xv. 30, 31.

† Psalm, xxxii. 18, 19; Luke, ix. 13 et seqq.

‡ Job, ix. 8; John, vi. 19.

§ Matt. ix. 21, 22; Mark, vi. 56.

|| Psalm, cii. 2 et seqq.; John, xi. 43, 44.

¶ Psalm, lxxvii. 36; Mark, iii. 15; Luke, x. 17.

\*\* John, xi. 46 et seqq.; Luke, xx. 19; Matt. xxvi. 4.

resorted to. Yet the lengthened and iniquitous process of his condemnation, and the circumstances of his death, only attested more forcibly the splendour of his divinity. On the Sabbath which preceded his crucifixion, he rode in triumph into the city, which was ere long to witness the spectacle of his suffering, and was hailed with the loudest enthusiasm, by those who soon solicited his condemnation.\* Denied by one of his Apostles, betrayed by another, and abandoned by all, he endured with patient meekness the reproaches and insults that were mercilessly heaped upon him.† The tranquil and intrepid fortitude with which he met the approach of his last hour, together with the forgiveness which he implored for his persecutors, displayed a character more than human; and exhibited a miracle of virtue, to which philosophy could never form the disciples of her school.

Every circumstance in the melancholy tragedy fulfilled some ancient prediction. When the last act was consummated; and in that moment when he appeared abandoned by all, his power became most manifest. The veil of the temple was rent, the earth shook, the sun was darkened; the dead arose from their sepulchres, and stalked in mid-day through the streets of the city; and nature sympathized in agony with the sufferings of her God. But the divinity which was shrouded under the pall of death, soon broke forth in the splendour of his resurrection: and the lion of Juda girt with might, and clothed in immortality, awoke from the slumbers, and conquered the terrors of the tomb. Encompassed with the trophies which he had redeemed from captivity, he returns in triumph to his Father, from whom he had descended, and takes possession of that glory which his victories had won.

Such is a brief epitome of our Redeemer's life, as predicted by the ancient prophets, and sketched by the evangelists.

\* Isaias, lxii. 11; Matt. xxi.

† See the history of the passion in each of the evangelists. Isaias, liii. 7.

After Christ's ascension, the Apostles waited for the fulfilment of that promise which he had made of sending down the Holy Ghost.\* The promise was accordingly fulfilled; and no sooner did the divine spirit take possession of their hearts, than they went forth announcing the mighty wonders of which they themselves had been witnesses.† Burning with zeal, and careless of danger, they fearlessly came forward before the men from whose power, but a few days before, they had shrunk in confusion, and boldly reproached them with having put to death the Son of God. The conversion of three thousand was the first fruit of the preaching of St. Peter. Such was the ample effusion of the spirit that was poured upon the apostles, that the unbelievers, unable to comprehend it, ascribed it to intoxication; but St. Peter refuted the charge by an appropriate application of the prophecy of Joel; and converted the calumny into a new attestation of the divinity of his mission. The authority which they proved by reference to the Jewish prophets, they farther confirmed by striking and stupendous miracles. A man who was lame from his mother's womb, was restored to strength and soundness by St. Peter.‡ The evidence of the miracle wrought many conversions among the people, and spread terror and alarm among the princes and ancients of the city. In vain did they concert measures to check its publicity, or intimidate into silence those by whose ministry it was wrought. Peter and John were summoned before the assembly and charged not to teach in the name of Jesus.§ But the calm and dignified intrepidity of the prince of the apostles, who urged the necessity of obeying God rather than man, disconcerted the iniquitous designs of the Jewish priesthood. Again they were threatened, and again the threats were disregarded. Peter was cast into prison, but the angel of the Lord descending into the dungeon, unbarred its

\* John, xvi. 16, &c.; Acts, i. 6.

† Acts, iii. 1, et seqq.

‡ Acts, ii.

§ Ibid. iv. 18.

doors, and led him forth from his confinement.\* After baffling the wicked plans of the Jewish authorities, and converting multitudes of the people in the city where Christ was lately crucified, the apostles full of the holy Spirit, applied to themselves the inspired language of the royal prophet: "Why did the Gentiles rage and the people meditate vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord, and against his Christ."†

Scarce was the faith planted in Jerusalem, when it was diffused, by the zeal of its preachers, among the different cities of Palestine. Unrestrained, however, by any partiality for a particular country, they carried the tidings of the Gospel to the Gentile world. Peter was instructed by a heavenly vision,‡ to break down the wall of separation which had kept the Jews and Gentiles hitherto asunder; and by the baptism of Cornelius invited the latter into the Church. The conversion of Cornelius was followed by a number of Pagan proselytes, who abandoned their ancient superstition, to embrace the religion of Christ, whose followers became so numerous in the ancient capital of Syria as to receive there the name of Christians.§ Among those whose fiery zeal strove to retard the progress of the Gospel, was Saul, a native of Tarsus, who deemed it a merit to assist those who put Stephen to death; and whose miraculous conversion was probably owing to the prayers of the first martyr. The fury with which he hitherto laboured to overturn the infant Church was now converted into the most ardent zeal for its support.|| Incredible were the fatigues which this apostle sustained in the propagation of the Christian religion. Conscious of the inestimable grace which the Almighty had conferred upon him, by enlightening his mind with the truths of the Gospel, his heart burned with the most ardent desire to communicate the same happiness to

\* Acts, xii. 7, et seqq.

‡ Acts, x.

† Ibid. iv. 25, et seqq.; Psalm, ii.

‡ Acts, xi. 26.

|| Ibid. ix.

mankind. His success corresponded with his disinterested fervour. Not content with preaching the Gospel in Palestine and Asia Minor, he directed his course to the West, and preached to the city of Troas, Ephesus, Miletus, and the other cities of Ionia. The success of his labours among the Ionian Greeks prompted him to penetrate into the parent country. There was scarce a portion of Greece that was not visited by his labours. Besides Cyprus, Crete, and other islands, he preached in Laconia and Corinth, the extreme territories of the Peloponnesus. Again, he preached in the northern districts of Macedon, where he founded the Church of Philippi and Thessalonica.\* Attica, too, was visited by the apostle, who confounded the wisdom of Athens, and instructed its philosophers in the worship of the unknown God."† Accused by the Jews of sedition, who mistook hatred of the apostle for zeal for their religion, he pleads his cause before Felix; and makes the voluptuous Pagan tremble with the terrors of the Gospel.‡ Again, he announces to Agrippa and his queen the history of his life and of his conversion, and almost persuades the king to become a Christian.§ Having urged the privilege of a Roman citizen, and appealed to Cæsar to escape the treachery of the Jews, and the injustice of the governor,|| he repairs to Rome, and multiplies the number of converts to the faith; and strengthens those whom he had already converted, by the epistles which he addresses to the distant churches.

Reserving for another occasion, a fuller relation of what the apostles suffered and achieved in propagating Christianity, I shall here stop to make some reflections on the authenticity of the monuments which they have transmitted to us, and on the truth of the facts which those monuments contain. Of all the ancient records that have reached us, none have been subjected to a severer critical ordeal than those of the evangelists and

‡ Ibid. xxiv.

\* Acts, xvii.

§ Ibid. xxvi.

† Ibid. 22, et seqq.

|| Ibid. xxv. 9, et seqq.

apostles. Yet, the severity of the process, instead of injuring their credit, has established more triumphantly their claims to authenticity. All, Christians as well as Pagans,—and, among the former, heretics as well as Catholics, acknowledged the books of the New Testament to be the genuine productions of those whose names they bore. The only controversy turned on the value and appropriation of this legacy; the proud and contemptuous Pagans, deeming it unworthy of the source from whence it was supposed to be derived; while the Christians warmly contended for its divine authority and its legitimate and exclusive possession. In the controversial war which then agitated the Christian Church, no circumstance would have been omitted which could have thrown the suspicion of fabrication on these productions; and, since they satisfied the doubts of those inquisitive times, we may safely conclude, that the arguments in support of their authority were demonstrative.

This inference, however, is not founded on presumption, since we have the positive testimonies of the early fathers, Justin, Origen, and Tertullian, that the Christians, in their public assemblies, were in the habit of reading the Gospels, which breathed the language of the apostles, and were marked with the impression of their character. Yes, the likeness of the apostles was yet too strong and lively in the hearts of the faithful, to be erased by counterfeit transcripts; nor would they have endured the impudence of the cheat, who should attempt to obtrude a fictitious copy, while the living originals could still reveal the clumsy imposture. Ere the apostles disappeared, their pictures were multiplied in various copies of their own productions, faithfully reflecting, in strong relief, the mild and persuasive charity of St. John; the ardent, and too confident attachment of St. Peter; and the lofty and unconquerable soul of St. Paul, which would yield only to the Omnipotent Spirit that prostrated him to the ground, on his way to Damascus.

The very selection of the topics, and the minute fidelity of the descriptions, must fortify our conviction still more, that the books of the New Testament were written in the infancy of the Christian era. In these records frequent reference is made to the political state of Judea, and its dependence on the Roman government. Its religious festivals and customs are circumstantially described: yet in such a wide field, where the vigilance of criticism could easily detect any departure from historical accuracy, the authors of the New Testament have not been found to stray into any errors. If, to this circumstance, we add that an angry controversy then raged among the converts from the Jewish to the Christian religion, about the observance of the Mosaic rites, on which St. Paul delivered his instructions,\* and that the letters which bear his name make no allusion to the destruction of the Jewish people, we must conclude that these letters were written before that event, since a more recent writer would not have wasted his time in superfluous reference to ancient prophecy, while the actual abolition of these ceremonies, in the ruin of the Synagogue, would convey to the minds of all a more intelligible refutation.

To illustrate more strikingly the force of these observations, let us suppose that some impostor attempted to introduce into the Churches of Corinth or of Rome either forged or corrupted letters, in the name of St. Paul. He tells the Corinthians of the labours he underwent for their conversion, and then boldly reproaches them with their pride and their divisions.† If they had not heard until that moment of those epistles, (and they could not be ignorant of writings which came home to their nearest interests), it is utterly at variance with every principle of human nature, that they should have conspired to propagate a fraud so insulting to their own characters. Never would they endure that

\* See his Epistle to the Galatians, which frequently turns on the abolition of the ceremonial law.

† See the first six chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

a bold impostor should arraign their vices with impunity, by covering the deceit under the garb of an inspired apostle. Such are not the usual features of fraud. It is generally found to be of a more accommodating character. We are not unacquainted with the restless and proverbial levity of the Greeks, or that they treated those with little ceremony, who assumed the freedom of reproofing their vices. The most celebrated of their sages and patriots, Aristides, Militades, and Themistocles, rose and fell,—now the creatures, next the victims, of successive factions; nor did Socrates himself escape their cruelty. We cannot, therefore, suppose that on this occasion their prejudices would have been so far subdued, as to revere as an apostle the memory of an intrepid impostor, who had ridiculed their philosophy, and reproached them with crimes of incest, of schism, of pride, and of sacrilege.

The same feelings of reverence, which contributed to preserve those precious relics of the apostles, must likewise have watched over their integrity, to protect them from adulteration. Yet, the reverence of the first Christians was neither blind nor indiscriminate. They were as anxious to reject every false, as they were to guard every genuine record. Tertullian assures us that a priest was deposed by the just severity of the primitive Church, for having, from mistaken zeal, attempted to exaggerate the relation of the sufferings and merits of St. Paul. Thus the same principle of reverence, though operating in a different way, animated the Christians in punishing those, whose pious frauds would have disfigured the relation of the acts of the apostles, and in cheerfully laying down their own lives to protect the genuine history. If, therefore, the monuments which have preserved the chief events connected with the Christian religion, be authentic, its truth must entirely depend on the veracity of its founders. We shall try the veracity of their authors by the usual and received standard of historical certainty.

We may venture to assert there are no works

extant, invested with half the splendid characters of truth which are conspicuous in the books of the New Testament. In some instances, the tried probity of the historian gives currency to facts, in their own nature doubtful or unimportant; and in others, the striking nature of the events bids defiance to the distortion of the most uncandid historian. What then ought to be the impression, when we discover a union of those qualities—a candour unsullied by the least suspicion of fraud on the one hand, and events too momentous to be affected by such a suspicion, on the other. The number of the witnesses, who attest Christ's miracles; the tone of artless and unaffected candour, which runs through the entire of their narrative; their cold and unimpassioned manner in describing sufferings the most touching, and prodigies the most stupendous; their uniform agreement in the principal events which they relate, and their frank confession of their own jealousies and weakness, furnish a body of evidence in favour of their moral integrity, unexampled in any historical composition.

The miracles which they record are not of the suspicious nature, which have been put forward for the purposes of illusion. Unlike those nocturnal conferences, which were said to be held with invisible beings at Mecca or at Rome,\*—one time with an angel, and at another with a nymph, but all equally shrinking from the light of criticism; the miracles recorded by the apostles were facts of a public and palpable nature, wrought in open day, in the midst of crowded assemblies; nay, in the very presence of Christ's enemies, who, unable to deny their existence, were driven to the desperate subterfuge of controverting the divinity of the power that achieved them. Christ was not one of those who sought to shelter his actions from observation. No; he boldly courted

\* The pretended conferences of Mahomet with the Archangel Gabriel, and of Numa with Egeria.

inquiry, and rested his claims to credit on the wonders which he performed.\* While he walked through the land of Judea, diffusing virtue as he went, and leaving, as he retired, attestations of his divinity ; if any apprehension could have been felt, it was lest the regularity or the suspension of nature's laws should be viewed with equal indifference ; and lest the frequency of his miracles should wear away the feelings of astonishment which their splendour first awakened.

Of all these miracles, Christ's resurrection is the most important in its consequences, as it is that which is the most stupendous in its nature, and splendid in its evidences. It is that on which Christ himself chiefly rested the truth of his mission ; and, according to the apostle, it is the hinge on which Christianity revolves.† Hence, it pleased the Almighty to invest it with characters of truth proportioned to its importance ; and to array the enemies of our Redeemer among the most convincing, though reluctant, vouchers of his resurrection. It is also a link which so connects the previous and subsequent events of the Gospel history, that, with the fact of the resurrection to sustain them, they form a consistent and consecutive series ; and without it would exhibit only an incongruous mass, outraging all the laws of probability and reason. In the event of Christ's resurrection, the prediction of it is natural, since such a previous manifestation was calculated to support the courage of the apostles against the shock which they might receive from the humiliation of the cross, and throw new lustre over the event which was to confirm Christ's divinity. But, in the supposition that he has not risen, such a prediction becomes a mystery which no human ingenuity can explain. Now, that Christ foretold his own resurrection is confirmed by the conduct of the chief priests who guarded the sepulchre, in order to defeat his prediction : and that they had recourse to this extraordinary measure is, independently

\* John, x. 38, &c.

† 1 Cor. xv. 14, &c.

of the Gospel history, attested by the constant tradition of the Jews.

As the prediction, then, is a fact to which the enemies of Christianity bear testimony, we shall briefly connect with this fact the truth of the resurrection. In the doctrine which Christ had taught, there breathes a spirit of holy simplicity, which fully reveals to us an integrity of mind, utterly irreconcilable with any plan of deception. The purity of his life accorded strictly with the lofty character of the doctrine which he taught. The Redeemer alone, if we may except the Jewish lawgiver, has escaped those imputations of imposture which have been deservedly fastened on the authors of new religions; and it is his singular prerogative, that while they are reproached with fraud and artifice, Christ, even according to his enemies, was borne away by the enthusiasm of virtue. But the prediction of the resurrection, in any supposition but that of its truth, is as much at variance with innocent enthusiasm as it is with a studied plan of imposture. Could we suppose that Christ, as a philosopher, had solely by the influence of virtue, the charms of persuasion, and the ascendancy of genius, secured the homage of his followers; he never would have furnished them with means of dissolving that attachment which his virtues had created, and of defeating all the plans of conquest which he had meditated. Yet such would have been the prediction of his resurrection. By resting all his authority on such an event he furnished his friends as well as his enemies with an easy opportunity of ascertaining his claims to confidence. The attention of all would be directed to the fulfilment of the prophecy, and if it should not be accomplished, his cause was to meet no other fate than the desertion of his friends as well as the derision of his enemies. If he were not to appear to his disciples after the term of his prediction, they should naturally feel that they were hitherto the dupes of delusion; and should therefore be desirous of hiding their shame in secrecy and silence. A resolution of persevering in the

course into which they had been betrayed ; and of supporting, at the peril of their lives, the cause of a man by whom they had been deceived and disappointed, is a supposition which no ascertained principle of human conduct could possibly sustain. The language of an individual who should address such a proposal to his companions could not be considered in any other light than as a strain of the most galling and insulting irony.

However, let us suppose, in defiance of its absurdity, that the apostles would in such a case come to the desperate resolution of propagating a fraud, of which they themselves were the victims. Such a resolution would have been in vain, without means to accomplish it. But here again, the very prediction of Christ opposes an insurmountable obstacle ; since it suggested to the high priests and rulers of the Synagogue, the caution of guarding the sepulchre, equally against the machinations of fraud or the assaults of open violence. A cohort of Roman soldiers is stationed round the tomb, whose valour it was as vain to expect to subdue by force, as it was to surprise their vigilance by stratagem. Thus, the designs of the apostles are disconcerted by the precautions of their enemies ; and the prediction of Christ, which would have rendered the conception of the project absurd, would have equally defeated its execution. Yet, in spite of this accumulation of absurdities, if Christ had not risen, the apostles intrepidly come forward after a few days, and publish to the world the resurrection of Him who was crucified. Notwithstanding the folly and impiety of such a design, as well as the doubt of its accomplishment, twelve illiterate individuals interweave with a prodigious variety of circumstances, an artful tale of deceit and imposture, in which, however, no contradiction could hitherto be found. And then, with unconquerable intrepidity, they promulgate this tale to the world, while neither the inconstancy of human nature, nor the remorse of conscience ; nor the fear of infamy, nor the experience of

present suffering, nor the terrors of future vengeance, can awaken them to a sense of their guilt, in labouring to involve the world in a new idolatry. Away then with suppositions which are as weak as they are impious; and which, like vapours in the sunshine, disappear before the light of argument.

While the history of the Gospel, then, is a collection of facts, without order or consistency, in the supposition of the enemies of Christianity, it borrows strength and harmony from the resurrection; and in the effulgence of its evidence, all the other parts of the narrative become connected, lucid, and consecutive. In the holy women, we perceive the tender solicitude of their sex, anticipating the morning sun, to come and embalm the body of the Redeemer.\* In the apostles, on receiving the first tidings of his resurrection, we discover the quick alternations between joy and despondency, natural to men whose hopes were weakened by the scandals of the cross, but not utterly extinguished. Anxious to ascertain the fact by the evidence of their own senses, they did not hesitate to express their doubts of the story of the women, until Christ himself had dissipated their apprehensions.† One still remains obstinate and incredulous to the joint testimony of the rest. Christ condescends to cure his incredulity, by the palpable contact of his own body;‡ and the incredulity of Thomas, according to the wise remark of St. Gregory, becomes the strongest testimony of the resurrection, and the most effectual antidote against the incredulity of thousands.§ The strength of their conviction, accounts for the intrepidity of their conduct; and the zeal with which they laboured to impress conviction upon others, furnishes the most satisfactory evidence of the firmness of their own.

We can now well understand, why they who fled in terror and confusion at the prospect of the Cross, were

\* Mark, xvi. 1; Luke, xxiv. 1.

† John, xx, 24, &c.

‡ Luke, xxiv. 21, et seqq.

§ Hom. xxvi. in Evang.

indued with strength and confidence, after contemplating the glories of the resurrection. We are no longer surprised at the intrepidity with which they reprove the guilt of the rulers of the synagogue, and brave the most appalling terrors. The answer of St. Peter, when reprimanded for preaching in the name of Christ, appears dignified and natural, as he declares that God must be obeyed before men :\* and the interposition of Gamaliel to protect him from the vengeance of the Synagogue, is a farther attestation of the truth of the resurrection. In short, the more we pursue the Apostles through the career of their mission, the more we shall behold the truth of the resurrection developing itself at every step, since nothing but the faith of the resurrection of Christ, and the hope of sharing in its glory, could have sustained their courage against a pressure of suffering and persecution, under which human fortitude must have yielded.

In reply to such arguments in favour of the resurrection, and the miracles of Christ—arguments which are embodied with the greatest revolution which the world ever underwent—it is in vain that we shall be reminded of the incredulity of the Jews, or the silence of Pagan writers. To those who weigh not the evidences of the Christian religion, the incredulity of the Jewish people may appear a stumbling-block ; but he who studies attentively the mutual relations of both, will view in the obstinate unbelief of that people only a feature of their natural character. However, it must be remarked, that this question is much distorted by those who would assume the incredulity of an entire nation, of which thousands were converted to Christianity.† The number who were added to the faith by

\*Acts, iv. 19.

†Acts, ii. 41 ; iv. 4. Even during the lifetime of the Redeemer, several Jews of distinction were numbered among his disciples : such as Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews (John, iii. 1) ; Joseph of Arimathea, a respectable senator (Mark, xv. 43) ; Lazarus, and his family ; Zaccheus, chief of the Publicans, and a man of wealth (Luke, xix. 1) ; the prince of Capharnaum, and his whole house (John, iv. 46, &c.) ; Jairus, a prince of the Synagogue, whose daughter Christ had raised

the preaching of St. Peter, after the days of Pentecost, is a sufficient refutation of the supposition. But these are confounded with the Christians, who are all characterised under the invidious denomination of the interested party. If eight thousand more of this stiff-necked race had embraced the Christian religion, such a number would have considerably augmented the number of its witnesses. Yet the obstinacy of the infidel would not still be vanquished, since even those would merge in the mass of Christians, to whom he refuses credit. He forgets, that in the transition from the Jewish to the Christian religion, they gave the most solemn assurance of the sincerity of their conviction. The very instant they assume the name of Christian, they are in his eyes disentitled to belief. The very circumstance that should place their veracity above impeachment becomes, in his mind, the strongest motive of suspicion ; and thus, by admitting such a criterion of truth, the miracles of the Gospel ought to be considered doubtful, while there remained any of the Jewish nation, whose conversion was not achieved by their evidence. In the supposition that the facts recorded in the Gospel are not true, no possible motive can be assigned for the conversion of those who embraced the Christian religion : whereas, a variety of reasons might have operated on the unbelieving Jews to resist the evidence of Christ's miracles, and reject the truth of his doctrine.

Dazzled by the glowing images under which the prophets foretold the reign of the Messiah, they hoped he would be a powerful prince, who should avenge the wrongs and restore the freedom of his country ; and obliterate, by the splendour of his conquests, the disgrace of its recent disasters. These carnal prejudices, first suggested by a literal interpretation of the figurative language of the prophets, were transmitted through successive generations. Becoming stronger as they descended, they were cherished with all the fondness

from the dead (Luke, viii. 41) ; and many other of the chief men who believed in him, although they did not confess him openly, lest, as St. John remarks (xii. 42), the Pharisees should cast them out of the Synagogue.

of a family inheritance, until they were gradually blended with the most sacred traditions of the nation.\* In the ages which preceded the coming of the Redeemer, such an interpretation of the reign and the character of the Messiah might have been guiltless. It was enough for the Jewish people to have cherished a lively faith of future redemption: they were not required to comprehend the nature of the instrument by which that redemption was to have been accomplished. The seal was not as yet broken which had been fixed on the prophetic books, to guard their mysterious contents from a profane and premature disclosure. The obscurity, under which the prophets shadowed their meaning, was impenetrable to the human intellect; and it was reserved for the Sun of Justice alone to dissipate the darkness in which the mysteries of the ancient covenant were enveloped. Yet, ere the time for unfolding all the hidden splendours of the prophetic writings had arrived, many had presumed to unlock their treasures, without awaiting the divine guide that should lead the mysterious way. But their own ruin was the reward of their presumption. Relying on their unassisted reason, they sounded the depths of prophecy; and from the splendid images under which the glory of the Messiah was announced, they rashly drew the conclusion of a temporal Redeemer. Others, however, wisely hesitated, on comparing the features of greatness with which the Messiah was to be invested, with those of sorrow and humiliation with which they were contrasted. On contemplating the apparent discordance in the prophetic picture, they paused ere they would pronounce on the work of the divine artist, prudently concluding that they were not yet in a fit position to judge of its symmetry; and that the Almighty himself would one day

\* See the petition of the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Matt. xx. 21. The inveteracy of these prejudices is fully discovered in the hopes and doubts of the disciples journeying to Emmaus, Luke, xxiv. 21; and in the question proposed by the Apostles themselves to the Redeemer, before his ascension: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" Acts, i. 6.

The characters which the Rabbins have drawn for the Messiah, will be found in Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, lib. v. c. 11-13.

put it in a light, which would harmonize its colours and develop its perfections. Such were the conclusions drawn from the inspired writings, before Christ had reconciled, in his own person, their apparent contradictions. However, though numbers confessing their own weakness, piously resigned their belief into the hands of God himself; others assumed the office of deciding with certainty, and confidently expected in the Messiah a temporal deliverer. An interpretation so flattering to all the passions that sway the human heart, naturally prevailed, and was supported by all the wealth and power of the nation. Of those who maintained it, such as were distinguished for their rank, found their way into the Synagogue, and imported with them those opinions which were most flattering to their prejudices. Hence, as the belief of the people must be ever influenced by the force of authority and example, the general expectation of the Jews partook of that temporal cast, which it borrowed from those to whom their instruction was particularly entrusted.

The appearance of Christ, therefore, under the lowly character of a *man of sorrows*\* and affliction, at once revolted those prejudices, which had taken the strongest possession of the minds of the Jews, and which were as widely diffused, as they were deeply rooted. These prejudices, which were of ancient growth and general adoption, were fortified by other causes, more partial in their operation, and more recent in their introduction. In the decline of the Jewish republic, the rival sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees alternately swayed the public councils, and commanded the homage of the nation. Whatever might have been the source from which their peculiar opinions were derived (a question on which much learning has been expended), those opinions were adverse to the spirit of the Christian religion. Without involving myself or my readers in the ingenious conjectures of those, who

\* Isaiah, liii 3.

trace the origin of the Pharisees and Sadducees to the schools of Grecian philosophy, it will be sufficient to observe, that the tenets of the Pharisees bore a strong affinity to those of the Stoics; while the opinions of the Sadducees on the immortality of the soul resembled those of Epicureans.\* From the time that the Jews were dispersed over the east by Nabuchodonosor, a free intercourse arose between them and the neighbouring nations; and the rigid spirit of the Mosaic law was relaxed by the introduction of many traditions of native or of foreign origin. The followers of those traditions were known by the name of Pharisees, who generally affected great austerity of manners, and obtained, by counterfeit devotion, vast influence among the people. The Sadducees, on the other hand, rejected those traditions with disdain, and in their zeal to purge the law of Moses from every impure and exotic mixture, refused to admit the immortality of the soul. Under the reigns of Hircanus and his son Alexander, the Sadducees gained great influence in Judea, and were admitted into the first civil and ecclesiastical offices in the state.† The licentious principles which they avowed, must have gradually weakened the influence of religion, and insensibly introduced that voluptuous apathy, which is equally indifferent to truth or error, to vice or virtue. If, under the succeeding reign of Alexander, who espoused the interests of the Pharisees, the cause of the Sadducees declined; it must be confessed, that the absurd and hypocritical devotions of the one brought as much discredit on religion, as the avowed and licentious profaneness of the other. In short, all the credit and authority of the state was in the hands of two parties; of whom, one openly derided religion, and the other was influenced to revere it by selfish motives alone. However opposed in their sepa-

\* For a particular account of the four sects of the Jewish philosophy, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the followers of Judas the Gallilean, see Josephus, *Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 1.*

† Joseph. *Antiq. lib. xiii. c. 10.*

rate views, they were both united in their enmity towards the Redeemer; and therefore, besides the prejudices of the entire nation, regarding the temporal reign of the Messiah, Christ had to combat the combined authority of those sects, whose mutual jealousy was suspended, in their common aversion to his religion.

Whoever seriously weighs these different circumstances, will not be surprised at the obstinate incredulity of the Jewish nation. Miracles, it is true, have a strong influence over the convictions of the human mind. But still there is a degree of obstinacy, which no authority can bend; and an array of prejudices which no light of evidence can penetrate. The minds of the Jews were surrounded with prejudices of this nature; and when the splendour of Christ's miracles broke through them all, rather than yield their convictions, they endeavoured to elude their force, by affecting some scruples about their origin. When personal antipathies mingle with man's speculations, there are none acquainted with the human heart, who feel not how liable he is to delusion. What wonder then, that those who were hostile to religion should have combated the progress of a doctrine, which threatened to annihilate all their hopes, and extinguish all their influence? The Jews, in many instances, confessed the miracles which were too striking to be disputed.\* But, blinded by their prejudices, every new miracle, instead of working their conversion, exasperated their fury.† Nay, the virtues of Christ, which should have

\* The Apostles, in their addresses to the magistrates and people, as recorded in the first chapters of their Acts, confidently appealed to the miracles of the Redeemer as to public facts, which the enemies of the Gospel did not and could not deny.

† See Matthew, xii. and Luke, xi. The Redeemer, in his public instructions, spared neither the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, nor the impiety of the Sadducees; and the malignity and vexation of both, were only augmented by the exhibition of powers more than human. Hence in the blindness of their rage, they ascribed his miracles to his intercourse and favour with Beelzebub—a blasphemy which the malice of their descendants has perpetuated down to our own times. It has been urged by Trypho, in his disputation with the martyr Justin, has been inserted in both the Talmuds, and embodied in that impious collection, called the Sepher Tholedoth Jesu, which has been published by the industry of Wagenseil.

called forth reverence and admiration, had the effect of stirring up their hate, and inflaming their envy. The opposition, then, with which the authority of Christ and of his miracles was combated, arose from that jealousy of the human heart, which is mortified by superior excellence. The majesty of the Redeemer's character, overshadowed the loftiest dignity in the state; the forced and artificial importance of the Pharisees shrunk into littleness before his august and commanding virtue; and the rulers of the synagogue felt their power so much impaired in his presence, that they longed to be relieved from his oppressive superiority. Hence their insatiable malice, which nothing but the blood of the Redeemer could appease. The same implacable spirit which consigned him to death, pursued him beyond the grave; nor ought it to excite our astonishment, that they, who condemned our Redeemer, "approved by signs and wonders," should afterwards have had recourse to the most iniquitous artifices to conceal the triumphs of his resurrection.

In the incredulity then of the Jews, there is no circumstance which is at variance with our knowledge of the human character. But, in the supposition that the facts recorded in the Gospel had been forged, there is no ascertained principle of human conduct, that can account for the conversion of the number of Jews who embraced the truths of Christianity. Nay, although infidels rely much on the incredulity of that nation, it furnishes Christians with an argument more powerful than their total conversion could supply.

Had the whole people of Judea, by a sudden and spontaneous impulse, renounced their ancient prejudices, and embraced the truths of the Gospel, some secret motive would be assigned to explain the strange revolution. It might be urged, that all were actuated by a reverence for ancient prophecy, which had predicted the rise and progress of the new religion. Then we should hear the perpetual charge of a concert among the chiefs of the Synagogue, to mislead mankind.

The pride of originating a new religion, which ultimately achieved the conquest of the universe, would suspend the rivalry of adverse sects, in order to unite them in the common imposture. Thus, some motive of national vanity would be assigned why the Jewish people should conspire to deceive. Since a new covenant was promised to succeed that which had been struck with their fathers, in acknowledging the authority of Christ, they might be supposed not to renounce their allegiance to Moses ; and in their very transition to another religion, which had been foretold by the prophets, they might be said to be only furnishing fresh arguments of the truth of their own. Whereas, in the incredulity of those who resisted the evidence of Christ's miracles, we have the most satisfactory assurance of the integrity of the ancient prophecies ; and we may adopt the conclusion of Pascal, "that if all the Jews had embraced Christianity, we should have but interested witnesses ; and if all had remained incredulous, we should have none !"

If the credit of the Gospel history cannot be affected by the incredulity of the Jewish nation, it must not be expected that we should account for the indifference of some profane writers to the important facts which it contains. Yet, some have not failed to shelter their own incredulity under the indifference and incredulity of the historians of Greece and Rome.\* The author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,"† dwells with an insulting complacency on the contempt with which Tacitus treated the rising *sect* of Christianity, and hesitates not to assert, that "he drew his conclusions from the incredulity of an unbelieving age." If, however, the unbelief of the Pagan writers were to

The Pagan testimonies, on the subject of Christianity, are discussed with ingenuity and judgment, by Addison, in his short but elegant treatise of the Christian Religion.

† Of the writers who have undertaken to reply to "The Rational Inquiry into the Progress and Establishment of Christianity," contained in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of this celebrated history, Spedalieri is, beyond all doubt, the most learned, argumentative, and satisfactory. His judicious work was published in two quarto volumes, at Rome, in 1784.

affect the truth of Christianity, the objection might be repeated while a single individual was found to withhold his acquiescence. Are not all the primitive Christians so many vouchers of the truth of the miracles of the Gospel? nor could they afford a more striking proof of their conviction, than in their transition from one religion, which gratified all their passions, to another which exposed them to the sharpest persecution. Among the converts to Christianity, there were many as distinguished for the extent of their learning and the acuteness of their judgment, as the most eminent of the profane historians. In his apology to the emperor Marcus, Justin Martyr exhibits a profound knowledge of the religion which he embraced, as well as of the superstitions which he had abandoned; and the writings of Clement of Alexandria are, perhaps, the richest repository of ancient learning that has been rescued from the decay of time. Unless the profession of the Christian religion be supposed to extinguish the light of the human intellect, Clement and Justin may rival, if not surpass, the excellence of Tacitus or Suetonius. We find, therefore, in their conversion to Christianity, that testimony which is sought in vain in the works of some Pagan writers. The practical illustration, in their own lives, of the creed which they professed, will not, surely, be considered to weaken the force of their conviction. What may be said of these converts will equally apply to the other illustrious men,\* who abandoned the errors of Paganism and sealed their faith in Christianity with their blood. While infidels, therefore, affect to regret the absence of Pagan testimony to the wonders which the Evangelists record, we have the strong and stubborn evidence of the conversion of thousands, which no artifice can contradict, no sophistry elude.

Besides, the silence of the profane writers is as con-

\* "Multi omnis ordinis" is the expression of the celebrated governor of Bythnia and Pontus. Plin. lib. x. ep. 97.

sistent as their testimony. Long accustomed to confound religion with superstition, and the notion of miracles with imposture, they viewed Christianity with similar scorn, deeming its pretensions unworthy of their consideration. Hence, their silence arose from the indifference of the times. If, however, some among them should be found whose candour broke through the prejudices that surrounded them, to give a favourable testimony of Christianity, like that ascribed to Josephus, the Jewish historian, their testimony might be controverted; whereas their silence, like his, may be well accounted for, on prudential and political motives.\* I shall not detain my readers by a serious refutation of the conjecture, that these facts were perhaps combated by contemporaries, whose writings were afterwards suppressed by the fears or envy of the Christians. It will be sufficient to remark, that if the champions of Paganism were not able to check, by the arguments which they advanced, the growing influence of Christianity, they might well be despised when Christianity had triumphed. The Christians had no interest in destroying monuments which they should rather wish to perpetuate as the trophies of their own religion. But, in freeing them from the charge of the active destruction of these monuments, it is not to be regretted that they did not bestow much attention on their preservation. While we must acknowledge ourselves indebted to them for the immortal productions of the Greek and Roman poets, orators, and historians; we shall freely forgive

\* Some modern critics, notwithstanding the combined weight of all the manuscripts, and the authority of Eusebius, Rufinus, and St. Jerome, reject the celebrated testimony of Josephus, regarding the person, miracles, and disciples of Christ. (*Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 3.*) The supposition, however, that the passage is apocryphal, can only affect the veracity of the courtly historian. Whilst he describes, with minute fidelity, the fortunes of the false Messiahs, who, for a season, imposed on the credulity of his countrymen, it is difficult to conjecture a reason why he should silently pass over the life and actions of Christ, a man whose career was closely linked with the most extraordinary revolution which the Jews had yet undergone; and whose religion and disciples were not altogether unknown to the contemporary and distant historians of Rome. Nor is the difficulty of believing the passage to be written by an unconverted Jew, insuperable: in our own times has not the character of the Redeemer been portrayed in still more glowing colours, by the eloquent but infidel Rousseau?

them for consigning the polemical writings of later sophists to merited decay: nor is it to be imagined that they entertained any fears for Christianity from the sophisms of Julian or of Celsus in favour of the Pagan divinities, when they scrupled not to transmit to us those divinities, clothed in all the charms with which the genius of Homer or of Plato, as well as the chisel of Phidias or Praxiteles, had invested them?

In the coincidence between the ancient prophecies and the miracles of our Redeemer, the reader must be struck with the evidence which arises from the fulfilment of the former, in their exact correspondence with the latter. This argument may be yet more fully developed in the farther correspondence between the predictions of Christ himself and the melancholy fortunes of the Jewish people. In the midst of a profound peace, enjoyed under the government of the Roman empire, and in which human sagacity could not behold any symptoms of approaching revolution, Christ, with tears in his eyes, thus foretels the utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace, and now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee; and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee around, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."\* Never was prophecy more literally fulfilled. Not long after the death of the Redeemer, the woes which he predicted began to come upon the Jews, and to succeed each other in a rapid and disastrous train.

The frantic Caligula, who succeeded Tiberius, exasperated the zeal of the Jews by setting up his own statue in the temple, inscribed with the name of Jupiter.† The emperor, provoked by their resistance to his will,

\* Luke, xix. 42-44.

† Joseph. de Bel. Jud. lib. ii. c. 10. Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 9.

inflicted on that nation the utmost severity of his vengeance. Under Claudius, the Jews enjoyed a temporary respite; but their discontent was soon inflamed by the cruel rapacity of Florus, who in the reign of Nero was appointed governor of Syria.\* Some of the principal cities of Palestine were laid waste; Jerusalem was besieged, and throughout Judea many thousands of the Jews were put to the sword.† However, the full accomplishment of our Saviour's prophecy was reserved for the reign of the Vespasian, who, to be freed from the repeated revolts and restless fanaticism of the Jews, resolved to extinguish their very name. He entrusts to his son Titus the conduct of the war, who repairs to Judea, determined upon bringing it to a speedy conclusion. The city is accordingly blocked up, and the siege pushed on with vigour; while the infatuated inhabitants, deluded by the dreams of their prophets, rely upon that supernatural aid which their guilt had for ever forfeited. Often did the clemency of Titus proffer them terms of capitulation. They were as often rejected with a sullen and obstinate disdain. There was neither energy in their conduct nor union in their councils, since the Lord mingled therein the spirit of giddiness; whilst supernatural prodigies, which are attested by a profane writer,‡ announced the speedy dissolution of their nation. Never did a besieged city suffer calamities so appalling. The closest bonds of nature and affection were forcibly rent asunder. The demon of discord banished peace from the city, and famine had so extinguished all the feelings of the human heart, that the mother literally protracted

\* Joseph. *ibid.* c. 14.

† We may form some idea of the extent of the slaughter, from the fact recorded by Josephus (*lib. ii. c. 18*), who tells us, that in Cæsarea alone twenty thousand Jews were killed in the space of one hour.

‡ “*Visæ per cælum concurrere acies, rutilantia arma, et subito nubium igne concludere Templum. Expassæ repente delubri fores; et audita majoi humana vox, “excedere Deos”: simul ingens motus excedentium. Quæ pauci in metum trahebant: pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum litteris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judea rerum potirentur.*”—Tacit. *Hist. lib. v. 13.*

her own life by feeding on the babe that suckled at her bosom. Among those who stalked through the streets with vacant looks, without a recognition of their kindred, there was one who incessantly poured out woes on Jerusalem, and whose name, Jesus, seemed to bode the evils which he predicted ; since they had spurned the blessings which were before offered in that name.\* In vain was he menaced to desist. The more he was commanded to forbear, the more loudly did he repeat the incessant prophecy of woe upon Jerusalem, until, at length, a stone cast upon him from the roof of a house made him the victim of that destruction in which the city was soon to be involved.

At length the city is taken, and the temple is levelled to the ground : a blazing torch, flung by a Roman soldier,† suddenly reduced to ashes the stupendous monument of the wealth and piety of Judea, while Titus strove, in vain, to arrest the mighty ruin. In his useless attempts to save the temple, the Roman general saw the visible effects of a power which he was unable to control ; and so struck was he with the idea that he was only the instrument of supernatural vengeance, that he declined the accustomed honours of a triumph. And why, we may be permitted to inquire ? Perhaps, because it was already anticipated by the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. For the wars which were successfully waged by their policy, and the victories which were achieved by their valour, well might the Romans have celebrated their own power. But for the conquest of a city, which, like Lucifer, had rebelled against Heaven ; and on which, like Lucifer, God himself had poured out his vengeance, it is God alone that should have enjoyed the honours of a triumph.

In the general slaughter to which the inhabitants of this fated city were consigned, eleven hundred thousand perished by the sword,‡ and the rest were doomed to

\* Bossuet Disc. p. 314.

† Joseph. de Bel. Jud. lib. vi.

‡ Joseph. de Bel. Jud. lib. vi. 2.

all the horrors of captivity. In the history of Josephus, we discover the literal application of the ancient prophecies to the disasters of Jerusalem. "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people? . . . My eyes have failed with weeping when the sucklings fainted away in the streets, and breathed out their souls in the bosom of their mothers. . . . The voice of howling is heard, the cedar is fallen and its glory is laid waste. The streets of the city are silent, and darkness and desolation are on its den for ever."

Yes, such was the miserable condition to which the Jews were reduced after the destruction of their city, that they were prohibited from coming within a certain distance of its ancient boundaries. The Romans feared that a place, so long the theatre of supernatural agency, would inspire the Jews with the hope of reviving their former glory. Hence, like their progenitors at Babylon, the Jews were doomed to sigh their distant devotions towards Sion; or obliged, as we are told by St. Jerome, to purchase from the avarice of the soldiers permission to undertake a sorrowful pilgrimage to the ruins of their former temple. Still they cherished some lingering hope of its restoration. After having rejected the true Messiah, who had proved his mission by miracles the most incontestable, this unfortunate nation became the dupe of a succession of impostors, who rose and disappeared, flattering them with hopes of conquest, which were suddenly dissipated. Now, deluded by Judas, the Gaulonite, and again by Barchochebas,\* who severally pretended to be the promised deliverer of Israel, they strove to shake off the yoke of the Romans, which was laid but still more heavily on them. The fanaticism of Barchochebas and his followers, provoked the vengeance of Adrian, who inflicted the severest chastisements on that devoted race. Without a single ray of hope to cheer the gloom of despondence, save what they derived from the passing and delusive meteor

\* See Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, lib. vii. 12.

of some false prophet, they languished until the reign of Julian, who reassured their drooping spirits by a promise of rebuilding their temple, and restoring their scattered nation.\* Tempted by the encouragement, which was held out to them by the emperor, they assembled from the remotest countries, to give their aid to the project. In their zeal to restore their ancient worship, they sacrificed every other consideration ; and the enthusiasm of the children of Abraham was enlisted in the service of the imperial apostate. But the hand of the Almighty defeated the rash and impious project ; and, like the architects of Babel, the workmen were scattered by the vengeance of Heaven. There is no fact in ancient history better attested than the miraculous interposition, which suspended the rebuilding of the Jewish temple. Independently of the authorities of Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen, the circumstances are thus told by Ammianus Marcellinus,† a Pagan historian: “Whilst Alypius, assisted by the governor of the province, urged with vigour and diligence the execution of the work, horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundation, with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen ; and the victorious element continuing in this manner, obstinately and resolutely bent, as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned.” It may gratify the curious reader here to transcribe the reflection of Gibbon on this striking testimony of Ammianus, which reveals no less his hostility to Christianity than his utter inability to elude the evidence of this miracle. “Such authority,” continues the historian, after citing the passage, “should satisfy a believing, and must astonish an incredulous mind—yet, a philosopher may still require the original evidence of impartial and intelligent spectators. At this

\* “Ambitiosum quondam apud Hierosolyman templum . . . instaurare sump-tibus cogitabat immodicis.”—Ammian. Marcel. lib. xxiii. 1.

† Ubi supra.

important crisis, any singular accident of nature, would assume the appearance, and produce the effects of a real prodigy. This glorious deliverance would be speedily improved and magnified, by the pious art of the clergy of Jerusalem, and the active credulity of the Christian world; and, at the distance of twenty years, a Roman historian, careless of theological disputes, might adorn his works with the specious and splendid miracle.”\*

If the distance of twenty years was sufficient to diminish the credit of a fact so stupendous, the reader may smile at the gravity of the historian, who relates, with unhesitating confidence, a series of events, reaching back near two thousand years. But, while the infidel tortures his invention by unavailing sophistry, the enlightened Christian beholds, in the frustrate attempts of Julian, the completion of the Redeemer’s prediction.† Instead of ascribing to chance or accident, the balls of fire that issued from the earth, and scorched and smote the workmen, he beholds in them the effects of the divine wrath, thus described by the psalmist: “Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord, and against his Christ. Let us break their bonds asunder; and let us cast away their yoke from us. He that dwelleth in the heavens, shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them. Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his rage.”‡

\* Gib. Decl. and Fall, c. xxiii.

† See Abbadie. Ver. de la Réél. Chrét. Sec. part, ii, sect. c. 8.

‡ Psalm ii.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## EXCELLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Accordance of its Doctrines, and beauty of its Morality.—Singleness and uniformity of the character of the Redeemer.—Singular Revolution achieved by the Christian Religion in the Morals of Mankind.—Lowly condition of its Founders.—Unexampled Patience and Perseverance of its Martyrs.—Supposed Dialogue between Seneca and St. Peter, exhibiting a view of the chief obstacles that were opposed to its propagation.

THE failure of the project of Julian to rebuild the temple of the Jews, did but more fully attest the inspiration of the prophecies which were accomplished in its fall. With the destruction of this splendid monument of their ancient religion, the evidence of God's farther protection visibly disappeared. The favour of Jehovah, which had hitherto been confined to Sion, was now transferred to the nations of the earth; and the light which had been gradually ushered in by the prophets was now poured forth in its full splendour to the extremities of the world. Hitherto, in union with the Jews, we have explored their ancient records, and traced the finger of the Divinity inscribed on their religion. But now, on the extension of God's grace to those whom they treated as outcasts, we are deserted by our ancient allies, who would fain still enjoy a monopoly of the divine favour. Their blindness, however, ought to awaken our pity, not provoke our indignation. They are sustaining the weight of God's vengeance, it is true, and paying the forfeit of the perfidy and prevarication of their fathers. Yet, even in their degeneracy and disgrace, we ought to recollect that they are the relics of a people once the most illustrious and favoured on the earth. In tracing the proudest pedigree, one can seldom ascend beyond the last revolution of his country, in which he will discover the loftiest tree springing from an humble root,

or grafted on a stock of comparatively recent origin. Not so the Jews: in despite of all the disasters that have afflicted them, they can count a genealogy of four thousand years; its branches adorned with the honours of pontiffs and of kings; a genealogy so illustrious, that two thousand years ago, the king of Sparta, the haughtiest of the states of Greece, was proud to continue the alliance of the Jews, and claim a common descent from the blood of the Patriarchs.\* And, if "the lofty cedar has fallen, and its glory has been laid waste," let us recollect that it has been riven by the lightning of heaven; and, if its branches are now degenerate in their growth, it is because its scorched and scathed "seeds have been cast among the nations," to be trodden, wherever they have been blown by the vengeful breath of the Almighty.

Having thus conducted the reader through the series of external evidence that sustains the Christian religion, from the first faint promise that announced the distant Messiah, to the full splendour that accompanied the miracles of his life, but chiefly the triumphs of his resurrection; I should here solicit him to pause to contemplate the beauty of that religion whose origin and progress he has patiently explored.

To detail the numberless blessings that sprung from the establishment of Christianity, or exhibit the characters of evidence that are inscribed upon its doctrine, would be a task disproportioned to the limits of my original design. The exalted sanctity of which it was productive sufficiently attested its salutary influence on public morals.† Were we to contrast the infancy of the Christian religion with the decline of Polytheism, the most prejudiced should confess, that nothing less than a virtue from above could animate the corrupt

\* Arius, king of Sparta, thus commenced his letter to Onias, the High Priest: "It is found in writing concerning the Spartans and the Jews, that they are brethren, and that they are of the stock of Abraham." (1 Machab. xii.) This treaty was renewed in the time of the High Priest Simon.—See xiv. 20, et seq.

† See the whole *fourth section of the second part* of Abbadie, *Traité de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne*.

mass of mankind to the production of the rare virtues which flourished in every quarter of the world. To substitute humility for arrogance; mortification for the love of pleasure; continence for sensuality; voluntary poverty for the ostentation of wealth and splendour, was a revolution in the affections of the human heart which philosophy could never achieve. These were virtues which the wisest of the ancient sages contemplated at an awful distance; but which they thought the weakness of human nature unable to attain. Yes, it required the omnipotence of the divine word to effect this mighty change; and it was only he who first subdued the convictions of the human mind, by the mysterious sublimity of his doctrine, that could control the passions of the human heart, by the wholesome rigour of his precepts. While his doctrine, then, may be assigned as the cause of this sublime morality; the morality reflects back its light on the divinity of the doctrine. A God made man, and atoning, by the effusion of his blood, for the iniquity of mortals, is a stupendous mystery, it is true; and one by which the comprehension of every mind must be oppressed and confounded. But it is a mystery pregnant with consequences which must reconcile our reason to its sublimity; since nothing but the infinite horror for sin which it reveals could have produced such a sudden revolution in the universe. Fix, then, the incarnation as the foundation of our faith (and it is established by the evidence of the resurrection), what admirable wisdom is displayed through the whole range of the Christian doctrine! Hence its contempt of the world, and fear of God's displeasure; its lofty aspirations after virtue, and its expiation of past sins; and all those practices of devotion, which might wear the appearance of folly, if they were not so many fences to guard us against the infinite evil of sin, follow each other in a dependent and consecutive train. The more the Christian religion is contemplated, the more it is calculated to command our admiration; and the apparent or imputed

imperfections that strike a superficial observer, on a first view, disappear on a closer inspection. It has sustained the test of the most rigid and hostile examination into the tendency of all its tenets; and some of the practices which appeared most revolting to the profane are those which bore the strongest evidence to the divinity of its origin.

This truth must appear still more striking, when we reflect on the character of its Author and the agency which he employed in the propagation of his religion. At a time when the wisdom of the world, long exercised in painful researches after truth, had acquiesced at length, in the humiliating acknowledgment of its own weakness, to behold an individual of obscure birth, in an obscure corner of the world, without those aids which assisted the inquiries of the philosophers, forming a system of religion which unfolds new beauties in proportion as it is contemplated, is a circumstance so extraordinary, as to be accounted for by no supposition but that of his divinity. Could we forget, for a moment, our conviction of Christ's divinity, there is no phenomenon more astonishing than that of an individual, without influence or education, devising a plan of doctrine and morality so fitted for promoting the happiness of mankind, that human reason has been since employed only in unfolding its advantages and eulogising its perfection. Unlike the incoherent systems of which each succeeding part annuls the preceding revelations, thus betraying the evidence of imposture, indebted to accident for its success; there is, from the first idea that Christ unfolded of his religion to its full development, a simplicity of design and a uniformity of execution which at once reveal the omniscience as well as omnipotence of its author. From the commencement of his mission, he confidently talks of the homage of all mankind, and retains the same tranquil assurance of success when circumstances seemed the least favourable to the accomplishment of his designs. No occurrence that met him in his progress through the

world seemed to be unexpected. Equally calm through all the vicissitudes of his life, he viewed with like indifference persecution and applause, conscious that his religion was not dependent on the capricious support or opposition of mankind. An attention to this circumstance must exalt our ideas of the beauty of Christianity, and teach us, that those blemishes which some affect to discover in it are only the creatures of their own fancy.

To give but a partial view of some of the virtues which it enjoins, and some of the institutions to which it gave birth, is a narrow and unfair mode of reasoning. The absurd consequences of some of the counsels of the Gospel not intended for all, may be magnified to a degree to which, in fact, they never extended, without taking into consideration the correctives they must experience, from principles of an opposite tendency. Man has a multiplicity of duties to discharge, and it is from the exactness with which the Christian religion adjusts the respective influence of each, controlling the excesses into which the exclusive practice of one might lead, by the restraints imposed by another, that the beauty of the Christian religion arises, which thus harmonises the different obligations of its members. It is by a comprehensive and dispassionate view of this kind that we shall be able to appreciate the full benefits of Christianity. From a long and familiar acquaintance with its advantages, we may become indifferent to many, which would be more strikingly felt by the melancholy experience of their privation. To impress this observation more strongly on the reader, it may be necessary again to point his attention to the lamentable condition of the Pagan world, in order that he may have a clearer view of the happiness for which he is indebted to the Christian religion.

While the Almighty was dethroned by the impiety of the Pagans, and his place usurped by gods who were more frequently honoured for their vices than their virtues, the stream of public morals was polluted.

in its very source. To look for domestic virtue among those who hung up the most licentious images, as objects of adoration,\* would be to look for conduct at once at variance with the nature of their belief, and the corrupt desires of their heart. Hence, the face of society presented a moral waste, where every virtue withered, under the chilling influence of a widespread corruption. If the light of science was kept alive, amidst the schools of philosophy, it assisted but little in exploring the way to virtue. It rather gave a fuller view of the darkness, which it could not dissipate; and might well be compared to those fires that are occasionally lighted on a rocky coast, and which, instead of saving the mariner from shipwreck, cast a more frightful glare over the horrors that surround him.

Nor were their political institutions of a more exalted character. With the decay of virtue, every generous motive that inspires true elevation of character disappeared, and mankind was left to languish under the most oppressive tyranny. Rulers exercised their dominion with distrust and severity, while the obedience of subjects was sullen and constrained. Hence, no indulgence on the one hand, and no respect on the other. Authority lost its reverence with the people, who regarded power rather as an engine of oppression, than as the shield of their protection. Hence, the rapid and successive revolutions with which the world was afflicted—now groaning under the weight of despotism, and again shaken by all the licentiousness of anarchy and disorder. With the exceptions of Greece and Rome, the flame of freedom was extinct in all the nations of the earth, and even in these comparatively favoured countries, its occasional appearance was so irregular and unsteady, as to have been productive but of little public benefit. While a few factious leaders

\* Après la défaite de Xerxès et de ses formidables armées, on mit dans le temple un tableau où étaient représentés leurs vœux et leurs processions, avec cette inscription de Simonides : “celles-ci ont prié la Déesse Vénus, qui pour l'amour d'elles a sauvé la Grèce.”—Bossuet, Disc. p. 255.

abused the name of liberty, by exercising under its injured name the most sanguinary proscriptions, the mass of the people never breathed a respite from servitude. The slaves of either country were the most numerous, as well as the most formidable body of the state.\* So late as the reign of Augustus, the policy of that monarch forbade them to wear a distinct habit, lest, from the contagion of their discontent, and the consciousness of their numbers, they should become dangerous to the peace of the empire.† The condition of these miserable beings was almost beyond endurance. Invested with the absolute disposal of their lives, their masters treated them with the most relentless rigour. The occurrence of every war, and in those days wars were frequent, exposed the inhabitants of the conquered country to all the horrors of unmitigated slavery.

This savage and unfeeling spirit extended itself to their very amusements. The citizens of Rome became so depraved in their appetite for pleasure, that it could not be gratified but by the effusion of the blood of their fellow-creatures.‡ To appease this sanguinary taste, theatres were erected, where all ranks of citizens contemplated with unfeeling indifference the contests of the gladiators. The circus streamed with the blood of those unfortunate victims of human cruelty. The public and private convivial parties of the citizens were seasoned with similar sanguinary exhibitions: in short they were repeated in the celebration of all their festivals: and it is calculated that these amusements were more destructive than war to the lives of the people.§

\* See the curious and learned treatise of Canon Pignorius, "De servis et eorum apud veteres ministeriis," p. 509 et seq. ed. 1674.

† See Senec. de Clemen. lib. i. c. 24.

‡ "Quin etiam exhilarare viris convivia cæde  
Mos olim, et miscere epulis spectacula dira  
Certatum ferro sæpe, et supra ipsa candentum  
Pocula, respersis non parco sanguine mensis."

Sil. Ital. lib. ii.

See also the twelfth discourse of Maximus of Tyre, who feels all the partiality of a philosopher for the sanguinary amusement.

§ "Credo, imo scio, nullum bellum tantam cladem vastitatemque generi humano intulisse, quam hos ad voluptatem ludos."—Just. Lipsius, lib. i. c. 12.

The maxims of the Grecian philosophers were not of a milder complexion. The safety of the state was, in their opinion, the supreme duty by which every other should be regulated. Infants were accordingly consigned to premature destruction by an unrelenting policy, lest they should become a burden to the state; and the aged and infirm were doomed to linger out an existence more painful and ignominious than death itself. Such was literally the state of the poor in the Pagan world—their safety or destruction being converted into a political problem, to be resolved according to the suggestions of a self-interest, as cruel as it was capricious.

But scarce was the divine Gospel, which Christ came on earth to preach to the poor, announced, when the face of the universe was entirely changed. The rights of humanity were recognised, and the waters of baptism, which regenerated from eternal death, saved many an infant from premature destruction. Thus, the most spiritual rights became the instruments of temporal advantages, and the abstract dogmas of Christianity were productive of the most important practical effects. However severe the enactments of legislators, they were insufficient to check the barbarous practice of exposing infants, so frequent amidst the licentiousness of the Pagan world. The sacrament of baptism, and the simple belief of the effects of which it is productive, has easily accomplished what human laws could not achieve. By the infusion of the merciful spirit of the Gospel, the rigours of despotism were mitigated. In the language of the prophets, the valleys were raised, and the mountains were made level.\* The poor man lifted his head from his prostrate condition, and the rich recognised in every being who wore the same form, not only an individual of the same species, but a brother in Jesus Christ, bought by the same redemption, and entitled to the same inheritance. In

short, the spirit of charity walked abroad, with all the blessings announced by the prophets in its train, bringing light to those that sat in darkness, and solace to the broken-hearted. At its hallowed touch the fetters of the captive fell off, and, like the roe on the mountain, he bounded exulting in his freedom;\* and while the Catholic Church, like a temple seated on an eminence, realised the prophetic vision of Ezechiel holding forth the torch of its faith, and opening wide its portals to the nations of the earth: from the threshold of the same temple, to pursue the prophetic image, went forth a torrent of sweetness, refreshing the world as it rolled, and bringing strength, and health, and benediction, to every living thing that was touched by its waters.†

In his estimation of the evidences of the Christian Church, the conviction of every rational man must be strengthened by a reference to the agents, by whom it was founded, as well as to the obstacles which they had to encounter, in accomplishing their great design.‡ Had Christ paid court to the great or to the wealthy, he might have enlisted their co-operation in his service. Had he gained over some of the philosophers of Greece and Rome, the union of their learning and eloquence might have been deemed a powerful accession to his cause. His religion then might have borne the marks of a system which human wisdom had artfully contrived, and which human power had erected. This did not suit the plan of a religion, divine in its origin; and the same supernatural providence is discoverable in its commence-

\* Five thousand slaves were manumised by the illustrious martyr Ovinus Gallicanus; eight thousand were restored to liberty by Melania the younger.—Vide Terentian. in actis SS. Joh. et Pauli. Surium ad diem 26 Junii; et Palladium, ed. 1680.

† “And he brought me again to the gate of the house, and behold waters issued out from the threshold of the house. . . . And every living thing that creepeth whithersoever the torrent shall come, shall live.”—Ezech. xlvi.

‡ The direct and indirect evidence of the labours and sufferings of the apostles, and of the character of the cause in which they were endured, is stated with clearness and force by Paley in the first eight chapters of the “View of the Evidences of Christianity.”

ment that has been since so conspicuous in upholding its existence. Relying solely on that aid, which He was to impart from above, He chose twelve unlettered individuals, to be the heralds of his mysterious doctrines to the uttermost regions of the earth. Without any of those natural aids of education or of patronage, on which the success of arduous enterprise so often depends, they went forth, fearless of danger, to wage war against an array of power, of learning, and of prejudice, which would have appalled any human resolution. Judea was then held in utter contempt by the Romans. Her religion was characterised by Tacitus with the name of an odious superstition. To have sprung from such a country was enough to cast discredit on any religion. Philosophy was cultivated with success, at least with eagerness, in the most celebrated cities of the Roman empire, and no one was deemed competent to dispense knowledge, who had not tasted of the wisdom of her schools. Its votaries might amuse themselves with some abstruse disquisitions on the nature of the gods, and the end of man; but their labours gradually terminated in practical irreligion. Hence, a system of general toleration characterised the sects of the Pagan religion; and they mutually extended to each other the indulgence which they claimed for themselves. Each nation had its tutelary god, but they were all linked together by that conciliating principle, which occasionally introduced the deities of the neighbouring countries; nor was any state, by this adoption of a foreign worship, supposed to be guilty of a renunciation of its own. While the Romans extended their dominion, their policy led them to adopt the gods of the conquered countries, fancying that thus they might secure their protection. While Jupiter still held his throne in the Capitol, the deities of every wood and river of the Roman world were ranged in subordinate stations in the Pantheon; and he who should presume to displace a single idol, would be supposed to insult the majesty of all.

The princes lent their aid to the encouragement of this superstition. Blinded by that flattery, which soothes the pride of the human heart, they protected a system, which consecrated, in the public estimation, their follies as well as their crimes. Finding some of their predecessors, whose misdeeds should rather have consigned them to public infamy, enrolled among the gods; they, too, hoped that the honours of an apotheosis, should secure to their memory a similar veneration. As for the people, gratified by shows and licentiousness, they cherished a religion which flattered all their passions by the looseness of its morality, and amused their fancy by the fantastic combination of its tenets.

In preaching the Christian religion, the apostles had to contend with all the obstacles that arose from the pride of the learned, as well as the passions of the ignorant. To these formidable impediments were still united the power of the Roman emperors, who were, by the nature of the office of supreme pontiff which they assumed, entrusted with the guardianship of the religion of the state. In the performance of this duty, they found willing instruments in those ministers, who derived much credit and influence from their connexion with the established worship. In short, under whatever aspect the religion of the Pagan is viewed, it presented appalling terrors to the preachers of the Cross; nor could the human mind contemplate any two objects more opposed than the religion which they promulgated, and that which they resolved to overturn.

In the apparent folly of the mysteries, which they announced, the apostles irritated the pride of the human understanding. By the austerity of their precepts they offered violence to the passions of the human heart; nor were they gifted with any of those personal acquirements that could soften the prejudices, which the nature of their doctrine was calculated to provoke. Yet those humble instruments, so inadequate in the views of worldly wisdom, for such an undertaking, effected, in

a short space of time the conversion of a great portion of the universe.\* In this struggle, weakness had to contend with power, poverty with wealth; and unlettered simplicity with disciplined wisdom. It was not to be expected that a triumph over such a union of foes could have been quietly obtained. Accordingly, the apostles were met by an array of opposition that commenced with the first preaching of the Gospel, and continued unabated during the entire of their career.

It has been sometimes insinuated that the Christian religion was peculiarly flattering to the prejudices of the Jews and Gentiles:† to the Jews, because it was grafted on their ancient religion; and to the Gentiles, because it was purified from the intolerant spirit of the law of Moses, and because it proffered the benefits of the promises to all the nations of the earth. Were such a view of Christianity to be admitted, it would follow that the causes which should have accelerated its progress among the professors of the one religion, should have checked it among those of the other. These prejudices were of contrary tendency, and the religion of Christ, instead of being assisted in its progress by their union, must have been retarded by their opposition. Should anyone feel alarmed at the difficulty which is suggested by the incredulity of the Jewish nation: he may discover in that incredulity an antidote against the sophistry of those, who would fain pretend that the Christian religion was flattering to its prejudices.‡ The stubborn unbelief of a great portion of that people, proves how ungrateful the Christian religion was to their carnal expectations.

Nor was it more welcome to the Gentiles. Of the new covenant, to the participation of which they were invited, they were as careless as they were ignorant. Nay, to them, the Christian religion had not only no

\* Rom. x. 18.

† Gibbons' "Decline and Fall," chapters xv. and xvi.

‡ The arguments which the Jews have in every age opposed to the authority of the Gospel, are enforced with great subtlety in the famous "Amica Collatio" of Orobio with Limborch.

charms to solicit its acceptance, but from the singularity of its pretensions, provoked the most deadly hostility. Had the doctrine of our Redeemer been of the same accommodating character as the systems of Paganism, like them it might have been adopted by the Roman emperors, and incorporated with the reigning worship of the times. But the apostles, instead of being content that Christ should be enrolled among the gods, thus to share the honours of divine worship among a crowd of co-ordinate deities, insisted that he should be the exclusive object of adoration. This exclusive pretension to truth, offended the prejudices and roused the resentment, of the Pagans. A participation in the common worship of Polytheism, they might possibly extend to the God of the Christians. But that he should displace all their ancient divinities, with whose reign they associated all the prosperity of the empire, was an idea that was at variance with all their notions of religion. Hence, all the strength of the empire was exerted to check the religion of Christ; and the pride of the philosopher, the policy of the magistrate, and the fanaticism of the people, were enlisted to arrest its diffusion. The zeal of the apostles was only inflamed by the obstacles that were thrown in their way. In vain were they threatened with torture, and with death, if they did not desist from an enterprise, which was deemed no less rash than impious. Their courage rose superior to the menaces of their enemies, and finally triumphed by the sacrifice of their lives. The contest, however, was long and sanguinary. It raged, with little intermission, for the space of three hundred years. During that period, the purity of the Christian faith was tried like gold in the furnace of persecution, and its professors cheerfully laid down their lives in its defence. The ingenuity of the human mind was exhausted in devising new instruments of torture; but the martyrs, instead of shrinking from suffering, courted death in its most terrific forms. The authentic annals of those times contain a narrative

of the persecutions which afflicted the infant Church. Some of the most heroic champions of the faith are singled out by those writers. But in some particular provinces of the empire, and under some reigns, distinguished for their cruelty, such was the effusion of human blood, that the number of Christian martyrs exceeded computation. In the protracted struggle, the patience with which those witnesses suffered for the faith, struck the Pagans with astonishment. Beholding the tranquil and joyous composure with which they met death, the infidels concluded that they must have been endowed with divine fortitude. Nothing, they frequently exclaimed, but supernatural assistance could achieve such prodigies of human patience. Hence, their executioners were often converted by the patience of the Christians; and becoming themselves, in turn, the victims of the sufferings which they had inflicted, the very blood of the martyrs, in the triumphant language of Tertullian, became the seed of Christians,\* and accelerated the progress of their religion.

In the patient fortitude with which the champions of the faith† endured the most exquisite and lingering torments, we behold the influence of the language of our Redeemer, warning his disciples not to fear those who could kill the body, but rather to fear him who could cast the soul into eternal fire.‡ The philosopher may waste his subtle ingenuity, in accounting for the motives that could sustain the courage of the martyrs. The arm of God alone supported the weakness of human nature, to brave the terrors of the faggot and the rack, and the other engines of execution, which were invented to fatigue that fortitude, which the prospect of instant death could not subdue. Habit may do much in giving vigour to the human constitution. The influence of education may so attach man to hereditary prejudices,

\* Tertul. Apolog. c. 50.

† See Abbadie. Vérité de la Relig. part ii. § i. cap. 2. This learned and accurate treatise may be safely recommended to the perusal of the sincere votary of truth.

‡ Matt. x. 28

as occasionally to induce him to lay down his life in their support. A savage fanaticism may steel one against the horrors of death; and the thirst of fame may impel another to die in a cause which will crown his memory with honour. But in the suffering and death of the martyrs we discover none of those causes, whose influence might support the dying moments of the "savage or the sage." The tenderest virgins sought death with the same alacrity as the most robust of the other sex; and, instead of deriving support from the influence of education, they suffered for a religion which was opposed to all its prejudices. However ardent the love of fame, which animates some writers, who ascribe to this motive the courage of the martyrs, it is seldom of that firm consistence which would prompt them to exchange the pleasures of life, and support the torments of a lingering death, for so delusive a phantom. Waiving the consideration that they must have forfeited their claims to a heavenly reward, could they suffer their motives to be infected by vain-glory, a vast number must have been placed beyond the reach of such a temptation. What glory could they reap from dying for a religion then reproached with the vilest superstition? A patriot of Athens or of Rome might have been animated by the confidence of a reputation, coeval with the existence of history; but what prospect of earthly reward could have sustained their courage, whose obscurity and numbers bereft them of the honours of a name? Besides, there may be glory in leading the opinions of mankind; but there is little, in mixing with the crowd of followers.

Nor can we compare with the martyrs of Christianity, the different fanatics who have occasionally died in support of erroneous doctrines. The examples are but comparatively rare, and therefore form no ground of analogy with the circumstances of number, of meekness, and perseverance, which are peculiar characteristics of the martyrs of the Christian religion.\* Passing over the different motives of pride, of revenge, and

\* See the Martyrs of Chateaubriand *passim*.

ambition, which may overcome the natural love of life, their sufferings could only attest the sincerity of their own persuasion ; but the sincerity of one's persuasion is quite distinct from the truth of his doctrine. To the mind of an individual, influenced by strong prejudices in its support, error may wear the mock semblance of truth ; and dying in its cause, would only attest the strength of his conviction or his prejudice. He cannot convey to the spectators the impression of truth, since error may have misled his own imagination. Not so when he dies to attest facts, which are palpable to his senses. Then the firmness of his persuasion involves the certainty of the facts for which he dies ; and the truth of those facts frees the character of those who vouch for their existence, from the imputations of fanaticism. Such were the primitive martyrs of Christianity. They suffered for those stupendous wonders, which ushered in the Christian religion, and which they witnessed with their own eyes, or whose certainty had been sealed with the blood of their predecessors.

It might be imagined that time would have mitigated the rage of persecution ; and that the enemies of the Christian Church, taught by the frustrate efforts of preceding emperors, would relax their hostility. Yet, instead of subsiding, it gathered fresh vigour from time ; and the persecution of Diocletian, which closed the last scene of Christian suffering, may be reckoned a terrible, yet appropriate climax to the cruelty of his predecessors. In describing the persecution of Diocletian, Eusebius\* assures us that the work of slaughter was not unfrequently suspended, because the axe lost its edge, or dropped from the wearied hand of the executioner. The eloquent Lactantius declares that language was inadequate to express the sanguinary rage of persecution. Not confined to the persons of the Christians, it embraced every object connected with their religion. Their books were burnt, their temples demolished ; and now it would seem as if the powers of the earth had

\* See particularly the *Martyrs of the Province of Thebais*, lib. viii. c. 5.

conspired not only to effect the ruin of the Christian Church, but to obliterate its remembrance. This was the last ordeal, through which it was fated to pass, and having come forth triumphant, it carried with it the splendid attestation, that it was not in the power of man to extinguish what God had decreed to be immortal. Its persecutors soon disappeared from the face of the earth. In their tragic deaths,\* we may discover, without being influenced by superstition, the visible marks of the divine vengeance; and while their names are consigned to merited infamy, the memories of the martyrs, who triumphed over their rage, are embalmed in the veneration of the world. By the meek fortitude of its martyrs, the Christian Church gained a glorious victory over its foes; and the cross, the symbol of redemption, was planted on the throne of the Cæsars. Enough had now been done to exercise its patience and prove its fortitude: it had travelled sufficiently long through the wilderness, to attest the presence of the divinity, that protected its journeyings; and, after having overcome the Hethite, and the Pheresite, and the Amorrhite, and the Chanaanite, that annoyed it in its passage, it was allowed to pause after the fatigue of its victories; and, like Jerusalem, once the citadel of the Jebusite, Rome, the strongest fortress of its foes,† was converted into the sanctuary of its religion.

The reader has been now presented with a detailed view of the difficulties which the Christian religion encountered in its early progress. While he meditates on the nature of its doctrine, as humiliating to the pride, as it was mortifying to the passions, of man; on the power and the profligacy of those to whom this doc-

\* See Lactantius, lib. "De Mortibus Persecutorum." This book details not only the violent deaths of the persecutors, but gives a sketch of the number and sufferings of their victims.

† "Hic conculcandæ philosophiæ opiniones, hic dissolvendæ erant terrenæ sapientiæ vanitates, hic confutandi dæmonum cultus, hic omnium sacrilegiorum impietas destruenda, ubi diligentissima superstitione habebatur collectum, quidquid usquam fuerat vanis erroribus institutum. Ad hanc ergo urbem tu, beatissime Petre apostole, venire non metuis," &c.—St. Leo, Sermon. i. de SS. Apost. Petro et Paulo.

trine was preached, and on the lowly characters of the men who announced it, he will readily acknowledge that they were only subordinate instruments in the hands of him "who chooses the weak and foolish things of the world" more fully to manifest his own wisdom and omnipotence. To illustrate more clearly the folly of the attempt to convert the Roman empire, if the apostles were not under the immediate influence of supernatural power, let us suppose that St. Peter, on his arrival at Rome, meets with Seneca, the Roman philosopher, with whom he holds a conference on the vast project which he meditated.\* The supposition is neither violent nor unnatural, since they were contemporaries; especially as there are yet extant some epistolary fragments, which, though they are not considered genuine, were once believed to have passed between Seneca and St. Paul:† however, his closer connexion with the Church will justify me in substituting the prince of the apostles. Struck with the singular appearance of an individual attired in simple garb, supported by a staff, and this (let us add), surmounted with a crucifix, contrasted with the fire which his humble exterior could not conceal, Seneca inquires of St. Peter what is the object of his mission, and what the purport of the symbol which he bears? The apostle replies, that his object is to achieve the conquest of the Roman empire, to overturn its religion and the dominion of its gods. Astonished at such wild pretensions, the philosopher asks him, whose worship does he intend to substitute in their place? The apostle answers: the worship of a man born in Judea, who chose me for his companion, and shared with me his confidence and power; who wrought many miracles, but was at length sacrificed to the jealousy of his own

\* I am here reminded of St. Augustine's beautiful observations on the mysteries of memory, having in the course of my reading met with something of this fanciful discourse between a philosopher and one of the apostles, but not recollecting where.

† See Natalis Alexan. Hist. Ecclesiast., tom. i.; p. 90, ed. 1679.

people, and that of the Roman proconsul. The philosopher, surprised at the incongruous climax of infamy with which he closes the relation of the virtues and miracles of the Redeemer (for the resurrection he derided), exclaims, Folly! However, his curiosity prompts him to extend his interrogatories, and to inquire by what power he is to accomplish his mighty project. By the power of Him, replies St. Peter, whose cross I bear. Confounded still more that he should thus boast of the secret virtue of a symbol, which, to him appeared a badge of infamy and shame, he wonders why the apostle should rely on the power of one who was not able to save himself by descending from the ignominious cross on which he was suspended.\* He, therefore, endeavours to dissuade him from his purpose, by pointing out its folly and its danger. He exhibits to him, in proud array, all the arguments which learned reason could suggest, supported by the most pompous names of Greece, or of his own country; and triumphantly inquires of the apostle, what he can allege in reply. St. Peter, with an air of abstraction, which intense attention to a single object creates, and which may wear the appearance of folly, heeds not his arguments; but reflecting on the words of the prophet: *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the prudence of the prudent I will reject*,† simply replies, my speech is not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power‡ (pointing to the cross) of this symbol of redemption. He presses him again, and again St. Peter repeats the same “foolishness” with which he first reproached him. The philosopher, astonished at the man equally obstinate and ignorant, tells him that a religion which has no reason to support it, ought to be suppressed, and that he himself will invoke the powers of the state to check the odious superstition.

\* “He saved others; himself he cannot save: if he be the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross.”—Matt. xxvii.

† 1 Cor. i. 19. Isaias, xxix. 14.

‡ Ibid. ii. 4.

Thinking to frighten the apostle by this denunciation, Seneca is impatient to know what he can oppose to the vengeance of the emperors? St. Peter meekly replies: *Patience*. Here, the philosopher imagining that such a passive and unresisting disposition but ill accorded with those schemes of conquest which he first avowed, tells him: "In that case, then, your reign shall be short, and your religion shall be extinguished in your blood." The apostle intrepidly replies: "you may shed my blood, it is true, but my religion you cannot extinguish, since that blood which you threaten to spill shall become the seed from which my religion shall spring forth with fresh vigour." Whether the philosopher was prepared to comprehend the mysterious answer which time had fully revealed to Tertullian, it is difficult to conjecture. But, compassionating such inflexible obstinacy, he calls to mind the liberal policy of Rome; and by a proposal founded on that policy, makes one last effort to consult for the safety of the apostle. "Forbear," he tells him, "a little, and cease to disturb the repose of the empire, until Tiberius shall ascertain from Pilate, the proconsul, whether Christ was such a character as you represent. And if so, the emperor may condescend to enrol him among the gods, in consequence of the piety with which he lived, and the patience with which he died."\* Here the apostle's zeal, impatient of farther discussion, takes fire at the ignominious proposal, and breaks forth into a prophetic view of the future glories of his Church. "You mistake the true object of my mission. I come not to capitulate, but to conquer. The Man-God who was crucified disdains a place among the licentious crowd of divinities that disgrace the Pantheon. Nothing less than exclusive homage shall satisfy him; nor will he be content while a single idol is

\* Tertullian, in his "Apology to the Emperor Severus," assures his readers that Tiberius proposed to the Roman Senate to enrol Christ among the gods. Alexander Severus also paid him great honour. "Christum Abrahamum et Orpheum et hujusmodi Deos, habebat."—*Historiæ Romanæ Scriptores*, vol. ii. p. 354; Geneva, MDCLIII.

worshipped throughout the empire. You may stir up the vengeance of the emperors and the fury of the people. You may array a host of your philosophers against me and my religion. The day shall come when that religion shall triumph over the powers of the earth; when my successors shall be seated on the throne of Tiberius, and the signet of Peter—the humble fisherman who now stands before you—shall obscure the lustre of the diadem of the Cæsars. The powers of the earth, it is true, jealous of their reign, shall endeavour to drown them in the tide of persecution. But though the fears of their people may imagine them for a moment buried in the deep, like a prophet whose name is familiar in the story of my country, they shall again appear, unhurt, from out the bosom of the waters. You boast of your Pantheon, as the proudest monument of Roman power and Roman genius, which have been exhausted to make it a fit residence for the majesty of your gods; yet the residence of your gods is only fit for the servants of Christ, to whose images they shall one day give place; and to whose virtues the Pantheon shall be consecrated, to be preserved to posterity as a monument of the impiety and fall of your religion; and of the sanctity and triumphs of mine. And to show you still more the influence of my religion in expanding the human mind, and imparting to it the virtue of its own omnipotence, the genius of a future artist, inspired by the sublimity of the religion which you now despise, shall lift your Pantheon to the clouds, where that object, now so colossal in your eyes, shall be seated in humble though just proportion, forming only the dome of the majestic temple which shall be inscribed to my memory, and consecrated to the worship of the God whom I adore.”\*

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\* See note, p. 160.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Religion perfected by the Redeemer, incapable of farther improvement.—Christianity broken into different systems, by the malice or ignorance of men.—Necessity of Church authority.—Errors introduced by the Reformation, very different from those of any preceding age.—Diffusion and private interpretation of the Bible.—Confederacy of the sects against the authority by which they have been condemned.—True state of the controversy between Catholics and Protestants.—Difficulties of the religious system of the latter.—They can have no well-grounded assurance of the inspiration of the Scriptures; the only source from which it can be derived is the authority of the Catholic Church.

IF the providence of God has been conspicuous in the propagation of the Christian religion, the influence of the same providence is no less manifest in its preservation. To the same divine interposition which achieved the downfall of idolatry and the establishment of the Christian Church, are we indebted for the perpetuity of the same Church, amidst all the vicissitudes of the world. Having been erected by a divine architect, it has borne in every age the marks of perfection with which he has invested it. In every preceding revelation we behold but a series of human embassies sent with a partial manifestation of the counsels of the Most High, and commissioned principally to announce the coming of the expected of nations. This large and splendid train of ambassadors was worthy of the majesty of him by whom they were succeeded; nor can it be matter of wonder that their delegated functions should be superseded by the presence of the august Sovereign.\* As Christ was the last and greatest of the prophets, he closed the series of the divine communications which had been hitherto imparted to man.

\* God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets: last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by his Son.—Heb. i. 1, 2.

Having been the individual to whom their predictions pointed, he unfolds the truths of religion in their full perfection, and brings the merciful work of man's redemption to its accomplishment. If the partial and imperfect dispensation of the old law needed the immediate hand of God to complete it, having received at length the last finish from its divine artist, in the new, it shall never require the aid of man to improve it. To perpetuate the form which God has given it, shall be the care of those to whom he has entrusted its preservation. To suffer it to be perfected by the skill or experience of mankind is an idea which our knowledge of the wisdom and omnipotence of its author forbids us to entertain. The slow and successive development of religion, from the first intimation of redemption that cheered the despondence of our first parents, until its accomplishment in the person of Christ, is analogous to all the works of providence.\* To assign the mysterious causes of its delay, cannot be more reasonably expected from our imperfect knowledge, than to explain the gradual growth of the productions of nature. Without, then, dwelling on the variety of reasons that are generally advanced, an earlier revelation might have been probably premature. It required a long lapse of time to impress man with a full conviction of his own weakness. The prophetic picture which was to represent the future realities of the Christian religion required to be stretched out over a long and distant portion of time, to prevent it from being crowded with a confusion of images. Had the stream of revelation, which flowed from the creation, been permitted earlier to spread among the nations, it might have been lost amidst the rage of concupiscence, like a river that disappears in the burning sands of the desert. And if it required the labours of a century, together with the admonitions of Noah, to construct the ark which was to save mankind from the deluge,

\* See the third and last chapters of Bishop Butler's "Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature," part 2.

it is no wonder that it should have employed the immense period of four thousand years, and the warning of many prophets, to build that spiritual bark which was destined to bear the true believers over the flood of time, until it should rest in security and triumph on the summit of the holy mountain.

Having thus conducted my reader to the establishment of the Christian Church, it might have been naturally imagined that our labours would here terminate. But, unfortunately for the repose of the world, those who have thus far combated for the truth now strenuously controvert the nature of the revelation; and no sooner do they triumph over the enemies of Christianity, than their strength is mutually wasted in intestine contention. Hence, every age has witnessed the most angry controversies among those, who, acknowledging the truth of the Christian religion, have zealously disputed its genuine possession.

In vain, then, should we have proved the existence of the Christian Church, if we were not able to distinguish it from the counterfeit impostures with which it is attempted to be confounded. It is not enough to show that revelation has been once imparted; it is likewise necessary to prove that this revelation has reached us unadulterated. Among the various claimants to the inheritance of Christ, we must determine who are they whose pretensions are best founded. The name of Christianity does not necessarily imply the true profession of the religion of Christ, since Christianity itself has branched out into as great a variety of discordant systems as the ancient philosophy. Yet, amidst this strange confusion, all are equally confident that they have inherited the religion of Jesus Christ. As then the true Church, whatever it may be, can pretend to nothing more than the faithful possession of the Christian doctrine, it must be confessed that that society is best entitled to the name, whose principles are best calculated to preserve and perpetuate its purity.

Important as this controversy always has been, it has acquired fresh interest since the era of that religious revolution, called the Reformation; in no country, however, more than in our own, where the division of Christians into two powerful bodies, has kept alive an incessant contest among the adherents of the rival Churches. Though there are many points at issue between Catholics and Protestants, on which much of polemical skill has been displayed, yet the simple question of the authority of the Church is that which is most deserving of their mutual attention. Instead of an intricate maze of disputation, through which one might wander for ever, without coming to any definite conclusion, the controversy on the authority of the Church is palpable to every apprehension. It is one which, though not beyond the reach of the humblest capacity, may yet employ the range of the most vigorous and excursive intellects. Hence, ever since the celebrated conference of Bossuet and Claude, the two most distinguished champions of their respective creeds, the authority of the Church has been an important and unceasing theme of discussion. As it has been the common centre of the union of Catholics, it has been the common point of the hostility of Protestants; and however adverse the creeds, and rancorous the jealousies, of the reformed sects, their mutual impatience of control has often suspended their intestine divisions, to league them in opposition to that authority by which they have been proscribed.

In contemplating the character of the revolution, which, in the sixteenth century, produced the separation of a large portion of the Church from the parent stock, we will find it marked by a peculiarity, which distinguishes it from every other. Each preceding error was opposed to some particular tenet of Catholic belief; and if it was cherished for some time, it was because authority was rather eluded than resisted. The most contumacious unbelievers were ready to profess their respect for the decisions of the proper tribu-

nals ; and if they refused acquiescence, it was because they affected to doubt the legitimate exercise of its power, rather than to question its existence. The restless love of novelty exhausted at length the circle of human errors, by resting upon one when driven from another, until, finding no new ground on which to repose, it turned upon that authority by which it had been pursued through the labyrinth of its wanderings. This is the new feature that discriminates the errors of modern times. If the Donatists protracted their schisms, it was because they pretended that the bishop of Carthage, from whom they separated, in consequence of the crimes with which he was charged, had been absolved by corrupt and interested judges.\* If the followers of Eutyches defended that there was but one nature in Christ after the incarnation, it was, they said, because the doctrine was included in the definition of the fathers of Ephesus.† The council of Chalcedon it is true, soon corrected their mistake ; and those who were animated with a love of truth and unity, soon returned to the bosom of the Church. Such, however, as resisted the authority of the council of Chalcedon, affected to believe that it was opposed to that of Ephesus, and thus would fain palliate their resistance, under the mask of respect for authority. These observations are applicable to almost every error that deformed the faith of the Church, as well as to every schism that disturbed its tranquillity during fifteen centuries. The necessity of some coercive authority was generally acknowledged by all, while, in their application of this truth, they ingeniously discovered reasons to justify them in eluding its exercise. The doctrines of one, it was said, had been misrepresented by envy ; malevolence had imputed false crimes to another. The Roman pontiff had been often imposed on by the artifices of individuals interested in

\* The monuments pertaining to the history of the Donatist schism, are collected with care, and arranged with judgment, in Du Pin's edition of Optatus, folio.

† See Baronius ad an. 448, 451.

misinforming him on distant transactions; and the fathers of a general council were not unfrequently represented as the factious partisans of some powerful patriarch, jealous of the influence of a rival.\* Such were generally the arguments by which the heretics of former times endeavoured to shield themselves against the spiritual terrors of the Church; and such are the apologies that are still advanced by those historians who are partial to their memory. It was reserved, however, for the spirit of a later age to assert an unlimited independence of thinking on the most mysterious subjects of religion. Not content with controverting the truth, it controverts the authority by which truth has been decided. While others have sought to diminish Christ's doctrine by the subtraction of some precious article of belief; it is now attempted to dissipate the whole by wresting it from the possession of those to whom it has been entrusted. Heretofore the New Testament was considered as a precious inheritance, bequeathed by Christ to his spouse for the benefit of her children. To protect it from profanation, it was confided to the apostles as a sacred deposit, and transmitted by them to their successors, who were to guard it with similar care. Equally vigilant against the craft of the thief, and the violence of the robber, they have preserved it unimpaired. When persecutors strove to destroy this legacy, by consigning the Sacred Volume to the flames, it was rescued by their zeal from the danger with which it was threatened. And when the prodigal children of the Church, abusing her bounty, would fain squander their portion of the inheritance, and wander into a far country, like a tender parent she wept over their errors, recalling them again to feast in their father's house, and to

\* The council of Ephesus was represented to have acted under the influence of Cyril of Alexandria, whose opposition to Nestorius was imputed to jealousy of the rising power of the bishops of Constantinople. Nestorius is still a favourite with modern heretics, who fancy that by treating the mother of God with indignity, they are proving their respect for her Son.—See Mosheim, century v. cap. v. § 7. See also Brett's "Judgment of Truth," p. 27; Dub. 1770.

partake of the banquet in which they might still share, but which she could not suffer to be dissipated.

Now, however, the Church experiences a revolt unexampled in the history of former ages. The natural alliance which mutually connects the Testament of Christ and its guardians—an alliance sealed with his blood—is violated, and the rich deposit which he bequeathed is attempted to be scattered abroad, not only to be enjoyed by the observers, but to be rifled by the violators, of his covenant. Mixed with the impure errors that cover the earth, the truths of this divine Testament, when dispersed out of the Catholic Church, gradually disappear. Like the manna which fed the Israelites from heaven, and which, if collected as God had prescribed, became substantial nourishment, but vanished from those who sought it in any other way; the word of God becomes life to those who seek it from the Church, while it eludes the search of all who only follow their own caprices. In vain, then, is the world inundated with Bibles. The dead letter may be circulated without being informed by the Spirit, which maketh wise unto salvation. All may be invited to slake their thirst with the divine word: but let them recollect that after being forced out of the inclosures of that Church, which is called “the sealed fountain,”\* its contents, instead of being pure, are the poisoned “waters of the broken cistern.”

Hence the strange alliance between infidelity and fanaticism, that characterises our period.† Retaining, by the principle of resistance to authority, the very root of infidelity, men still affect to consult the inspired writings for what they ought to believe: the result is such as might be expected. Under the common name of Christianity, infidelity lies disguised; and from the latitude of belief, which has resulted from each one’s sense of the inspired writings, unbelievers have dis-

\* Cantic. iv. 12.

† See the sixth chapter (vol. i.) of the “*Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de Religion*,” by La Mennais.

covered that to abandon them to the interpretation of each individual, is the most effectual plan to propagate their infidelity. The contest does not now, as heretofore, turn on any peculiar tenet of the Catholic Church. Its very authority is aimed at; and the abettors of the perfectibility of the human mind flatter themselves that they have superseded the power of the Church, by having erected the monstrous system of Bible Societies. This is but giving a new name to the principle of private judgment, from which the pretended Reformation sprung. The spirit of man is inventive, and one folly quickly succeeds another. However, in this vast design of reducing the world to a uniformity of faith, by the dumb authority of the Bible, the ancient feuds of the sectaries seem to suffer a temporary respite. In the hope of deposing that authority, which equally proscribes them all, they forbear advancing their own claims to any peculiar election. Weary of an incessant struggle, in which they had wasted each other's strength without any prospect of victory, they have adopted more moderate counsels, in order to effect a stronger opposition against the authority of the Church. But this confederacy will soon be dissolved. The elements of discord, of which it is composed, are incapable of strong or lasting cohesion. Like the leagues which were often formed against the Church, this too will soon pass away, and its fleeting existence will be only remembered as another trophy of the strength of that Church, which it was intended to overturn.

To fix, then, the faith of the true believer, as well as to enable those who have strayed from the paths of truth, to retrace their wandering footsteps, shall be the object of the succeeding chapters. In the prosecution of a work in which the elucidation of truth is my aim, I shall abstain from every topic that can be considered only a subject of barren disputation. If candour and temper are deemed essential qualities in every writer who wishes to make a favourable

impression; much more necessary is it for him who labours to promote the interests of charity and the salvation of mankind, to lay aside every acrimonious feeling. In entering on a discussion in which the spiritual interests of millions are involved, a writer must not lose sight of the nature of the object in which he is engaged. It is not a philosophical discussion, of which the issue is to depend on the subtlety of argument, or the variety of learning, with which either champion shall vindicate his cause. Much learning and ingenuity may be displayed in the support of an erroneous position; and if truth were never supposed to triumph until the spirit of cavil should yield, the sum of certain and indisputable principles would be reduced to a small number. Of the force of subtle and metaphysical arguments the people are incompetent judges; nor can he be supposed best calculated to guide their belief, who leads them through a labyrinth where but few can follow. The advocate of one system may be satisfied with the evidence by which it is supported. But if the process of reasoning by which he has arrived at his conclusions be intricate, while he displays the force of his own mind, he ought to reflect that such a process is not obvious to every capacity. As the present controversy, then, regards principally the great bulk of mankind, it might happen that the mode of reasoning in which most ingenuity could be displayed, would be the least adapted to their apprehensions. We are to recollect that it is to the poor that Christ chiefly preached the Gospel, and that he gave thanks to his heavenly Father for having revealed to the "little ones what he had hidden from the wise and prudent of the world."\* Having, therefore, in view these words of Christ as our motto, we shall leave to others the subtlety of disputation, conscious that the poor and the little ones are our clients; and our cause the interests of their salvation.

\* Luke, x. 21.

Having descended upon earth to rescue mankind from sin and error, Christ bequeathed to them a religion calculated to dispel the darkness of the one, and to heal the wounds of the other. To this religion he invited all: and lest they should think themselves at liberty to reject or adopt it, he promised salvation to those that believe, while he threatened the unbeliever with condemnation. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.\** To insure a compliance with the obligations which Christ imposed, two different methods are proposed for the adoption of the people. By the one, they are required to follow the direction of a large and visible society of men who profess to teach the same doctrine which Christ has communicated by virtue of the succession which they trace from the apostles, and through them, from Christ himself. By the other, they are required to take and read the Scriptures; and to form from them the rule of their belief and practice, without reference to any authority save what their conscience imposes. This is the true state of the controversy between Catholics and Protestants, when stripped of those superfluous questions by which it has been encumbered.† The rejection of every other authority, save that of the Word of God, as interpreted by each one's conscience, has been the foundation on which the religion of Protestants has been reared. It is the principle which is still avowed by the consistent advocates of the system; and if the Church of England has courted the alliance of any other, it is because, like every revolutionary power, she grasps that authority which she had overthrown, lest herself should become the victim of a similar revolution. Whatever, then, of exterior authority is preserved in any Protestant community, is not a genuine feature of

\* Mark, xvi, 16.

† See Tournely de Ecclesia, tom. i. at the article, "An et quis sit supremus Judex controversiarum fidei?" The compressed and accurate tract of Doctor Delahogue, De Ecclesia, may also be consulted with advantage on this important question.

that religion.\* It can only belong to the Catholic Church. When, therefore, power is claimed by any Protestant society, it is in direct violation of the principles to which it owed its birth; and it is maintained only for the purpose of counterfeiting the Catholic Church, or of protracting its own existence. These observations are made for the purpose of directing the attention of the sincere inquirer to the simple and original difference that marks the two methods recommended, lest he should be deceived by the appearance of authority assumed by some Protestant Churches, but which is utterly at variance with the primitive nature of their creed.

That the method which constitutes every individual the judge of the inspired writings, and the arbiter of what he is to believe, is the one which is most flattering to the wise and the prudent, cannot be controverted. But since Christ has hidden these things from the wise and prudent,† we shall next inquire which method is best adapted to the “poor and the little ones” to whom he has revealed them.

In the system which constitutes the written Word of God, as interpreted by each one’s reason or caprice, the sole legitimate standard of religious belief, there are difficulties which cannot be reconciled with Christ’s merciful plan of affording instruction to the poor and the little ones.‡ I shall not now speak of the comparatively small number of copies of the inspired writings which were thinly scattered over the Christian world before

\* Doctor Brett insists (p. 20) on the distinction between the principles of the Reformation and the principles of the reformers, the latter erecting the authority which the former had overturned. On the definition of heresy, enacted 1 Eliz. c. ii. he remarks: “Scripture alone would, I must think, have told them what was or was not heresy; and when councils were called in [he contemptuously overlooks the co-ordinate authority of the parliament and convocation], the first justificative principle upon which the reformers set out was plainly abdicated, fairly renounced. As soon as the authority of councils was admitted, the right to reform was given up.”—“Judgment of Truth,” p. 25; Dub. 1770.

Such is also the well-known doctrine of Chillingworth:—“The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants.” See his “Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation,” chap. vi. A work written in defence of his apostasy.

† Matt. xi. 25.

‡ See Dr. Milner’s “End of Religious Controversy,” part i., letters 8 and 9.

the introduction of printing. I shall not insist how rare was the qualification of reading, or to how few this invaluable privilege was then confined. Nor shall I dwell on the circumstance, that in despite of all the efforts made by wealth and benevolence united for the education of the poor, numbers of every age, and sex, and country, must still remain ignorant of the very elements of literature, from the necessity of their condition. I shall not dwell upon those topics, though the evidence which they furnish of the absurdity of a system which makes every individual the arbiter of his own creed, should make its abettors blush at the extravagant consequences to which it leads.\* To how few could the blessings of Christianity be imparted if the Scriptures were to be the sole medium of their communication? If there were no other tree from which the fruit of knowledge could be plucked, how few could enter the forbidden enclosure? To millions, as they journey through the desert, the waters of life would be as inaccessible as those in the rock, ere Moses had touched it, until they had been drawn forth by a similar authority to slake the thirst and sustain the weariness of God's creatures. I shall not, however, dwell on the consequences which must be obvious to every reader. But there are features of this controversy which deserve to be exhibited to those who seriously imagine that the Scripture, and the Scripture alone, is our sole guide in religion.

Let us suppose, in defiance of the practical difficulties of the supposition, that all mankind are furnished with a sufficient quantity of Bibles and sufficient qualifications for their perusal. Let us suppose that the rage which now agitates the world to diffuse the holy writings is not a mere ephemeral impulse of fashionable fanaticism which will be soon succeeded by some folly

\* Episcopius seriously wishes that husbandmen and mechanics should learn the original languages of the Bible, and of course of the early versions, that each might be qualified to form a correct judgment for himself on a matter of such paramount consequence as the meaning of the Scriptures!

more novel and attractive.\* Can it be seriously imagined that the Bible is the sole standard by which each one is to regulate his religious belief? If it be the exclusive criterion on which man is to form that faith on which his salvation depends, how painful must be his task, and how distressing his anxiety? He must bring to the perusal of that book a faith yet unfixed, opinions as yet fluctuating, in order that he may determine them by the result of his own study and researches. He must place all the notions which he has inherited from his parents on one side, and those he receives from the perusal of the Scriptures in juxtaposition on the other; and then suffer his judgment to weigh maturely the comparison. All the mysterious topics of grace, of free will, of original sin, of predestination, of the Trinity, the incarnation, and the real presence, must pass in review before his intellect, while he examines whether the hereditary ideas he has received on those subjects be conformable to the evidence of Scripture. The Bible is of too vast an extent to enable him to form an accurate comparison after one or two perusals. It will require the leisure and diligence of many years to perform the stupendous task. Alas! how few are favoured with the opportunity of giving so much attention to the subject! Yet all this is necessary in the system which shuts us out from every other means of arriving at that knowledge which is necessary for salvation.

Again, on receiving the Divine Word as the guide of his religion, one who acknowledges no other authority must naturally inquire whether he is assured of its inspiration?† Without this assurance he cannot advance a step in his inquiry. If it were possible that the book which he receives as inspired, or any portion of it, were a human composition; then the faith which is founded on its authority, reposes not on a divine foundation.

\* See the third and fourth chapters of the spirited pamphlet, called "Observations on the State of Political and Religious Feeling in Ireland," by the Rev. A. O'Callaghan, A.M.; Lond., 1827.

† The difficulties attendant on this view of the subject are placed in the clearest evidence by Bossuet, in the celebrated Conference with Claude.

And yet from whom does he receive this assurance? Is it from his pastor or his parents? Can he acquiesce in their assurance, when from the very outset of his inquiry, he takes up the Scripture to canvas the truth of their traditions. If he were to depend upon their single and unsupported testimony, he might, for aught he knows as yet to the contrary, receive from them, instead of the inspired writings, the Koran of Mahomet. He must then rely on some other source, which will convey something like certainty to his mind. If he imagines (and this is a supposition seriously made) that the Scripture will flash upon every mind the evidence of its inspiration, experience contradicts the flattering idea. The keen perception of Luther could not discover in the Epistle of St. James, any evidence that it was inspired.\* To the intellectual eyes of others, there appeared nothing divine in the Visions of the Apocalypse. Whole books of the Old Testament were rejected by some of the ancient heretics,† because they seemed to them unworthy of the Divinity. To an unprejudiced reader, there seems to run through some of the books which are rejected by Protestants, the same evidence of their inspiration that is said to be felt in others. Taste, then, is too capricious a standard to detect the inspiration of Scripture: a principle which has been productive of such a variety of deplorable consequences,‡ cannot bring with it the tranquillity of a settled conviction. No alternative then remains, save that of adopting their inspiration on the authority of the Church. If the authority of the Church be the motive of acquiescing in their inspired origin, then that authority must precede our belief of the Scripture,

\* This is the fair construction of the epithet "Straminea," even in the opinion of Bayle. This sarcasm of the father of the Reformation gave rise to a protracted and acrimonious controversy—a sketch of which may be found in notes N. O. P. of "Bayle's Dictionary," Art. Luther; ed. Amsterdam, 1720. The centuriators of Magdeburg did not fail to improve on the opinion of their master.—Cent. 1, lib. ii., c. 4.

† The Ebionites rejected the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the Epistles of St. Paul; S. Epiph. Hær. 30. The Gnostics expunged the Psalms from the list of canonical Scriptures.—Idem, Hær. 42, &c.

‡ See the end of Religious Controversy, Part I., letter 6.

and must of course form its foundation. If this authority of the Church be secure and unerring, then we have some fixed anchor by which to bind our faith, before we suffer ourselves to float on the ocean of revelation. But if we entertain any doubt of the validity of that authority, the same doubt will check our confidence in the inspiration of the written word; and plunge us at once into infidelity and error. The consequence of that process must therefore be obvious, which would make the Scriptures the sole foundation of our religion. The principle, by loosening the Scriptures themselves from their connexion with tradition, would involve their authority in doubt and uncertainty.

In vain will it be advanced that we receive the Scriptures on the authority of the Church—viewing it as a historical medium which conveys to us a strong moral certainty. The admission would not exalt the quality of our faith beyond that conviction, which human testimony conveys. Yet as divine faith essentially reposes on the divine authority, there must be something beyond mere human testimony, from which it derives its supernatural impression. Again the inspiration of Scripture is a quality, which the evidence of human testimony can never reach. Its knowledge must be derived from a higher origin. It is not enough that a book be the production of an apostle, to conciliate the character of inspiration. Nor is it necessary that of every book of the New Testament, an apostle should have been the author. Of the first assertion, we have a proof in the epistle which is ascribed to Barnabas, the apostle.\* We question not its authenticity, yet we adopt not its inspiration.† If a moral certainty that a particular book is the production of an apostle, be the only motive to determine the judgment of a Protestant in the choice of the inspired writings, I know not with what consist-

\* "He is said to be full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."—Acts, xi. 24. "He is called an apostle."—Acts, xiv. 13.

† See Du Pin, "Dissertation préliminaire sur la Bible," lib. ii. c. 6, § 7.

ency he can refuse to incorporate the epistle of St. Barnabas with the canonical Scriptures.\* But if, notwithstanding this moral certainty that it is the genuine production of an apostle, he places it beyond the pale of inspiration, it is clear that in receiving the other Scriptures as inspired, he is guided by some other motive, however unconscious he may be of its force. And this motive is no other than the silent authority of the Church, which he may still be unwilling to avow. The delusive right of private judgment will not enable him to ascertain the difference; for the epistle of St. Barnabas seems to breathe as fervent a spirit of devotion, as may be felt in those books which are adopted as inspired.

Nay, it is not necessary that the inspired books should have the apostles for their authors. Thus the Gospels of Mark and Luke, together with the Acts of the Apostles, are revered as a portion of the inspired and canonical Scripture, though their authors are not numbered even among the disciples of our Redeemer. History asserts, if you will, that those works are the genuine productions of those men to whom they are ascribed. Yet can all the evidence of history reveal the mysterious secret of their inspiration? Let us suppose that all the light which the collected testimony of ages can furnish, leads us back to the genuine source of those writings; still, without some other guide, we look in vain for the proofs of their inspiration. Are we to believe them inspired on their own authority? St. Mark, if I mistake not, asserts no such claim; and from the perusal of the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke, the reader should be led to conclude, that to his own curious industry alone was the evangelist indebted for his information.† Besides,

\* Should the Protestant refuse to acknowledge the authority of the early fathers, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Jerome, regarding the epistle of Barnabas, he may perhaps respect the opinion of Lardner, who admits it to be genuine.—Credibility of the Gospel History, vol. iii. b. i.

† "It seemed good to me also, having diligently attained to all things from the

were they to assert the fact that they were inspired, since an enthusiast or impostor might do the same, the rules of sound and impartial criticism would still require that we should not yield our assent to a testimony, of which we cannot ascertain the truth, but by some extrinsic evidence. And what evidence have these Evangelists furnished? Miracles? It is not recorded in Scripture that they performed any. The testimony of other inspired writers? I do not find in the writings of the other apostles any clear and explicit passage, in which they bear to those of Mark and Luke any such attestation. The only source, then, from which we can derive the assurance of their inspiration is the authority of the Church.\* No evidence of human testimony, however splendid, can bring with it conviction on this mysterious subject. Without any other assignable motive, save this authority, we refuse to recognise the inspiration of a letter, which is the acknowledged production of an apostle, nay, which some ancient fathers ranked with the canonical Scriptures; and yet we admit the inspiration of other works written by individuals who may have had not more immediate intercourse with our Redeemer.

This comparison, on which I have dwelt, between the epistle of St. Barnabas and the writings of St. Luke, is worthy the attention of those who pretend that they are influenced by no authority save that of Scripture. Should they bestow more consideration on the subject, they cannot but come to the conclusion, that the infallibility of the Church and the inspiration of the Scripture are so entwined, that we cannot reject the authority of the one without doubting the certainty of the other. It was the clear perception of this intimate union, that drew from the great Augustine the memorable words, "I should not believe the Gospel

beginning, to write to thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mayest know the verity of those words," &c.—Luke, i. 3, 4.

\* Remarkable as it must have appeared, Luther was forced to confess, that if he and his associates had not received the Word of God from the Catholic Church, they should have known nothing about it.—Com. in Joan. cap. 16.

were I not influenced by the authority of the Catholic Church.”\*

The difficulty of ascertaining, by the aid of unassisted reason, the inspiration of Scripture, is one which ought to subdue the confidence of every conscientious Protestant. After the controversial efforts of three centuries, it still lies in the way; and, like the stone of Sisyphus, † rolls back upon those individuals who labour to upheave it. Yet this is not the only obstacle in the way of certainty, which they have to vanquish, who trust their faith to their own interpretation of the inspired writings. A long interval of time has flown since the origin of the Christian religion, during which period the original revelation has passed through a variety of translations. The fidelity of such versions must entirely depend on the knowledge and accuracy of the translators. To ascertain their qualifications by a comparison between the translated and original text, is a task beyond the powers of the generality of readers. Yet it is of vital importance to them to know, whether the original meaning be faithfully transmitted through the new medium. Nor is this an imaginary difficulty, since the heretics of every age have been reproached with unfaithfully rendering the original text, and accommodating it to their own errors. ‡ And can the Protestant be secure from similar apprehensions, especially when he reflects on the long catalogue of mistranslations which the learning of Ward has discovered in the Protestant Bible? No matter, as far as regards the present question, whether Ward exaggerated some, and introduced imaginary errors. His triumphant appeal to the original language is on record; nor can any individual who follows no other guide than the

\* Lib. contra Epist. Fundam, cap. v.

† “Sisyphus versat  
Saxum sudans nitendo, neque proficit hilum.”

Vetus Poeta apud Cic. Lib. Tusc. Qu.

‡ Zuingle calls Luther an impostor, who changes and corrupts the Sacred Word. Luther was not more partial to the biblical labours of Zuingle. These mutual invectives were common among the Reformers.—See Florimond, liv. i. cap. 15, note 7.

sacred text, rest secure until he has ascertained, by a diligent comparison, the truth or falsehood of Ward's accusations.\* How few possess the union of learning and industry which such an examination would require! and how few, by a necessary consequence, are not doomed to trust their belief to a mere human authority. which can afford no pledge that it will not betray them into error! How a Protestant can reconcile these obvious difficulties with a system which disclaims the support of every argument but Scripture, is a question that has been frequently pressed, but never yet sufficiently answered.

Let us suppose that in the course of the inquiry which leads a learned Protestant to explore the sources from which the certainty of the inspiration of Scripture is derived, he should adopt the doubts which some of the ancients entertained regarding the epistle to the Hebrews, or the Apocalypse.† To what authority shall we have recourse to fix his indecision? Should he confidently trust himself to the force of the arguments of either side, his doubts will not be dissipated; since the uncertainty of some of the fathers arose from the circumstance that the arguments were equally balanced. It is in vain for him to quote the decree of the Council of Carthage, which fixed the canon of the Scriptures. For him the decrees of councils have no weight; and therefore his mind must be for ever perplexed between the force of opposite arguments; or he must surrender his conviction to an authority which at once dissolves

\* Dr. Ryan has attempted this task in his "Analysis"—a work more remarkable for ingenuity than candour. It has been triumphantly confuted by Dr. Lingard in his "Preface to the Fourth Edition" of the *Errata*; Dub. 1807, 1810. That even the present authorised (Protestant) version is not beyond the necessity of farther improvement, appears from an "Essay for a new translation of the Bible," by H. R.; ed. London, 1727.

† The Epistle to the Hebrews was by some ascribed to St. Barnabas, by others to St. Luke, and even to St. Clement. See Du Pin, *Disc. Prelim. lib. ii. cap. 2, § viii.* The name of the apostle is struck from the title of this epistle in the Protestant (English) edition of 1579. (The expression of Fulke is from some of our translations.) The doubts of the ancients regarding the authenticity and canonicity of the Apocalypse will be found in Euseb. *Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. vii. cap. 24,* and in the Epistle of St. Jerome to Dardanus. Among the moderns, Erasmus leans to the negative opinion.

all his ideas of independence. Whatever may be the pretext, it is certain that no other motive, save the authority of the Church, silently but forcibly determines the Protestant. to receive as inspired, the same books which the Catholic Church reveres. Now all the books which she offers to her children as vehicles of the divine word, are entitled to the same veneration. To her sacred authority the precious legacy has been confided: it is through her authority that it becomes entitled to our respect. Reject any one book of the sacred canon of the Catholic Church, the motive of your rejection will equally affect others that are acknowledged as inspired. Tear but a single leaf from the charter of revelation, you snap the very thread that keeps its different parts together. Encouraged by your rashness, another will make an attempt still more sacrilegious, by taking asunder some obnoxious portion. Emboldened by the temerity of Luther, who got rid of the Epistle of St. James, because he could not relish its recommendation of good works, some other pretended reformer may reject any book equally opposed to his own peculiar tenets. Were the Catholic to yield thus in a single instance, every part of the Christian inheritance should be successively forfeited to the daring individuals who might presume to question the validity of its possession; and the sacred charter that contains it, should be yielded to every critic who would choose to impeach its claim to inspiration.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION.

Farther difficulties of the Protestant System.—Argument from experience.—The Early Heretics defended their most mischievous errors by an appeal to the Written Word.—The Ebionites.—Sabellians.—Arians—Nestorians—Eutychians—Monothelites.—The Pelagians and Donatists.—Immoral and impious Sectaries of the Middle Ages.—Rise and religious systems of the Reformers.—Their principles soon urged to the most blasphemous lengths.—Celebrated Confession of Ausburg.—Socinians.—The Principles of the Reformation hostile to morality.—The Anabaptists.—Reformations of England.—Distinction of Fundamental and Non-Fundamental Articles.—Doctrines of Paley, Balguy, and Watson.

IN the preceding chapter the reader has been made acquainted with the doubts which must perplex every inquisitive and conscientious Protestant regarding the inspiration of the Scriptures. He has seen that these doubts must necessarily be dissipated by the authority of the Church; else they may finally conduct him to the gradual rejection of many parts of the inspired writings. Yet these are not the only circumstances that are calculated to abate his confidence in the security of that medium which he chooses for his only guide in the way of salvation. Were he to entertain no uneasiness on the mysterious question of the inspiration of Scripture: were he to enjoy the most tranquil conviction, that the books which are placed in his hands are exclusively the Word of God, the experience of history will teach him, that the sole written Word of God can never lead him to the important result of ascertaining the true religion. While the credulous votaries of those who pretend to afford the guidance of the Divine Word, listen to their flattering promises, instead of following its heavenly light they are pursuing only

meteors of delusion. What avails it to any individual that the Word of God is put into his hands, if its true sense be perverted by an erroneous construction? The integrity of the Divine Word suffers equally from cancelling any of its parts and from misinterpreting its genuine meaning.\* Yet, can a Protestant, who is left to his own unassisted exposition of the text, enjoy a full security that he has ascertained its true import? Had such an opinion been defended before the light of experience had brought out its refutation to public view, the confidence of the Protestant might appear more reasonable, and his temerity more capable of apology. But that, after the experience of eighteen centuries which have witnessed the melancholy and rapid succession of errors the most revolting, the perspicuity of the Sacred Volume should still be insisted on, betrays a pertinacity in ancient prejudices which no force of experience can subdue.

It is now confessed by the votaries of modern wisdom and the advocates of the perfectibility of our nature, that experience furnishes one of the most cogent and convincing arguments that can be addressed to the human mind.† And, if the world has been so long detained in subjection to prejudice, it is, if we are to believe them, because fanciful theories were suffered to supersede the sober results of a practical philosophy. Applying this principle to the subject now before us, we shall, by a brief and comprehensive reference to the history of past times, dispassionately examine how far the clearness of Scripture and its adaptation to every capacity have been illustrated in the tenets of those who have professed to make it the standard of their religious opinions.

The number of the early heretics who appealed to Scripture for the truth of their tenets would swell to a large catalogue; and a minute detail of their errors

\* “*Tantum veritati obstreperit aduler sensus, quantum et corruptor stylus.*”—Tertullian.

† This is the great principle of the Baconian philosophy.

would be disgusting to the taste and delicacy of my readers.\* From Simon,† who, by the unanimous consent of ecclesiastical writers, has been ranked the first of the series, to Arius of Alexandria, a number of heretics arose who disturbed the peace of Christianity by their religious dissensions. As I intend to reserve for a particular work the fuller history of those errors, I shall only remark, that while their principles were as subversive of morality as they were contrary to sound doctrine, they confidently appealed to the evidence of the inspired writings.‡ On the pretended authority of St. Matthew, who recorded with minuteness the actions of the Man-God, the Ebionites,§ a sect of Jewish origin, denied the divinity of our Redeemer. Sabellius and the celebrated Paul of Samosata had recourse to the authority of the Divine Word, while the former confounded the persons of the Trinity and refined their names into mere abstractions;|| and the latter maintained that Jesus Christ had sprung from the earth and not descended from heaven.¶ To illustrate, by one example, the wild extravagance of the errors of the early Sectaries, Menander blasphemously assumed the character of Saviour, and insisted that his baptism not only expiated sin, but that it was likewise a charm against death and infirmity.\*\* Without pursuing, however, the fleeting forms of those obscure fanatics

\* The learned and curious reader may consult the first chapters of Petau de Incarnat. Dog. Theol. tom. iv., Part I.

† Acts, viii. Baronius ad an. 67, &c.

‡ “Scripturam sacram pro ipsa sua altitudine non uno eodemque sensu universi accipiunt; sed ejusdem eloquia aliter alius atque alius interpretatur, ut pene quot homines sunt, tot illinc sententiæ. . . . . Aliter namque illam Novatianus, aliter Sabellius, etc., exponit.”—Vincent. Lerinen. Comm. cap. ii.

§ Some trace this name to the founder, others to the poverty of the sect, others again to the contempt in which it was held by some of the incredulous Jews. Origen and Eusebius ascribe it to the penury and meanness of their faith; other conjectures it would be superfluous to add.—See Epiph. Hær. 30, and Simon’s Hist. Critique du Nouv. Testament, tom. i. cap. 8.

|| Epiph. Hær. 62.

¶ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast., lib. vii. cap. 29, 30.

\*\* Epiph. Hær. 2. Euseb. lib. iii. cap. 26.

through the darkness of the first ages of the Church, I shall come to that celebrated epoch when the spirit of error assailed with most success the doctrines of Christianity.

Arius attempted to dethrone the Son of God from the honours which he shared with his Eternal Father,\* and in this impious attempt, he turned against the Son the force of his own words. The Protestant, who adores the divinity of Christ, would shudder at such blasphemy. Yet, it was the weapon of the modern Protestant that was wielded by Arius when he sought texts to support him, in the inspired Word of God. The errors of Arius, for error is fugitive, were succeeded by Macedonius, who hurled against the divine majesty of the Holy Ghost the same arms of the divine Word which his predecessor had directed against the divinity of the Son.† The heresies concerning the Trinity were now exhausted. In the Incarnation, the restless activity of the human mind found a more prolific theme of error and dispute. Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, affected to be shocked at the language that would call Christ the true Son, or Mary the Mother of God.‡ To protect the honour of the Divinity from this profanation, he pretended that the Redeemer was composed of two persons, of whom one was eternally begotten of the Father, and the other in time

\* Socrat. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. ii. cap. 5, 6.

† Athanasius, lib. De S. Spiritu. "Quos πνευματομαχους Græci dicunt, eo quod de Spiritu Sancto litigent."—August. Hær. 52.

‡ Evagr. Schol. lib. i., cap. 2, 3, 4. See the acts of the Council of Ephesus, and Petau. de Incarn. cap. vii., viii., ix., x. The greater part of the numerous followers of the doctrines of this heresiarch have been reconciled to the Catholic Church. The patriarch Abdissi or Hebed-Jesu, who claimed jurisdiction over the Christians of the East, visited Rome, and received the pallium from Pius IV. in 1562 (Spondan. ad. an). His profession of faith was presented in session xxii. of the Council of Trent; but his assumption of authority over the churches of India was opposed by the ambassador of Portugal, in the name of his royal master. Elias, one of the succeeding patriarchs of this sect, sent an embassy and confession of faith to Paul V., but hesitated at first to apply to the Blessed Virgin the epithet θεοτοκος, the criterion of orthodoxy. The difficulty, however, was soon arranged to the entire satisfaction of the Holy See.—See Doucin, His. du Nestorianisme; 4to. Paris, 1698: a learned and very entertaining work.

received his birth from the Blessed Virgin. To support, however, this distinction of persons in Christ, as fanciful as it was impious, he cited a profusion of Scripture testimonies.

While Nestorius imagined that he beheld in the inspired writings the clearest evidence of his system, Eutyches saw in the same medium an opposite system, defined with the most exact precision. Instead of beholding two persons in Christ, even his double nature entirely disappeared from the vision of this enthusiastic monk. Rapt in the contemplation of the Divinity, every other object was lost; and according to him, the earthly substance of Christ was totally merged in the immensity of the Godhead.\* Of the errors of Eutyches, that of the Monothelites, who asserted only a single will in Christ, was the natural offspring.† To spare, however, the patience of my readers, I shall not follow these speculative errors into the fantastic variety into which they spread. For him, however, who makes the Scripture his sole rule of faith, it may be necessary to observe, that the authors of the heresies, which shook the Eastern Church, during the first eight centuries, and which it required the authority of many general councils to check, were all founded on a confident but erroneous reference to Scripture.‡ Until the controversy was settled by authority, the flexible and disputatious genius of the Greeks could equally marshal Scripture texts on either side of the question. From the fourth to the seventh century, when their intestine quarrels were suspended by the devouring hostility of Mahometanism, the Eastern Empire was almost a perpetual theatre of theological contention.

Nor was the Western Church wholly free from those

\* Vide Theodoret. tom. iv. dial. ii.; ed. Sirmond. Evagr. Schol. lib. i., cap. 9.

† The monuments of this heresy will be found in the acts of the sixth general council (the third of Constantinople). See also Petau. de Incarn. cap. xix., xx., xxi.

‡ This is manifest even from the liberal pages of Du Pin.—See his “Biblioth. des Aut. Eccl. passim.”

errors, to which the undisciplined perusal of the Scriptures gave birth. The Pelagians asserted an exemption from the guilt and punishment of original sin, and would fain sustain the new tenet, on the authority of inspiration.\* The Donatists denied the validity of baptism conferred by heretics; and confined the existence of the true Church to the boundaries of their own country. In the latter error they were oppressed by the learning of St. Augustine, who showed that their pretensions were inconsistent with the predictions in which the prophets announced the vast and unbounded empire of the Church. But on the former point, he modestly confesses that he, too, required the authority of the Church to guide him, and offers, as an apology for St. Cyprian, that in his days, the controversy was as yet undecided. Yet the Protestant embraces the doctrine of the Catholic Church, on the validity of a baptism which a heretic confers. If the question were to be decided solely by a reference to Scripture, it would not be difficult to offer an apology for the errors of the Donatists, since St. Cyprian appealed to the Scripture in support of his similar opinion. His error proved that the Scripture, subjected to individual interpretation, was liable to mislead: and the same apology might be offered for the Donatists, if they had not rejected that authority to which St. Cyprian was disposed to bow, and added to their errors the guilt of obstinacy and schism.

To come rapidly to that period, on which it is most important for the Catholic as well as the Protestant to pause, I shall only glance at a few of the sectaries of the middle ages, with whom the Protestants claim an affinity. Such are the sects which may be properly classed under the heads of European Manichæans; of the followers of Peter Valdo, more generally known by

\* With this view it was that their founder commented the epistles of St. Paul. Many of the fathers have written against this dangerous sect: the profound learning and patient industry of Cardinal de Noris have done ample justice to its history.

the name of the poor man of Lyons, in the twelfth, and of those of Wicliffe and Huss, in the fourteenth century.\* Had the poor men of Lyons drawn from the Scriptures only the lessons of poverty, their example would never be quoted, as an instance of the danger of an undisciplined and indiscriminate study of the inspired volume. But, together with the maxims of poverty, they forcibly extracted from it those of immorality and disobedience. After granting to the prejudices of Protestants, a fair deduction from the exaggeration with which they suppose contemporaries to have painted the vices of the fanatics of those ages, enough of sober and authentic history will remain to attest, that their principles were subversive of morality and social order. Scandalised, perhaps, at the personal disorders of men in secular or ecclesiastical authority, they resolved to adopt a mode of life more conformable to the maxims of the Gospel. But they soon passed from their abhorrence of the personal vices of individuals, to a contempt of the authority with which they were invested. In the Scripture they imagined that they discovered the monstrous doctrine, that the authority of priests and princes was necessarily identified with their sanctity.† They alone became the judges of the consciences of their superiors; and, as they were impatient of control, few could be exempt, in their eyes, from sins by which they forfeited their authority. Their morals were analogous to the looseness of their principles; and are

\* In the eleventh book of Bossuet's immortal "History of the Variations," the reader will find whatever is worth knowing regarding the origin, errors, and crimes of the licentious and dangerous sectaries of the Middle Ages.

† Bossuet, *Hist. des Vaudois*; *Hist. des Variat.* lib. xi. 71. See also xcii, xviii. Within the last few years, the history and doctrines of the Waldenses and of the Manichæan sects have become an object of increasing attention to Protestant writers. Those who prefer romance to research, and speculation to fact, may be amused by Gilly's "Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of Piedmont, in the year, 1823," and "Researches among the Vaudois or Waldenses," Lond., 1825; by Jones's "History of the Christian Church," including the very interesting "Account of the Waldenses and Albigenses," 4th edit.; and by "Acland's Brief Sketch of the History and present Situation of the Vaudois," Lond., 1825. But the lovers of truth will prefer the original authorities preserved in the twenty-fifth volume of the *Biblioth. Max. PP.* That many of the religious opinions which these sectaries have professed since the era of the Reformation, and to which

recorded as a melancholy monument of the extravagance into which, under a hypocritical semblance of piety, men may be betrayed. The errors of Wicliffe\* and Huss† were of a kindred caste, and might be considered as a link which connected them with those of Luther and his associates.

This is the epoch at which the right of each individual not only to read, but to interpret the Scripture, was asserted in its fullest latitude. It is, therefore, from this period, that it is chiefly incumbent on the Protestant to examine the fruits of the system. As all were invited by Luther to the perusal of the sacred volume, and to raise their faith on its foundation, he ought to examine whether the beauty and unity of the structure have corresponded with the supposed solidity of the foundation. But, alas! while he hopes to behold the stupendous fabric arise, he only witnesses the melancholy monument of their rashness, in the scattered fragments of the edifice, and the confused dialects of the workmen.

If the Scripture be the only guide given by God to rescue us from error, all who follow that guide should agree, since truth is simple and incompatible with contrariety of opinion. Yet instead of finding the variety of sentiments converging into one single path, in which

Protestants are so anxious to give an earlier date, were not previously received among them, is clear, from the unsuspecting testimony of their admirers:—Beze, *Hist. Eccles.*, lib. i. pp. 35, 46; Peter Gilles' (often cited by Bossuet) *Hist. des Egl. Ref.* cap v., and Abraham Scultet ad an. 1530. *Annalium Evangelii decas* Sec. ab an. 1526 ad an. 1536.

The detestable vices of the Albigenses will scarce bear transcription, even in the original language: "Vani homines (Albigenses) se fraudibus, homicidiis, latrociniiis, et usuris committunt. Efferuntur efferænes per varia desideria carnis, et nulla est nociva delectatio quam non pertranseat eorum luxuria... ad omne nefas promptissimi juvenes, luxuriosi et protervi adolescentes; impuri pueri sine certo patre; mulieres effrontes et sine verecundia."—Lucas Tudensis, lib. iii. c. 5. *Bib. Max. PP.* tom. xxv.

\* Bossuet *Hist. des Variat.* lib. xi. from cliii. to clxi.

† *Ibid.* from clxii. to clxvii. When Eckius accused Luther of being a partizan and protector of the Bohemian heretics, the latter, with his usual modesty, exclaimed—"You l—e, I never was a Hussite," &c.—Florimond, lib. i. cap. 10, note 6. Yet in his reply to the Bull of Pope Leo, the consistent reformer tells him—"Whatever you condemn in Huss, I approve; and whatever you approve, I condemn."—*Adv. execr. Antich. bull. ad prop.* 30. In another place he reproaches the Hussites with gross blunders on the subject of justification.

he might walk secure, the Protestant beholds numerous ways into which he is tempted to stray, without any unerring rule to direct his course and fix his uncertainty. When Luther invited the people to follow the guidance of Scripture, his recommendation might have been profitable, if he had furnished them with means of ascertaining when they were conducted by its spirit, and when they were under the influence of fanaticism and imposture. Scarce did they attempt the experiment, when the most serious divisions arose among his disciples.\* By what means did he strive to restore concord? By offering, of course, the benefits of his own enlightened interpretation. Vain expedient! Calvin offered his.† The pretended apostles of the Reformation, instead of illustrating in the uniformity of their faith the clearness of the means which they proposed for enlightening mankind, gave a fatal attestation of the danger of confiding in the Scripture without some guide to distinguish its genuine voice from the suggestions of error. Luther defended the real, and Calvin the figurative, presence of Christ in the Eucharist.‡ This marked difference of doctrine between two who assumed the lofty tone of prophets, and divided the empire of those who revolted from the Church, is calculated to make the Protestant distrust the boasted

\* The shame and remorse of the masters at the scandalous dissensions which prevailed from the very commencement of the Reformation, among their disciples, are depicted in the liveliest colours in their works. Calvin declares, in a letter to Melancthon, that "it is more ridiculous than can be imagined, that those who broke with all the world should agree so ill among themselves." Luther, maddened by the multiplicity and absurdity of the interpretations of the Scripture, threatens "to submit again to the decrees of councils, and take refuge under the yoke of authority." And Melancthon confesses, that it was easy to know whom to avoid, but difficult whom to follow.

† Schlüsselburg has written with great asperity against the theology of Calvin. Several, even among his own party, speak of some of his opinions with horror. The controversy regarding the infamy of his early life is stated with great impartiality by Lessius, at the end of his disputations against the pedantic and absurd "Monitory Preface" of king James the First, in which the theological monarch undertakes to prove that the spiritual Father of the faithful has the unquestionable marks of Antichrist, and that the different Catholic sovereigns of Europe are so many horns of the beast. The work was published at Antwerp, in 1611.

‡ There are upwards of forty opinions to be found among the reformers regarding the Eucharist!

clearness of the Scripture. The supremacy of either, however, was not long acknowledged. They soon experienced the disobedience of which they had given the example ; and their disciples assumed the privilege of treating their opinions with the same contempt with which they had treated the doctrines of the Church. From the same arguments of its incomprehensibility, on account of which Calvin rejected the real presence, Servetus, a consistent reasoner on his principles, denied the mystery of the Trinity.\* Christians were not yet prepared for the blasphemous consequences ; and Calvin condemned to the flames an individual who had boldly developed the extent of the reformer's own opinions.† However, from the familiarity of error, the horror, which was first felt at the impiety of Servetus, was soon worn away ; and men beheld, in a few years, without alarm, the progress of opinions which startled the intrepidity of the Doctor of Geneva.

The reformers, perceiving at an early period the fatal tendency of their religious principles, vainly endeavoured to arrest the tide of infidelity which followed in their train. The chiefs assembled at Augsburg, where, after long deliberation on the principal articles of religion, they composed a common creed, which has derived its name from their place of meeting, and which they presented to the Emperor Charles the Fifth.‡ It might have been imagined that such a measure would have restored unity and concord. It had the contrary effect of giving a stronger impulse to

\* *De Trinitatis Erroribus, et Dialogorum de Trinitate, libri duo.*

† He was burned in 1553. Beza, to gain the favour of Calvin, wrote a treatise in defence of the magistrates' right to inflict the severest punishment on similar heretics. Calvin wrote a work on the same subject. Florimond informs us (lib. ii. cap. 15, note 6) that Calvin hoped, by the cruel death of Servetus, to purify his own character from the general suspicion entertained of his propensity to Arianism. Even the mild Melancthon approved the justice and piety of the sentence.

‡ See Florimond, lib. iii. cap. 7. The greater number of critics ascribe this celebrated confession or apology to the pen of Melancthon. Schlüsselburg says, that at least Luther countersigned it, with the addition of these remarkable words, "damnamus secus docentes," through hatred of the Zuinglians. *Theol. Calvinian.*, lib. ii. (Florimond, lib. ii. cap. 9, note 2).

the spirit of independence, and of widening the disunion of the sectaries. Four times was the article of the Lord's Supper retouched in this famous confession, without satisfying the religious scruples of the contending parties.\* Fancying that the confession of Augsburg breathed too much of the spirit of the Catholic religion regarding the Eucharist,† four of the most celebrated cities in the empire entered their protest against this creed, and drew up another better suited to the peculiarity of their new opinions.‡ The experiment of authority having once failed, all hopes of accommodation were now despaired of; and the confession of Augsburg, instead of proving a bond of union, stood as a salutary warning against the ridicule that could not fail to cover those who should attempt to exercise an authority inconsistent with the fundamental principle of their religion. Like a rock cast into a flood, which only heightens the roar and fury of the current which it is unable to resist, the confession of Augsburg, by giving a temporary check to the spirit of division, only augmented its impetuosity, which soon bore away the feeble obstacles of creeds and confessions.

Freed from every restraint which had been hitherto thrown in its way, the human mind pursued its stormy career of independence, until the very fundamental doctrines of Christianity were torn away by its violence. The flames which had been lighted for Servetus, consumed his person, it is true, but his errors burst forth with fresh force, and raged with more destructive fury after his punishment. Lelius Socinus, an Italian by birth, availing himself of the canon of interpretation laid down by Calvin and his associates, interpreted in a figurative sense the testimonies repeatedly borne by Scripture to the Divinity of our Redeemer. The dis-

\* Bossuet, *Hist. des Variations*, lib. iii. v.

† Vide art. x. *Conf. Aug.*

‡ Florimond., lib. iii. cap. 7, note 5.

ciples of Calvin might have been shocked at the blasphemies of Lelius Socinus ; but they could not arraign the consecutiveness of his reasoning.\* If the Calvinists had a right to understand the words of institution in a figurative sense, Socinus might plead a participation in the same privilege. The errors of Lelius were adopted by Faustus Socinus, who improved the legacy which had been bequeathed to him by his kinsman, and reduced his principles into a more systematic form. In developing the dangerous consequences of his system, instead of shrinking from an appeal to Scripture, he affected the utmost reverence for its authority.† Thus were the landmarks, which had been hitherto revered by our ancestors, removed by the daring spirit of the Reformation. From the times of Arius to Socinus, an interval of twelve hundred years, the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the Divinity of the Son, may be said to have been held as sacred truths, which the profane spirit of error did not venture to approach.‡ They were now denied by the presumptuous, and derided by the profane, as a relic of antiquated despotism.

Nor was the principle which enthroned the dumb authority of Scripture on the ruins of the Catholic Church, more propitious to the interests of morality. The same spirit which released the understanding from the faith of what it could not comprehend, released

\* Some time before the burning of Servetus, Calvin, in one of his epistles, addresses Socinus in the following words: "Quod pridem testatus sum, serio tibi gravia tormenta accersas. Ego si indulgentiæ specie vitium quod maxime noxium esse judico, alerem, in te essem perfidus et crudelis; Calend. Jan. 1552."—Vita F. Socini, at the head of the Biblioth. Fr. Polon. (not paged). The fate of the impious Spaniard soon after was a commentary not to be mistaken on the text; Lelius took the hint, and dogmatized in obscurity till his death. Faustus, his nephew, methodised and promulged his errors.

† Vide Hoornbeekii *Miscellanea Sacra*, lib. ii., cap. 23. This chapter is but a synopsis of the principal passages of the Scriptures, explained away by the malice of the Socinians, and fully vindicated in other parts of the author's works.

‡ The errors of some obscure Manichæans regarding the Trinity, have sometimes induced Catholics to rank them as Arians, but they can scarce be said to form an exception to the Catholic belief worthy of notice on the present occasion.—See Bossuet, *Hist. des Variat.* lib. xi. 40.

the heart from the practice of those precepts, the observance of which was felt to be painful to flesh and blood.\* There was not one of the social or domestic virtues that was not violated with impunity, under the abused sanction of the word of God. Polygamy was permitted by Luther; and the indulgence of having two wives, which he granted to the Landgrave of Hess,† was soon enlarged by the licentiousness of his followers into the privilege of an indefinite number.‡ The evangelical liberty, which was now asserted by all, soon extended itself to political institutions. Sedition marked the progress of the new opinions. The Anabaptists disdained subjection to the civil authorities. They acknowledge no guide but the Scriptures; and in them they pretend to have found a justification of rebellion.§ The principle of the Anabaptists was quickly exemplified in the political convulsions, which soon shook some of the most ancient and firm institutions of Europe.

From the contemplation of those effects that flowed

\* The disgraceful and deplorable fact is confessed by the principal reformers; it could not be denied. Their admissions are collected in the "Discussion Amicale," lettre ii. Appendix ii., p. 82, et seqq. The author of this learned and argumentative work resided many years in England; he is at present Bishop of Strasburg.

† The celebrated consultation of the reformed doctors, regarding this permission, is given at length by Bossuet at the close of the sixth book of his "History of the Variations." This authentic instrument is dated Wirtemberg, Wednesday after the Feast of St. Nicholas, 1539, and signed by Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer, and five other doctors of the new gospel. Another instance, though perhaps not so revolting, of the hypocrisy and casuistry of the fathers of the Reformation, is given by Florimond, lib. iii., cap. 7, note 4. Before opening the diet of Augsburg, the emperor wished to attend divine service, and required of the Duke of Saxony, whose privilege it was, to be present on the occasion in order to bear the sword before him. The duke, who had been taught that to assist at the sacrifice of the Mass was to bow the knee to Baal, consulted his doctors on this trying emergency. Hoping that the zeal of their patron would profit of the delicate opportunity, to recommend their cause to the emperor, they nicely decided that the duke might attend him to the altar, *not for the purpose of being present at divine service, but of discharging the duty of his office.*

‡ This doctrine was openly taught and practised by the immoral and blasphemous wretch, David George, and his followers; nor was it long confined to them. Vide Rescium in Atheismis, folio 12; and Florimond, lib. ii. cap. 15, where are noticed some of the authors of the other similar abominations.

§ See the notice of this licentious sect in Florimond, lib. ii., cap. 1 and 2. Its progress was marked by every species of crime; its followers were objects of execration, even to the reformers themselves. Catrou has written their history briefly, but faithfully.

from the indiscriminate interpretation of Scripture in distant countries, the English Protestant may turn to glance at those revolutions which agitated his own. Should he dispassionately peruse the history of the errors which rapidly succeeded each other, he may be inclined to pause before he acquiesces in the security of a medium, which has been productive of such a diversity of tenets altogether irreconcilable.\* In the reign of Henry, the first monarch who introduced the Reformation into England, but little alteration was made in the ancient faith, except in the article of supremacy.† The danger of appealing to the Scripture, as the sole standard of religious belief, was soon perceived by the tyrant, who was as jealous of his spiritual, as he was of his temporal, authority. The licence of individual interpretation was carefully repressed; and if his reign was not shaken by the same religious discord, which has since that period agitated England, it is because his severity in punishing dissenters arrested the spirit of innovation. It was only in the succeeding reign of his son Edward that the full consequences of the principle, which was partially adopted by Henry, were fatally developed. By appealing to the Scripture as their standard of belief, preachers filled the kingdom with religious confusion. To check this fanatical spirit a creed was formed, composed of forty-two articles, to which all were obliged to conform.‡ Elizabeth, however, was far from relishing the Reformation of Edward. She complained that the substance of the Christian doctrine on the Eucharist was almost frittered away by too subtle explanations,§ and that the retrenchment of the ancient ceremonies of the Church was calculated to abate the fervour of devotion. To obviate those inconveniences,

\* Burnet, the admirer and apologist of the Reformation of England, cannot dissemble the constant and indecent fluctuation of the new creed.

† Discussion Amic. let. i. p. 4. Lingard, Henry VIII. passim.

‡ Lingard, vol. vii., p. 125, 3rd edit.

§ This article was changed, through her influence, in the revision of the articles of Edward VI. See also Heylin's History, p. 165.

a new reformation was projected, the authors of which claimed the same participation of the Divine Spirit which was pretended to have directed their predecessors.\* The thirty-nine articles, however, were productive of the same effects as the confession of Augsburg, or the decree of the synod of Dordrecht.† Instead of producing conformity, they had the effects of alienating the minds of the thinking and judicious, who saw the obvious absurdity of bowing to the authority of any creed of human composition, while they reflected on their recent emancipation from every ecclesiastical control. This spirit of revolt to the authority which was exercised by Elizabeth has since continued to agitate the English nation. In vain do the ministers of the establishment pronounce the forms of religious concord. They are considered as mere forms to qualify them for office; and some of the dignitaries of the establishment who subscribe to the articles of the Church, scruple not to indulge the widest latitude of opinion.‡

From the introduction of what is called the Reformation into England, until the present day, it would be difficult, nay, impossible, to number the variety of sectaries that have rapidly succeeded each other. Yet all flippantly quote the Scriptures in support of their respective tenets. Now, let the Protestant, who has been taught to consider the Scripture as his only guide, ask himself whether that can be the medium intended by the Almighty to instruct him, which has been the occasion of such a multiplicity of errors. From the rise of Christianity to the present moment, he beholds secta-

\* See the Appendix to Downes' "Lives of the compilers of the Liturgy," containing a historical account of the compiling of the English Liturgy, and of the several reviews it has since undergone.

† The acts of this synod were published in folio, at Leyden, in 1620. Its decrees were for some time respected by some of the churches represented at its sessions; but they exasperated, instead of composing, the furious quarrels of the Gomarists and Arminians. See Limborch, *Vita Sim. Episcopii*; and Brandt, *Hist. de la Reform. tom. ii.*

‡ Read "Paley's Moral Philosophy," book iii. cap. 23. The loose doctrine contained in this chapter has been adopted by many of the most eminent Protestant divines of these countries.

ries following each other in quick succession; and, in the rapidity of their disappearance, scarcely impressing on the age in which they lived the memory of their existence. We must admit, however, that their professions have been always uniform. They alone pretended to be the true interpreters of the doctrine of Christ; their pretensions, however, were controverted by others, who appealed to the same source.\* The sincere Protestant may imagine, that of those innovators, some were misled by ignorance, and others by fanaticism, but that the well-disposed may still entertain a confident hope of arriving at the truth. A more attentive perusal of their history would correct his misapprehensions. The authors and followers of some of those errors were oftentimes men eminent for talents and biblical learning. It is in vain to assert that they did not bring to the perusal of the Scriptures minds sufficiently susceptible of the impressions of truth. They at least had a strong assurance of the purity of their intention. Yet, notwithstanding this sincerity which is claimed by all, they have been found to stray far and wide; for truth cannot surely be found in their opposite systems.

To extenuate the number and guilt of the ancient heresies, it has been often insinuated that they were but so many shades, which gave a pleasing variety to the face of Christianity,† without preventing a substantial agreement. This is an idea which has been propagated with great zeal, though plainly opposed to the very nature of Christianity. If there are doctrines, which can be denied without forfeiting the birthright of Christians, it would be desirable to know the limits which it would be death to transgress.‡ Notwith-

\* Tertul. lib. de Præscrip. cap. x.

† Doctor Middleton says, that diversity of opinions in religious matters is as natural as diversity of tastes.—Introductory Discourse to a Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, &c., p. 38. It was a favourite idea with some of the Reformers who wished for peace on any terms; and it is still proclaimed aloud by many a ranter of the conventicle.

‡ “He that believeth not shall be condemned.”—Mark, xvi. 16.

standing the frequency of its repetition, the distinction of fundamental and non-fundamental articles\* is as yet vague and undefined: nor has any method been ever assigned by which the doubtful distinction can be ascertained.† The Scripture does not affix the limits. Obedience to the authority of the Church is the fundamental article which it most clearly defines. If its authority be once discarded, every other criterion must be arbitrary and capricious. No individual will deliberately rank his own errors among those by which the foundations of Christianity are upturned. He may be shocked at the impiety which characterises the doctrines of others, yet he is insensible to that which is conspicuous in his own. He may be told that his errors are fundamental, but can he not rebuke the officious insinuation by an indignant appeal to the sovereign and uncontrollable tribunal of his own private authority?‡

Instead of giving to the appearance of Christianity a pleasing variety, those errors have disfigured it in every country in which they have been adopted. Christianity can derive but little of beauty from doctrines which have brought immorality, and rebellion, and infidelity

\* This novel theory, the invention of Jurieu, and the various arguments advanced in its support, are discussed at length in chapter vii. tom. i. of the *Essai sur l'Indifférence*, par La Mennais. The learned and eloquent author may be said to have exhausted the subject. Bayle himself characterises the system: "*Janua cœlorum omnibus reserata.*"

† Arnald. *Polenburgen. in præst. Vir. ep.* (Discuss. Amic. note I, page 125, tom. 1). Chillingworth simplified fundamental Christianity into an implicit faith in Jesus Christ and in his word. See Bossuet, 6ème Avertis. aux. Prot. iii. par. n. 109.

‡ And cannot the Jew, the Mahometan, or the Atheist, claim a similar privilege? Let the Protestant, who does not shrink from the legitimate consequences of religious logic, hear and answer the reasoning of the latter. (I do not transcribe it without horror.) "*Je ne reconnais, comme vous (Protestant), d'autre autorité que celle de la raison; comme vous, je crois ce que je comprends clairement, et rien autre chose. Le Calviniste ne comprend point la présence réelle, il la rejette, et il a raison; le Socinien ne comprend pas la Trinité, il la rejette, et il a raison; le déiste ne comprenant aucun mystère, les rejette tous, et il a raison. Or la Divinité est, à mes yeux, le plus grand, le plus impénétrable mystère. Ma raison ne pouvant comprendre Dieu, ne surait l'admettre. Je réclame donc la même tolérance que le Calviniste, le Socinien, le déiste. Nous avons tous la même règle de foi, nous excluons tous également l'autorité; de quelle autorité donc oserait-on me condamner? Et si je dois renoncer à ma raison, si vous me jugez coupable d'écouter ce qu'elle me dicte, renoncez donc vous-mêmes à votre raison, qui n'est pas plus infaillible que la mienne, abjurez votre règle de foi.*"—*La Mennais, ubi supra.*

in their train. Yet such has been the result of the varied opinions, which, the Protestants say, have agreeably chequered the Christian system; many of which have been pregnant with the most disastrous consequences. It is in vain, then, to speak of the beauty of variety in speculative belief; when that variety is illustrated in practice by the most deformed systems of morality. The alliance between speculative belief and morality is too strong, to suffer any important change in the one, which will not have a corresponding and sensible effect on the other. The consequence is avowed by Jurieu, the first abettor of the fanciful distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles. "The laws of princes," says this Reformer, "are the best interpreters of the exception, which expediency sometimes requires, to the law of the Gospel, which prohibits divorce; and those laws are sufficient to tranquillise the conscience."\* Thus we have a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental precepts of morality, as well as between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of religion. The one distinction is as natural as the other. If it be in the power of man to release the understanding from the obligation of believing articles that have been revealed; it is equally consistent to assume an authority of releasing us from the observance of those precepts, which a divine authority has imposed. Hence not only the speculative mysteries of Christianity yielded to the principle, which constituted each one's reason the judge of fundamentals, but even the most sacred fences of morality were broken

\* *Tabl. Lett.* vi. p. 308. His doctrine of supremacy, in which he has the honour of agreeing with Hobbes and Shaftesbury, is expressed in these remarkable words: "Il est certain que les princes sont chefs nés de l'Eglise chrétienne aussi bien que de la société civile; également maîtres de la religion comme de l'état."—*Lett.* viii. Articles of belief, as has been well remarked, might, without any violence to this train of reasoning, be esteemed a kind of public impost upon the subject, to be increased or lightened, augmented or diminished, like the other burdens of the state, at the will and good pleasure of the sovereign!

This servile doctrine is urged with very little of disguise, and with still less of skill or ingenuity, in the last "Charge" of a disputatious and prominent dignitary of the Irish Established Church.

down by its violence.\* The natural progress of this principle, in overturning all the landmarks of virtue is thus described by the eloquent Bossuet :

“Ashamed of the divisions, that sprung from the rule of interpretation, which they offered for understanding this divine book, the Protestants imagined that they found a remedy for those disorders, by attaching importance only to the principles of morality. Such is the principle of the Latitudinarians, who, while they widen the way to heaven with respect to faith, assert that it is by the rules of moral conduct that way is to be regulated. They talk only of leading a moral life ; as though a sound faith were not the sure foundation of sound morality. But to confine ourselves simply to the question of morals, in which they would fain include all that is essential in religion ; were not the Socinians the first to censure the origin of the Reformation, in which the rigour of morality was relaxed by the doctrine which taught that good works were not essential to salvation ? Did not those Socinians, as well as the Catholics, triumphantly demonstrate that nothing could be so fatal to the interests of morality as the doctrines of the inamissibility of justice, the certainty of salvation, and the imputation of the merits of Christ, such as they were taught in the reformed Churches ? This is sufficient to demonstrate that, on the subject of morals as well as of dogmas, the Scripture furnishes those generalities, under which may be disguised a variety of erroneous opinions. Let us, however, begin to examine (and the experiment has been often made) the doctrine of morals which the Scripture contains, on enmities, usury, mor-

\* The reader has been already referred to the consultation of Luther and his associates of the Reformation, on the subject of polygamy. The Magazine and Eusebia of Henke of Helmstadt, works not unknown in England, will furnish the standard of Christian morality, as generally estimated among the modern followers of the great doctor of Wirtemberg. The philosophical Discourses of Baron Stark on the reunion of the different Christian communions, which has been for some years translated into English, will supply many curious particulars touching the religious and moral sentiments of the present Lutherans of Germany.

tification, chastity, marriage, and reduce these doctrines to the principles of right reason. Do we not find polygamy taught by the Protestants in speculation and in practice? \* And will it not be as easy to persuade men that God could not wish to stretch their obligations beyond the limits of good sense; as to convince them that he did not wish that they should extend their belief beyond the boundaries of sound reasoning? But when men shall have reached this point, what shall be good sense in morals, but what has been sound reasoning in belief—the dictate of each one's fancy or caprice? Thus we shall lose the advantage of the decisions of Jesus Christ. The authority of his word, abandoned to arbitrary interpretations, will no more settle our doubts than the exercise of our own reason; and thus we shall behold ourselves plunged once more into those interminable disputes that turned the heads of the ancient philosophers. Hence it will become necessary to tolerate those who err in morals, as well as those who err in mysteries; and to reduce Christianity to a vague and indefinite system of the love of God and our neighbour, subject to each individual's capricious interpretation. To what length have not the Anabaptists and other fanatics gone, in reasoning on oaths, punishments, prayers, marriage, magistracies, government, and other institutions essentially connected with a Christian life? Though the Socinians make it their boast to insist on walking in the narrow way, with regard to morality, yet what a latitude do they not allow themselves in subjecting to eternal punishment, and the privation of eternal life, habitual vices only. † So much so, that Socinus fears not to assert that the murderer who is judged worthy of death and cannot share in eternal life, is not the individual who has committed an act of homicide, *but he who has contracted the habit of so mon-*

\* See note, page 198.

† Soc. in i. Ep. Joan. cap. iii. v. 5. Biblioth. Frat. Pol. tom. i. p. 194.

*strous a crime*.\* Such is the opinion of the greater number of his disciples. Such is the opinion of Crelius, one of the most distinguished of them, as well as one of the most rigid moralists. He, too, makes the habit of sin which excludes from eternal life, consist in a perverse habit.† Those whose extreme rigour we have remarked on the one hand ; and whose relaxation we have equally observed on the other, are, invariably, those Protestants who have more effectually shaken off the yoke of authority. It is they who have strayed farthest from the truth, not only on the doctrine of mysteries, but also in points of morality, on which they affect a rigour beyond all others. Without dwelling on the errors of Socinians, it is well known what liberty they allow with regard to falsehood and dissimulation, even on the sacred subject of religion. If princes but frown, they conceal their sentiments under any mask whatsoever, and feel little scruple on the score of hypocrisy : it must, therefore, be clearer than the noon-day that to sustain a system of morals as well as of faith, we must be guided by an infallible authority, in order to check the dangerous interpretations, which a vain insidious subtlety may give the Scriptures, on this as well as every other subject. Without such an authority, to boast of the rigour of a system of morals, is to upset that system under pretence of establishing it, by allowing each individual to adjust it according to his own caprices.”‡

From the profound and comprehensive view thus taken by Bossuet of the general principles of Protestants, it appears that those principles were not more destructive of faith than fatal to sound morality. Whatever affects the certainty of the one must necessarily

\* “Est tamen interim animadvertendum eum homicidam qui penitus morti sit adjudicandus, et sic cum æterna vita nihil commune habere possit eum esse, non qui aliquando hominem occidit, sive actum aliquem homicidii commisit : sed illum qui habitum aliquem, vel assuetudinem tanti sceleris habeat.”—Ibid. in vv. 13, 14, p. 202.

† Ethic. Christ., lib. ii., c. 5.

‡ Bossuet 6<sup>ème</sup> Avertis. aux Prot. iii. part. n. 114.

relax the vigour of the other. Faith is the active spring that puts the whole system of morality in motion. Where that faith is strong, it is felt in the impulse with which it prompts man to the discharge of his duties. Wherever it is feeble, it is productive of a corresponding languor in the incentives to virtue. Hence, by the progress of that scepticism which has thrown doubts over the mysteries of Christianity, the lofty standard of its morality has been gradually lowered. That doctrine must diminish our horror for sin, which teaches us to disbelieve the eternity of hell's torments.\* If we adopt the tenet that grace cannot be forfeited by transgression, it is but little calculated to excite in our minds any alarm for the consequences of guilt. It is in vain, then, that from an affectation of zeal for the interests of morality, speculative doctrines are disregarded: they are both essentially intertwined; nor can the enervated tone of public morality be restored, without infusing into the public faith an energy by which its languor will be reanimated.

In confirmation of the words of Bossuet, I shall direct the reader's attention to some of the most celebrated writers of the Established Church. In their works he will find the connexion between a fluctuating faith and a feeble morality fully exemplified. I shall not advert to those preachers who, it is said, have reduced the rigid standard of the Gospel virtues to the level of a Pagan morality; but shall content myself with quoting those names which are revered as the oracles of Protestant orthodoxy and moderation. Paley is often praised for his sound and practical sense. Yet Paley is one of those whose writings most strongly illustrate the affinity that is found between sceptical principles and dangerous moral deductions. Instead of yielding to the precepts of the Gospel, he often bends the rigour of those precepts by resorting to a subtle and dexterous interpretation. Falsehood is condemned by the Christian religion in the most unqualified man.

\* A doctrine daily gaining ground, among the divines of what may be called the new school, in the sister island.

ner : by directing his ingenuity to the inconveniences to which truth would sometimes expose us, he imagines that he finds in the magnitude of those inconveniences a sufficient reason to acquit a lie, in some circumstances, of any moral guilt.\* A similar process of reasoning applied to other precepts of the Gospel would be productive of a similar relaxation. And so effectual has this instrument of private interpretation proved in paring down all the asperities of the Gospel, that in the hands of Dr. Watson, bishop of Llandaff, it has effaced every discrimination between a Christian and a Pagan. In common with many of the prelates of the Church of England, Dr. Watson felt, or affected to feel, great alarm at the stroke which the historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire aimed at Christianity. He, accordingly, undertook a refutation of those parts which seemed of most obnoxious tendency. From the opinions adopted by his lordship, one would infer that the difference between both was too slight to have awakened any serious controversy. In the explanation which he offered to the historian, he seemed more jealous of his liberality than his orthodoxy ; and, anxious to wipe away every stain of bigotry from his character, he thus expressed himself : "I cannot but presume to enter a protest against our author's judgment, at least in the name of one Church, the Church of England ; and am bold to affirm that her mild decisions are not stained with so foul a blot as 'the condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous Pagans.' "†

Such is the latitude of faith adopted by Dr. Watson, once professor of divinity in the university of Cambridge, and one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of England. In a series of letters addressed to Mr.

\* "There are falsehoods which are not lies : that is, which are not criminal ; as (2) where the person you speak to has no right to know the truth, or, more properly, where little or no inconveniency results from the want of confidence."—*The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, b. iii., c. 15.

† Remarks on the last two chapters of Mr. Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in a letter to a friend, p. 226, published at the end of his *Apology for Christianity*, in a series of Letters addressed Ed. Gibbon, Esq,

Gibbon, he repeats similar principles, and insinuates strongly that the prejudices of education may be a sufficient apology for adhering to any system of error.\* Intrusted to the protection of such guardians, religion loses all its dignity; and the most essential points of Christian faith become matters of indifference.

In the eyes of Hoadly, baptism, of which the necessity is so clearly taught in Scripture,† appears to be only a frivolous and unmeaning ceremony.‡ There is no mystery of the Christian religion, however sacred, which has not been viewed with indifference by some of the prelates of the Church of England; and no ceremony, however venerable for its antiquity, with which some of them would not have dispensed. Thus the system of individual interpretation necessarily tolerates every error, and by tolerating error annihilates the authority of truth. Unable to sustain the weight of incomprehensible mysteries, a proud and presumptuous reason has attempted to level the lofty structure of Christianity, until it has not left a stone upon a stone in its anxiety to explore the deep foundation. The pious Christian, who fancies that he clearly finds those mysteries in the Scripture, may deplore those frightful consequences. He may deplore them, but he cannot arrest their course. They are the natural and necessary consequences of Protestant principles; and however incompatible they may appear with the rules of an orthodox theology, their abettors will defend them before the tribunal of a stern and rigorous logic.§

\* "I have not had so little intercourse with mankind, nor shunned so much the delightful freedom of social converse, as to be ignorant that there are many men of upright morals and good understandings, to whom, as you (Gibbon) express it, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres, . . . how severe soever some men may be in their judgments concerning one another, yet, we Christians, at least, hope and believe, that the great Judge of all will make allowance for our habits of study and reflection, for various circumstances, the efficacy of which, in giving a particular bent to the understandings of men, we can neither comprehend nor estimate."—Apology, &c., lett., p. 56. Such is the liberal and placable tone of a Christian apologist, when the very foundations of revelation are shaken: his *odium theologicum* (and Dr. W. was no stranger to it) is directed exclusively against the advocates of the Catholic Church.

† John, iii. 3, 5, &c.

‡ Law's answer to the Bishop of Bangor's Sermon. See Milner's Letter to a Prebendary; lett. viii.

§ See Oberhir Idea Bib. Eccl. Dej, tom. i. passim. See also the account of the

To conclude, then, the observations which have been suggested by a review of the principle of private interpretation—that cannot be the method proposed by Christ for the instruction of the poor, and the little ones, which would place the truths of his revelation beyond the reach of the bulk of mankind : that, which has been the source of endless error, cannot be the criterion by which our belief should be regulated : that, by which divisions are necessarily created, cannot lead men to unity of faith : nor can that be the source of certainty to the pious Christian, which he finds has conducted the most learned men to adopt a system of indifference and scepticism. Yet such is the rule, which, by making his own individual reason the arbiter of man's belief, would subject the authority of God's word to its extravagance or presumption. An indefinite latitude has been thus permitted to the wanderings of the human mind. To check its career, an arbitrary line has been drawn between fundamentals and non-fundamentals,—a vain and feeble fence against error, since the ideal bound may be extended, according to the faith or fancy of each individual. The stern and characteristic features of the Christian religion have been accordingly smoothed away by a refining system of liberality. With this relaxation of the Christian faith, an indifference of doctrine has been gradually propagated, until some of the prelates of the Protestant Church have been found to throw open the gates of heaven to the worshippers of the pagan divinities.\*

religious state of Germany, in the work recently published by the Rev. Mr. Rose.

\* The loose and scandalous doctrine, so openly avowed by Doctor Watson, was originally promulgued by the Reformer of Switzerland. The notorious Zuingle proclaimed, that as far as depended on himself, he had rather take his chance for eternity with Socrates and Seneca, than with the Bishops of Rome or the emperors and princes of Christendom. And in his exposition of the Christian Faith, presented to Francis the First, the heresiarch assures that monarch, that in heaven, his Majesty should meet Socrates, Aristides, Numa, Camillus, the Catos, the Scipios, nay, even Theseus and Hercules, enjoying the bliss of eternal life, of which their piety and valour rendered them far more worthy than the Dominicans or Cordeliers! The author of these sentiments, Luther (in Gen. xlvii) declared to be a Gentile and a Pagan, yet they have been recently approved by a prelate and guide of the English Church! See Florimond, lib. ii., c. 8., n. 8.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Endless disputations of the Ancient Schools of Philosophy, certainty and authority of the teaching of Christ.—He was not in the habit of reducing his doctrines by lengthened explanation to the level of human reason.—He spoke as one having authority.—Could not Christ delegate to his Apostles and their successors, the power of interpreting his Law: has he done so?—The arguments in the affirmative.—Conduct of St. Paul.—Answer to the objection of Protestants relative to the mutual dependence of the authority of the Church, and the inspiration of the Scriptures.—Analogy in favour of authority from the most perfect form of human institutions.—Authority necessary to preserve truth from adulteration.—Objection of Protestants, that the Bible is locked from the faithful.—Tradition.—Forcible argument of Tertullian in its favour.—The infallibility of the Church, not proved solely from the Scriptures.—Reasonableness of the Catholic method of communicating religious instruction, from infancy to manhood.

IT will not be deemed a rash or gratuitous assumption to affirm that Christ, who came to establish the empire of truth over the ruins of error and philosophy, would not have instituted a system necessarily productive of the consequences which we have briefly detailed. It was one of the principal defects in the ancient philosophy, that even though its votaries were to arrive at truth, yet they wanted authority to enforce it. A Socrates or a Plato might have explored with patience the monuments of wisdom and learning, and extracted, with much ingenuity, the particles of truth from the mass of error with which they were combined. Yet, those who were not blessed with similar leisure, or industry, or talent, could not follow him through the tedious process, nor appreciate the value of his discoveries. They could not, therefore, trust him except on the faith of his own professions and the general opinion

of his talents. But since other philosophers, equally eminent for abilities, and equally urgent in their pretensions to the fame of having sounded all the mysteries of wisdom, taught different opinions, the world was necessarily distracted by doubt and uncertainty.\*

This was one of the principal evils which Christ came to remedy.† Yet the system of individual interpretation to which he is supposed to have committed his law, instead of being an antidote to the evils of philosophy, would have been completely analogous to its principles.‡ There were in moral philosophy, as in the Christian religion, some few leading truths which united the general concurrence of mankind. By the uncontrollable privilege, which each one claimed, of reasoning on those acknowledged principles according to his own fancy, a variety of schools arose, gradually differing as they multiplied, until they were found to embrace the most opposite opinions. The intellect may be sharpened by the practice of dispute: eloquence may be exalted by the infusion of heat and passion. As far, therefore, as improvement in reasoning or eloquence might have been their object, the human mind might have derived some advantage from the disputes of the philosophers. But since truth is essentially simple, the

\* Besides the copious evidence which the first chapter exhibits of the pride and the folly of the ancient philosophers, the reader may be gratified by the following picture drawn by a writer who illustrated its justness in his own character:

“Quand les philosophes seraient en état de découvrir la vérité, qui d'entre eux prendrait intérêt à elle? Chacun sait bien que son système n'est pas mieux fondé que les autres; mais il le soutient parce qu'il est à lui. Il n'y en a pas un seul qui, venant à connaître le vrai et le faux, ne préférât le mensonge qu'il a trouvé à la vérité découverte par un autre. Où est le philosophe qui pour sa gloire ne tromperait pas volontiers le genre humain? Où est celui qui, dans le secret de son cœur, se propose un autre objet que de se distinguer. Pourvu qu'il s'élève au-dessus du vulgaire, pourvu qu'il efface l'éclat de ses concurrents, que demande-t-il de plus? L'essentiel est de penser autrement que les autres. Chez les croyants il est athée, chez les athées il est croyant.”—Emile, tom. iii. p. 20.

† The life and doctrines of the Redeemer will be found to bear ample testimony to the truth of this remark, in every page of the Gospel.

‡ Even Bolingbroke admits that, in England as well as formerly in Greece, the system of individual interpretation produced as many forms of faith as whimsical teachers could invent. And Sir Richard Baker confesses, that the fable of Proteus is no longer a fable, if the religion of England be its moral.

greater the variety of opinions, the more difficult it is to be found; and therefore its interests suffered much more than they gained from those divisions, however propitious they might have been to the progress of wit or eloquence. Now what can be the difference between submitting to the subtle scrutiny of man's intellect a few moral axioms, on which all are agreed, and subjecting to a similar operation a few leading truths of Christianity?\*

The same variety of intellectual faculties which disposes men to view in a different light the consequences of the fundamental truths of natural religion, will be productive of similar effects in their apprehensions of revealed religion. If revelation be not guarded by some authority, there is nothing in its own nature to prevent us from falling into errors. We may be awed, it is true, by our assurance of the divine source from which those truths are derived. But while our individual reason is the sole judge, we may fancy that truths, which we cannot comprehend, could never have been revealed. Instead, therefore, of being awed by the authority of any revealed truth, that truth must do homage to our reason, since it is its authority that is to decide whether any truth is to assume the character of a divine revelation.†

Our Redeemer foresaw this obvious consequence. He was well aware that it was this individual supremacy of intellect, which each of the philosophers wanted to

\* "Reasoning," as is well remarked by Bayle, no incompetent judge, "if not properly regulated, combats truth, instead of proving it . . . . It is a corrosive powder, which, after having eaten the corrupted part of the wound, eats next the sound: attacks and consumes the bone, and, at last penetrates to the very marrow."

† This is an obvious consequence of the very first principle of the Reformation, which declares, in the words of Luther, that the sole rule of truth, and the sole rule of Gospel liberty, is, that each one judge for himself: or, in other words, that the only authority which each one is bound to recognise, is the Scripture, interpreted by his own reason. Chubb, himself, will admit the Christian system on these terms: he has no objection to allow the Bible to be a sure guide for mankind, provided it be interpreted according to the rules of right reason, which sometimes require that we offer violence to the text. *Posthumous Works*, vol. ii., p. 326. See Bossuet *6ème Avertis.* iii. par. n. 17, &c.

establish, that deprived all of any claims to veneration. Were the ministers of his word invested with the like liberty of explaining its hidden meaning, and subjecting it to their own reason, the divine treasure would be soon frittered away, and lost altogether among errors perpetually multiplying. Hence, the character of Christ was not more different from that of the philosophers, than his method of instruction from that which they pursued. Those who gave no other proof of the truth of their speculations than their conformity with reason, were necessarily obliged to submit to the test of the most rigid examination. But he who wrought miracles in support of his doctrine sufficiently impressed upon it the seal of a divine origin. Hence, in unfolding the most sublime and mysterious tenets of his religion, Christ was not in the habit of showing that they were susceptible of demonstration. Regardless of the difficulties which sometimes startled his disciples, he generally repeated the doctrine, without studying to make it easier of comprehension. Thus, when the Jews expressed their surprise at his intimation that he had seen Abraham, by asking him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?"\* he entered into no farther explanation of the stupendous mystery, content with making this cool reply: "Amen, Amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am."† That the Jews were not content with this brief answer appears from the concluding verse of the chapter, in which it is stated, that they took up stones to cast at him, and that he went out of the temple to shelter himself from their fury.‡

Again, when he announced the mysterious doctrine of regeneration to Nicodemus, who inquired of him, with the utmost impatience: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?"§ Jesus answered:

\* John, viii. 57.

+ Ibid. 58.

‡ Ibid. 59.

§ John, iii. 4.

“Amen, Amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”\* To the mind of Nicodemus, the regeneration of the Spirit was still more incomprehensible, than the secret of the Redeemer’s age. In the sequel of his discourse, Christ, far from wishing to accommodate this mystery to man’s comprehension, labours rather to correct the perverse and unseasonable curiosity of the human mind. He tells him: “We testify what we have seen:”† which testimony, when confirmed by the wonders he had wrought, should have satisfied all of the truth of his doctrine. But, as if to arrest the presumption of those who should attempt to explore the mysteries of the Divinity, he adds: “And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven.”‡

When Jesus, after the departure of the wealthy young man, who came to consult him§ on the means of securing his salvation, said to his disciples: “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,”|| they wondered very much, saying: “Who then can be saved?” Yet he gave no other solution to a difficulty which seemed perplexing to their minds, than the simple language: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”¶ Similar was his conduct when he discoursed to his disciples on the mystery of the Eucharist, in the synagogue at Capharnaum. “I am the living bread,” says the Redeemer, “which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”\*\* The

\* John, iii. 5.

† Ibid. 13.

|| Matt. xix. 24.

‡ Ibid. 11.

§ Matt. xix. 16, et seqq.

¶ Ibid. 26.

\*\* John vi. 51-53.

Jews were startled at his doctrine. How does the Redeemer attempt to satisfy them on the words which confounded all their prejudices? By repeating the same language in a more emphatic tone, and in a variety of forms: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you,"\* &c. &c. To some of his disciples the doctrine appeared so revolting that they murmured, and walked with him no more.† However Christ, conscious of the evidence which attested to all the divine character of his mission, offered no farther explanation to reconcile it to their apprehensions. On these occasions, when he announced the loftiest mysteries of his religion—the Incarnation, the real Presence, and the necessity of Baptism, all of which provoked doubt and opposition, Christ attempted not to dispel the one or allay the other, by entering into any disputation on those awful articles. On them it was incumbent to dispute, who could only rely on the degree of evidence which speculative reasoning might convey. Of Jesus, however, it was the singular prerogative, that his words carried with them the weight of authority. At the conclusion of the divine sermon on the mountain, the Evangelist remarks that "it came to pass that when Jesus had fully ended these words, the multitude were in admiration at his doctrine. For he was teaching them as having power, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees."‡

Should any of his disciples presume to subject to the test of his own individual reason, the doctrine which Christ thus taught, as having authority, the piety of every Christian would revolt at the idea of such presumption. And if Christ had committed any part of his doctrine to writing, for the benefit of his followers, he, not they, would surely be the legitimate interpreter of its meaning. Should any dispute arise among them concerning the import of his language, while they were yet slow of apprehension, and that he interposed to ad-

\* John, vi. 54 et seqq.

† John, v. 67.

‡ Matt. vii. 28, 29.

just the difference, no one would so far trust to his own judgment as to refuse to accept his authoritative mediation. By committing it, therefore, to writing, he could only intend to render his followers more familiar with the law; without divesting himself of the right of being its supreme judge and legitimate expounder.

If it appeared that Christ had delegated to others the supreme right, which he could surely have exercised, of interpreting his words, they, too, would be entitled to the same acquiescence in their decisions. He that delegates his authority, expects that it will be respected in the individual on whom it is transferred. That Christ could have transferred a portion of his own power on the apostles and their successors, will not be controverted. The more ample the prerogatives, the easier it is to associate others to their participation. Though the fulness of the attributes of the Divinity is incommunicable, yet his omnipotence can invest his creatures with the most extraordinary privileges and graces. That Christ, then, while on earth, was the supreme guardian and expounder of his own word, whose interpretation no Christian could presume to canvass, is a truth that cannot be denied: that he could have communicated to his apostles and their successors the same authority, is a truth which his omnipotence places beyond the reach of disputation: and that if he did communicate it, Christians would be bound to acquiesce in their interpretation as in his own, is a conclusion which it can hardly require argument to establish.

Now, in the most precise and explicit language, Christ transferred this power on his apostles and their successors. I shall not detain my readers by any lengthened reference to the passages—"He that heareth you heareth me,"\* &c., or, "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the Heathen and Publican,"† or to other texts which prove that we obey or condemn Christ himself, by our respect or disregard

\* Luke, x. 16.

† Matt. xviii. 17.

for his ministers.\* But I shall solicit their attention to the last words, which our Redeemer addressed to his chosen apostles assembled on the mountain in Galilee, previously to his ascension to the kingdom of his Father:—"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."† Such is the solemn commission with which Christ invested his apostles, to teach all nations—a commission, which in the most explicit terms transfers upon them his own authority: "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." In the full assurance then of the aid and protection of that power, "go teach all nations to observe whatever I have commanded you." Be not appalled by the difficulties you are to encounter, nor the persecutions you may endure. "For behold I am with you." Yes: "I am with you, teaching and baptising all nations, all days, even to the consummation of the world." There is no limit then to that presence and protection, which Christ has promised, in the persons of his apostles, to his Church. It is to suffer no interruption: "Behold, I am with you all days." It is to extend to their successors, and to be coeval with the existence of their body: "even to the consummation of the world." On these words, then, "Behold, I am with you," we rest the evident proof that the apostles and their successors were to be guided by the spirit of Jesus Christ in teaching his word; and, of course, to be entitled to the same respect in its interpretation.‡

Such is the impression which the utterance of this language by the lips of Christ himself was calculated to produce. And, if we examine other parts of Scripture

\* See Hooke de Ecclesia (de Indefec. et de Infal.).

† Matt. xxviii. 18-20.

‡ See Bossuet, Instruction Pastorale sur les Promesses de l'Eglise, nn. iv. vi.

in which these words, *I am with you*, are used by the Almighty, we find them to have been infallible pledges of his protection. When the Lord had said to Gedeon: "Go in this thy strength, and thou shalt deliver Israel out of the hand of Madian;"\* and Gedeon, distrustful of his own weakness, had replied: "I beseech thee, my Lord, wherewith shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the meanest in Manasses, and I am the least in my father's house;" the Lord added: "*I will be with thee*: and thou shalt cut off Madian as one man."† Gedeon was accordingly strengthened by the words of the Almighty, and, under the shield of his promise, he achieved the deliverance of his country. "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death," says David, "I will fear no evils, *for thou art with me.*"‡ Similar is the language by which Isaias announces God's protection to his Church:—"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee and called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou shalt pass through the waters, *I will be with thee*, and the rivers shall not cover thee: when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burned, and the flames shall not burn in thee."§ To show the might of the same protection, the prophet says in another place:—"Take counsel together and it shall be defeated: speak a word and it shall not be done; *because God is with us.*"||

It is not, then, by an arbitrary interpretation that we infer from the words,—"*Behold I am with you,*" that

\* Judg. vi. 14.

† Judg. vi. 16. "En même temps que Gédéon regarde comme quelque chose de très-supérieur à ses forces de briser le joug des Madianites, l'ange lui fait comprendre qu'une puissance plus qu'humaine y suppléera.—Chais. ad. loc.

The interpretation of the learned Doctor Patrick is still more to our purpose: "Do not consider thy poverty, but the power of God, which shall accompany thee."—Patrick, ad. loc.

Would, that Protestant divines were equally unprejudiced in estimating the nature and extent of the last solemn commission of Christ to his apostles!

‡ Psalm xxii. 4. Dath thus interprets this text: "Ut pastor gregem pedo suo defendit ab impetu ferarum, sic David defensionem a Deo contra omnes hostes suo; sperabat."—Psalmi, &c. a J. A. Dathio, ad loc. (In the Hebrew Bibles, this psalm is the xxiii.)

§ Isaias, xliii. 1, 2.

|| Ibid. viii. 10.

the apostles and their successors were to be guided by the spirit of wisdom and truth. We only attach to the important words their ordinary and natural meaning; and, since Christ has added:—"all days even to the consummation of the world"—we are forced to conclude, unless we offer violence to the plain import of language, that his divine protection was to be without limit or interruption.\* As the term of the lives of the apostles could be but short, far from confining his aid to that narrow period, he extends it to the heirs of their authority, unto "the consummation of the world." From whence it clearly follows, that they alone are the legitimate interpreters of Christ's doctrine. If, in teaching and in administering the sacraments, Christ is with the pastors of his Church, it is plain that *they* cannot teach error, and that in trusting our faith to their direction, *we* cannot go astray.

The apostles committed to writing, it is true, the principal actions of our Redeemer's life. They also addressed several written instructions to the Churches which they had planted. But as Christ himself, while on earth, could not yield the prerogative of being the expounder and judge of his own doctrine, though he gave his apostles a commission to preach it; neither could they be supposed, by committing it to writing, to have resigned the solemn prerogative of interpretation, with which they were invested by Christ. While teaching and baptising the nations, Christ promised *to be with them*; and whether they taught by word, or communicated their instructions by writing, they were equally assured of his unfailing protection. If they

\* The opinions and contradictions of Protestants on the subject of the Infallibility, are briefly but impartially stated by Hooke in the argument for the authority of the Church, *ex consensione et praxi adversariorum*: and by Fletcher in his "Sermons on various religious and moral subjects," note K, among the learned illustrations of Sermon ii. Some of the Calvinistic synods in France compelled every minister to swear that he believed all their decisions, and would continue to do so till death. Nay, even before the meeting of the synod, it was not unusual for the various delegates to take an oath *to believe and embrace all the articles which the synod should decree!* Yet the infallibility of the Catholic Church is deemed by our theological adversaries of the day an impious assumption of the prerogative of the Deity!

occasionally addressed letters to their infant congregations, surely they neither abandoned them to the licentious interpretation of every individual, nor suffered them to supersede their own authority. No, instead of permitting the divine legacy, which they bequeathed to the children whom they “had begotten in Christ Jesus,”\* to be dissipated, they appointed vigilant guardians to watch with care over its integrity. Thus, although St. Paul had preached the Gospel at Ephesus, yet he appointed Timothy to remain there, that he “might charge some not to teach otherwise—who, desiring to be teachers of the law, understood neither the things they said nor whereof they affirmed.”† With a similar view of guarding “the word which was committed to him according to the commandment of God his Saviour,”‡ the same apostle thus addresses Titus:—“For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee.”§ Here we find Titus invested with a commission of perpetuating the priesthood, by virtue of the appointment which he received from St. Paul, who himself preached “according to the commandment of God.”

Lest, however, it should be imagined that the authority which he placed in the hands of Timothy or Titus, was of a temporary nature, and to expire with their lives, St. Paul exhorts them to transmit to faithful and capable individuals the sacred inheritance which was entrusted to them. “Thou, therefore, my son,” he writes to Timothy, “be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and the things which thou hast heard from me, through many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also.”|| Continue thou in the things thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee, knowing of whom

\* 1 Cor. iv. 15.

‡ Tit. i. 3.

† Ibid. 5.

+ 1 Tim. i. 3, 7.

|| 2 Tim. ii. 1, 2

thou hast learned.”\* Far, then, from being authorised to pervert, by any peculiar interpretations, the doctrine of Christ, Timothy was charged by the apostles to *continue* in the things which he had learned, and which had been confided to his care.

In his instructions to Titus, after pointing out to him the several duties which it was incumbent on him to discharge, he concludes by reminding him of that authority which was transferred on him by virtue of his succession to the ministry. “These things speak, exhort, and rebuke, with all authority.”† If, then, he was authorised to speak and exhort with the fulness of the power which the apostle had conferred on him, it follows that the Christians of Crete were bound to receive his instructions with a confidence fearless of being led astray. In short, we find the uniform exercise of this authority pervade the whole tenor of the lives of the apostles, accompanied by a correlative obedience on the part of the faithful to their instructions. In the communication of this power to others, to whom the last words of Christ were not addressed in person, it is clear that the apostles understood that the virtue of his promises equally extended to their successors. It is, therefore, by the existence of the same power, residing to this day in their hereditary successors, that the Catholic is guided, still as secure in his faith as those who heard the apostles. For the past he is secure, since the words “*all days*” leave not a moment’s interval, during which Christ could be supposed to have deserted his Church; and for the future he feels no anxiety, since he is assured of the same divine aid “until the consummation of the world.”

Since, then, our Redeemer communicated to his apostles and their successors, that power, which, while he lived upon earth, no one would presume to oppose by controverting his interpretation, it follows that while we subject ourselves to his delegated authority,

\* 2 Tim. iii. 14.

† Tit. ii. 15.

we are *taught by God himself*. The ancient prophecy of Isaias, so often abused, becomes literally realised in the Catholic Church—"all thy children shall be taught of the Lord,"\* because in adopting her doctrine, we adopt that of Jesus Christ, by whom we are taught to obey her. By reposing on this authority, the faith of the Catholic is always uniform and immovable. As it is on its credit he receives the inspired writings, it is on it likewise he receives their interpretation. He, therefore, is not guilty of the inconsistency of trusting solely to the Church, while he receives from her the instrument of her own power, and then by an abuse of the same instrument, of attempting to elude her jurisdiction. No, he is conscious that the Church was in the full enjoyment of its prerogatives before the New Testament was published to the world; nay, that the written manifestation of the New Covenant is one of the effects of that authority. It is not then exclusively from the Scripture, that the Catholic proves the infallible authority of his Church, because it is only from the Church he learns its inspiration. He takes a still higher position by relying on the living authority of that order of men, on whom Christ transferred his own power, and which was visible during the interval in which the Scriptures were yet unknown.† The Scriptures are, if you will, a record of the authority to which the Catholic submits, first exercised by Christ himself, and then delegated to his apostles. But whether that authority be put on record by its own depositaries, or transmitted by their own living testimony, it is still the same. Ink or paper take not from its validity; their only effect is to record the origin from which the power of the Church is derived, and to give it a more extensive and permanent promulgation. But anterior to this record, and independent of its subsequent testimony, the public and uninterrupted ministration of its

\* Isaias, liv. 13.

† Irenæus bears testimony, that even in his days there were nations who firmly believed in Christ, *absque charta et atramento*.

doctrines and sacraments, gave a more visible and striking attestation of the authority of the Church, than any written record could convey. We require not, therefore, the aid of Scripture to prove the establishment of a Church, which had been founded before the Scripture was written. Are we guided, then, solely by its own testimony? Yes, but it is a testimony as strongly fortified by the auxiliaries of truth, which a sound criticism requires, as the written testimony of Scripture itself. It is confirmed by the ancient distinction between the pastors and the people, and the mutual relations of authority and obedience which they exercised.\* It is proved in the uniformity of faith, which the Church has always retained; and in the variety of errors which she has extinguished. It is embodied not only in her public liturgies, but it speaks even in the reluctant acquiescence of the various heretics and schismatics whom she has condemned; and therefore instead of being a solitary or interested testimony, it is one, in support of which the soundest process of reasoning, and the very passions of the human heart, forcibly conspire. If all these motives are not sufficient guardians of the truth of her speaking testimony, what assurance have we of the veracity of the Scriptures, which is only the same testimony committed to writing; and of which she alone is the voucher? In vain will the acquiescence of Pagan writers or contending sects be adduced to fortify their veracity. The argument is as applicable to one testimony as the other. But after all, were they to be guided only by the testimony of the primitive heretics, the confidence of Protestants in the integrity of the inspired books would somewhat subside. Whatever importance may be attached to the opinions of those sectaries, it is to the zeal and vigilance of the pastors of the Catholic Church we are indebted for having distinguished the genuine Gospels and Epistles, from the corrupt transcripts, with which the fraud of those sectaries attempted to confound them.

\* See Hooke de Eccl. (de discrimine cleri et plebis).

The more, then, we sound the depths of the controversy, the more evident it will appear that our faith in the inspiration of the Scripture is dissolved as soon as it is severed from the authority of the Catholic Church. Whatever interval of time may have elapsed since its institution, the authority of the pastors of the present day is the same as in its origin.\* It would, therefore, be no less presumptuous in the faithful to interpret the precepts of Christ or his apostles against the authorised sense of the pastors of the Church, than it would have been for the people of Crete or Ephesus to oppose the epistles of St. Paul, to the jurisdiction of Titus or of Timothy. The folly, nay the impiety, of such opposition in the infant Churches to the authority of those whom Christ had established to bear the glad tidings of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, would not fail to strike every individual. Must not, therefore, the infatuation and impiety of the present day be still the same, when men oppose their own interpretation of the inspired writings to that of the guides,† who have inherited all the ministerial and judicial power of the apostles?

It is not, therefore, without reason that Catholics rely so much on the speaking authority of the Church, and that they receive with such veneration the precious deposit of its traditions. Their conduct is founded on the principle with which I have commenced this subject, that if it would be impiety to controvert the meaning of our Redeemer, explaining his own doctrine, it must be also an impiety to refuse acquiescence in the decisions of those to whom he has distinctly promised his own infallible protection. The Scripture, they venerate as the supreme law of the Almighty; the Church,

\* For proof that the bishops of the present day stand in the same relation to the great body of the faithful, as the apostles themselves to the early Christians, see the "Comparative View of the Catholic and Protestant Churches," by Fletcher. London, 1826.

† This reflection is timidly urged by episcopalian Protestants against Presbyterians and Methodists. But the stone which they thus cast is hurled violently back on themselves.

as the guardian of its integrity and the judge of its meaning, appointed to enforce its observance, and punish its infraction. The authority of both, it is true, is derived from the supreme power of the Almighty, but it is by the living authority of the judge—the Church, that we recognise the authority of the law—the Scripture; as it is through the medium of the constituted functionaries of the state we recognise the decrees of the legislature. Should an endeavour be made to impose any forged or unauthenticated acts on the public, the fraud would be instantly exposed by the vigilance and authority of those guardians. And should any turbulent individual attempt to distort the flexible letter of the law to a sinister interpretation, his temerity would be instantly checked by the legal interpreters of its meaning.

The doctrine and practice then of Catholics on the relative authority of the Church and Scripture, so far from being at variance with the principles of enlightened reason, bear a striking analogy to whatever is most perfect in society. Without a reliance on authority, in vain do you look for order or stability in human institutions. Let any one analyse the stock of his own knowledge, and how few truths will he discover, which he has not derived from tradition. Experience may confirm our hereditary knowledge, but still it is not less true that our knowledge is hereditary. Our habits of reasoning may expand our simple and primitive notions into a variety of consequences, but still we are indebted for those primitive notions to the past experience and fidelity of mankind. Philosophy, then, may amuse itself in tracing the sources of our knowledge, without affecting by its theories those general truths which the testimony of past ages has transmitted. They are now too solid and too strongly cemented into the constitution of society, to be ever shaken by the efforts of philosophy.\*

\* This doctrine is developed with great force and truth in the "Législation primitive."

If, then, society be sustained by the aid of those truths, which are independent of individual reason or experience, is not the Church, too, a society, divine in its origin and destined for an eternal duration, sustained by those great truths on which it was originally founded, and which are independent of the lights and experience of any individual? Society would soon be dissolved, were there not some conservative principle to keep together those traditionary doctrines, which a bold and unsparing philosophy would not fail to scatter. In like manner, the Church would be quickly subverted, were every individual at liberty to diminish, according to his pleasure or caprice, that inheritance which Jesus Christ confided to her guardianship for the general benefit of her children. What a strong analogy, then, between the philosophical method of the ancients, which almost dissipated into doubt all the primitive truths on which society was founded, and the same similar system of the modern Protestants, which has got rid of many of the revealed truths on which the Christian Church reposes?\*

To the philosophical method, which subjected every truth to the test of individual reason, the words of the Psalmist are strictly applicable,—“Truths are decayed from among the children of men.”† And hence the world had sunk into a state of languor and insensibility, from which the living energy of every moral principle had departed. In proportion, too, as the Protestant method has been propagated, it has succeeded, by the gradual subduction of the principles of revelation, in throwing the Christian society into a similar state of moral insensibility.‡

To preserve these truths, then, which will never cease to inform and vivify the great Catholic body, there must be an authority to guard them. This authority resides in the living pastors of the Church, who transmit the sacred doctrine which they inherited to

\* Lord Bacon declares divisions in religion, if they be many, to be one of the principal causes of Atheism.

† Psalm, xi, 2.

‡ See Robinson's Proofs of a conspiracy, passim.

their immediate successors. Between them and those successors there is a sacred covenant not to violate this inheritance. The study of each individual is to preserve unaltered the precious deposit which he has received ; and thus, while the Protestant, like the prodigal child, dissipates his share of the patrimony, the Catholic is careful to treasure it up in the house of his Father.

In vain will it be insinuated, that in the Catholic Church this treasure is studiously locked up from the necessities of the faithful. No, they are encouraged to use, they are forbidden to abuse, it. The treasure is destined for purchasing an everlasting inheritance, and not for being wasted according to each one's caprice in profligacy and riot. For, alas ! how often have the profligate abused the authority of the sacred text, in giving a sanction to their own disorders ? In teaching the principles of morality, her instructions are always enriched by the truths of revelation ; and in illustrating her own doctrines, she appeals to its written testimony. In the great voyage through life, the Protestant may have the chart ; but wanting the knowledge which it requires, and bereft of a guide, he is exposed to all the perils of the way ; while the Catholic enjoys all the confidence inspired by the twofold assistance of chart and guide. If he be ignorant, he trusts to the guide that has already conducted thousands through the same path ; and if he be enlightened, so far from his confidence being diminished, it is still heightened when he beholds the Church fearlessly spreading the Scripture before his view, and finds the most admirable accordance between the instructions of the chart and the skill of his conductor.

The method of perpetuating the Christian doctrine by the means of tradition, which St. Paul recommended to Timothy, has been invariably observed by the Fathers of the Church.\* Wherever the purity of the ancient

\* "Quamobrem ecclesiæ quoque traditionem censeamus esse fide dignam. Est traditio : nihil quæras amplius."—St. Chrysost. hom. iv. in ep. ii. ad Thess. Such is the doctrine of all the Fathers on the subject of tradition.

faith was attempted to be defiled by the introduction of error, the guardians of the faith diligently inquired into the ancient traditions, and proposed them to the veneration of the people as a safeguard against modern inventions. We are informed by Eusebius, that while St. Ignatius, the venerable bishop of Antioch, was conducted through Asia under a strong guard, he forcibly exhorted the faithful to beware of the dangerous opinions of heretics, which were spreading among them. "And he adjured them to be most tenacious of the traditions of the apostles, which, for the more ample instruction of posterity, he thought necessary to commit to writing."\* From this testimony an important truth may be inferred, that after the New Testament was written, St. Ignatius deemed an adherence to the tradition of the apostles the best preservative of the integrity of that faith. And that those traditions were not such as were committed to writing by the apostles themselves, is clear from his concluding observation, that, "he thought it necessary to write them for the instruction of posterity."

St. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, who sealed his faith with the effusion of his blood, after detailing with much historical minuteness the errors with which many laboured to deform the Church in his time, points out the method by which the true believers might preserve themselves from the contagion. Does he refer them to the written word of God? No; it was the perverse adaptation of that word to every fanciful error that he deplored. But striking at once at the root of those disorders, he tells the people: "The tradition of the apostles promulgated through the whole world, is rendered visible in every Church to those who are desirous of the truth; and we can number those who were appointed bishops in the Churches by the apostles and their successors to our own time, who neither taught nor knew such frantic opinions. If the apostles knew any mysterious truths which they secretly taught the

\* Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. iii. c. 36.

perfect, surely they must have communicated them principally to those to whom they entrusted the Churches.”\* And again, “were disputes to arise on any question, should not reference then be made to the most ancient Churches in which the apostles spoke, and whatever is clear and certain be adopted from them? If the apostles, however, had not left us Scripture, then it would have been necessary to follow the order of tradition which they delivered to those to whom they committed the Churches. This regulation is observed by many nations of barbarians, of whom, such as believe in Christ retain, without ink or paper, salvation written by the Holy Spirit in their hearts, diligently keeping the ancient tradition and believing in God through his Son Jesus Christ. Those who, without the aid of letters, have professed this faith, are called barbarians in our language; yet, on account of that faith by which they please God, they excel in justice, in charity, in wisdom: to whom should anyone announce the inventions of heretics, they instantly close their ears and fly, unable to endure such blasphemous language.”† “Wherefore,” concludes Irenæus, “we should hear those ancients in the Church who derive their succession from the apostles, and who, according to the will of the Father, inherit the gift of truth with the succession of episcopacy.”

That the Christian religion was preserved by a living authority, that received and transmitted, by virtue of hereditary succession, the precepts of Christ and his apostles, is also clearly shown by Tertullian. Having undertaken the defence of the Christians who were reproached with their scruples in not wearing a crown on their heads, after the fashion of the Pagans, Tertullian replies: “If this ancient practice has not been determined by Scripture, it has been confirmed by custom of which tradition was the source. Let us therefore examine, whether any tradition but a written one

\* St. Iren. *Adver. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 3.*

† *Ibid. c. 4.*

ought to be adopted. To begin with baptism : on approaching the font in the church, we there, under the hand of the bishop, solemnly declare that we renounce the devil, his pomp, and his angels.\* We are then thrice immersed, and make some answers which the Gospel has not determined. The sacrament of the Eucharist taken during the time of refreshment, and which all were commanded to partake of, we receive in our assemblies before the break of day, and from the hands of our priests only. On one day of the year we make oblations for the dead. On Sunday we deem it unlawful to fast. By a similar privilege we rejoice from Easter to Pentecost. On going in and going out, while we bathe, or dress, or sit at table, while the torches are lighting, or any other action is performing, we wear our foreheads with the sign of the cross. For these and similar practices, if you look for a law in Scripture, you will look for it in vain. They originated in tradition, they were confirmed by custom and observed by faith. These examples, then, prove that unwritten tradition may be defended when its antiquity is attested by the perpetuity of the practice. Even in civil matters custom passes for law, when the law is silent.†

Such is the language of Tertullian, one of the most ancient as well as most learned of the fathers of the Church, on the force and authority of tradition. He shows that many of those practices, which are now observed by Protestants as well as Catholics, have no other sanction but that of unwritten tradition. He proves that those ceremonies which are still mingled with the administration of the sacraments are not recorded in Scripture. And he concludes by observing that custom, sanctioned by the proper authority, always supplies the place of law.‡ This is an observation

\* What scriptural authority can a member of the Church of England assign for the Protestant ceremonial used in administering the sacrament of baptism ?

† De Corona Militis, cap. iii. iv.

‡ “Sine scripto jus venit, quod usus approbavit, &c.”—Inst. tom. ii. s. 9.

worthy of the penetrating mind of Tertullian. Far from confounding the practices which he mentions with those observances which originate in the caprice of individuals, and may degenerate into superstition, he traces them to that authority instituted by Christ, of which the sanction gave them the validity of law. In every well-regulated state there is a written and a common law, each of which is revered by the dispensers of justice. Nay, the common law is partly composed of those decisions which were given by preceding judges,\* on some points, on which the written law was not sufficiently explicit. Those decisions and practices of the court become afterwards incorporated with the law of the land, and form a standard for the direction of future judges. It is not merely because they are the decisions of the court that they pass into law, since the court cannot usurp the authority of the legislature: but because the judges are constituted the interpreters of whatever is obscure in law, and therefore their decisions, by its acquiescence, have the constructive sanction of the legislature.

Thus, too, in the Christian Church, its legislators, the apostles and their successors, received all power of instituting those laws which might promote its welfare. Whatever, therefore, has their universal approbation, whether written or unwritten, has the stamp of their authority. It is only in this sense, as far as it was connected with the apostolical order and a declaration of its authority, that Tertullian insists on the force of tradition.† This appears from the entire book of his Prescriptions, one of the most wonderful monuments of controversial powers that antiquity has left us; a book in which he not only refuted all the errors of his own

\* "When I call those parts of our laws *Leges non scriptæ*, I do not mean as if all those laws were only oral, &c."—Hale's Hist. Com. Law. c. ii.

† For a brief but comprehensive view of the question of tradition, see Doctor Delahogue's "Tract. de Ecclesia," Appendix i. The profound and elaborate treatise of Perez (Martinus Peresius, Guidixensium Episcopus) "De Divinis, Apostolicis atque Ecclesiasticis Traditionibus," is unfortunately too scarce for general perusal.

times, but furnished an anticipated refutation of all the future heresies that have since distracted the Church.\*

Having demonstrated the vain efforts of those who attempted to restore union among the sectaries by appealing to Scripture, † while each was permitted to give it his own interpretation : he lays down a safe and summary method of arriving at truth, by adhering solely to the doctrine which the apostles taught. To ascertain, however, that doctrine, Tertullian refers us not to the discordant notions which were extracted from their writings, but to the constant and uniform faith of the apostolical Churches.

“What they (the apostles) preached and Christ revealed to them, cannot otherwise be proved than by the same Churches which they founded, preaching to them by word, as well as by writing. If so, then, it is clear that every doctrine must be true, which is in accordance with the doctrine of the apostolical Churches, which are the source and origin of faith, still doubtless retaining what they received from the apostles, and the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God. On the contrary, every doctrine must be deemed erroneous which savours of anything against the truth of the Churches, and of the apostles and of Christ, and God. It, therefore, only remains for us to inquire whether our doctrine be derived from the tradition of the apostles ; and by consequence, whether all others be erroneous. We communicate with the apostolical Churches. The identity of our doctrine with theirs is the evidence of its truth.” ‡ “Well, then, all have erred: an apostle himself was deceived while he delivered his testimony. The Holy Ghost has not been attentive to the office for which he was sent by Christ, for which he was demanded of the Father, that he should teach all truth : the steward of God, the vicar of Christ, has so neglected his trust, as to suffer the Churches to believe and understand differently what he preached

\* A short and judicious analysis of the Book of Prescriptions, will be found in Butler's "Lives of Saints," vol. vii. July 17.

† De Præscript., cap. xvii.-xix.

‡ Tertul. de Præscr., cap. xxi.

through the apostles. Is it likely that so many and such distinguished Churches have been uniform in error? Variety is the character of error. But what is found the same among different nations is not error, but a deposit that was transmitted. Shall anyone, then, presume to say that those by whom it was delivered had themselves fallen into error? ”\*

The reader will now readily perceive that the doctrine, which I have been defending in this and the preceding chapter, is fully illustrated, by the authority of the earliest fathers and writers of the Church. Tertullian, so far from granting to every individual the licentious privilege of interpreting the Scripture according to his fancy, pronounces it the source of every error. And the clue which he furnishes for disengaging one's-self from the perplexity in which the heretics are eternally involved, is found in a steady adherence to the tradition and authority of the apostolic Churches. Those who depart from the path in which the apostles and their successors have walked, he pronounces to be enemies of the apostles, and disentitled, of course, to share in the inheritance of their testament. But I shall quote his own words. They have all the sacredness that is due to antiquity about them, nor shall I attempt to rub off any of that rust with which, to the modern reader, time may appear to have encrusted them.

“If, then, it follows that the truth should be adjudged to us and to all, who walk according to the rule, which the Church delivered from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God; we have developed the reason why heretics are not to be admitted to a disputation on the Scriptures, since we prove, without the aid of Scripture, that they cannot share in its privileges. For if they are heretics they are not Christians, since the very name of heretic demonstrates that they do not receive from Christ what, after seeking, they admit by their own choice. . . . To them we may, therefore, deservedly say: Who are you? Whence came you?

\* Tertul. de Præscript., cap. xxviii.

By what right do you, Marcion, fell my wood? By what licence do you, Valentine, turn my fountains from their course? By what authority do you, Apelles, remove my boundaries? The possession is mine. . . . It is mine since time immemorial. Nay, I was the first possessor, since my possession is derived from those who were the first proprietors. I am the heir of the apostles; and I still hold possession according to the solemn adjuration of their last testament. You, however, they have disinherited, and cast out as aliens and enemies. Whence, however, are heretic strangers, and enemies to the apostles, but from the diversity of doctrine which each one has fashioned or received according to his pleasure in opposition to the apostles.”\*

If, therefore, Catholics are guided by another authority besides individual interpretation of Scripture, they are fully justified by the concurrence of all ages. Numberless other passages, equally strong, might be cited from others of the early Christian writers, were I not apprehensive that they would swell this work beyond the limits of my original plan. Without this authority controversy would be interminable. Protestants may think the opinion of Tertullian harsh and unreasonable, because it denies them the right of disputing on the authority of Scripture. But his opinion is founded on an obvious principle, recognised in every society. It is not more unreasonable to refuse to those who have abjured the authority of the Church, a right of impugning that authority from Scripture, than to deny to any individual the right of controverting from the acts of parliament the authority of their authorised interpreters. Should the constituted judges of the law abandon their high station to dispute with men, who might have already questioned their right of interpreting the law, such conduct would not escape the reproach of extreme folly. Yet they, who would expect such condescension on their part, would be as reasonable as those who would admit sectaries to an equal privilege of

\* Tertul. de Præscript., cap. xxxvii.

interpreting the Scripture, with its authorised ex-pounders.\*

In vain will it be said that the New Testament contains an inheritance, in which all have a right to participate. Yes, all have a right to participate in the precious legacy; and the right which each possesses of sharing in its privileges, is a reason why each should not be a judge of its contents. The children of a common father may lay claim to his inheritance. But they are not, on that account, the administrators or ex-pounders of his testament. Its real or apparent obscurity might easily furnish to their self-interest some motive for dissension. But every temptation to quarrel is taken away by the explicit statement of the dying father, appointing certain individuals to put his will in execution.

Thus the New Testament contains the inheritance which Christ has bequeathed to his children. Though destined for the benefit of all, it does not follow that all have a right to its administration. Nay, it is for the benefit of all, that this right should be reserved to a particular body, whose authority and wisdom might moderate those disputes, which could not fail to spring from the passions or ignorance of the people.† Behold, then, the simple but infallible rule, by which the Catholic is guided—an adherence to the traditionary doctrine of those to whom the Redeemer promised that they should never go astray. But it may be asked: is not this infallibility of the Church proved solely from the Scripture? No; its promise is registered in the Scripture, it is true, but its operation lives and is felt through the entire history of the Church. This infallibility was in operation before the promise which sustained it was committed to writing. If, therefore, it never had been recorded in the Scripture, our certainty

\* This folly has been ridiculed by several eminent Protestant Divines, who, however, on this, as on many other points, are at issue with the great bulk of their brethren. See Fletcher's Grounds, &c., c. i.

† Selden, though a staunch Puritan, declares that the two words, "Scrutami Scripturas," have undone the world.

of its existence would be still the same, since it reaches us through the equally infallible medium of the writings of the Holy Fathers, and through the still more unequivocal medium of the power which the Church has always exercised. In the uniform authority, which her pastors always enforced, and in the uniform reverence with which her decrees were received, notwithstanding the angry passions which this exercise of power often awakened in the discontented, we behold a stronger evidence of the promises of Christ than any writings could convey.

How different, therefore, the confidence of him who thus relies on the collected wisdom of all ages and nations of the Christian Church,\* from the perpetual anxiety of the man who trusts solely to his own, or to the fleeting opinions of a few individuals? But is not the confidence of the Catholic unreasonable who thus reposes on the authority of others? Not more unreasonable than when he commits his life and property to the guardianship of the civil authority of the state. If the moral and metaphysical truths which form the source of our obligations to God and society are inherited by children from their fathers, without the reproach of credulity, why not communicate the more mysterious truths of revealed religion through the same medium of authority? Those principles which are connected with the preservation of society are suffered to be strengthened by all the natural prejudices of infancy and education: are the saving truths of the Gospel the only ones that should not be allowed to take such strong root, but be rudely torn from their soil, under the pretext that man himself had no share in planting them? Alas! in spite of all our efforts, the prejudices of education will prevail, and those who attempt to deprive truth of their alliance must give their strong assistance to error. As well, then, might you say that man is

\* "Curandum est," says an ancient writer, "ut id teneatur quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est. . . . Sed hoc ita demum fiet, si sequamur universitatem, antiquitatem, consensionem," etc.—Vincen. Lerin. Comm., c. ii.

unreasonable when he adopts, on the authority of man kind, those metaphysical truths which he cannot comprehend, as that the Catholic is unreasonable, when he reposes on the authority of the Catholic Church. Every assent, which is not founded on previous examination, is not, therefore, unreasonable.\* If it were, the number of truths on which we should enjoy conviction would be limited indeed. Is it by a previous process of reasoning that each individual is fortified in the conviction of the existence of a Supreme Being? If so, it is a process which few are able to analyse. Though it forces itself on the conviction of every mind, still it is so vague in the mode of its conception that no one can define its form or trace its origin. Yet, however undefinable, it is still so strong in its operation, that its faith could not be shaken in the most illiterate mind. The evidence of truth, then, is quite distinct from the process of reasoning by which it is unfolded. Nay, the truths, which are the simplest in their nature, and the least susceptible of argumentation, are those which act most strongly on our convictions. Such is the order of nature, observes St. Augustine, that when we learn any thing, reason is anticipated by authority. The profound observation is illustrated by the universal influence of authority over our education. But though truth may be poured into our infant minds before we could distinguish it from error, we are not, on that account, when our faculties are developed, the less sensible of its evidence and force. This is the reason of the calm and settled tranquillity which accompanies the Catholic through life; and which the Protestant may mistake for an unreasonable prostration of his intellect. Having found the truth by that method by which it has been transmitted, it would be folly for him to inquire for

\* "Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas. On le sent en mille choses. C'est le cœur qui sent Dieu, et non la raison. Voilà ce que c'est que la foi parfaite, Dieu sensible au cœur."—Pascal, p. 220. There is a philosophy in this observation, which is well calculated to abash the pride of mere science, and to illustrate the strength and security of the faith of those to whom in particular, on account of their simplicity, the mysteries of God are revealed.

that of which he is already in possession ; and hence he is secure from that anxiety which must agitate those who wander from one error to another. All the arguments of uniformity, antiquity, and universality, which fail not to strike every mind, have their silent but powerful influence on the education of every Catholic, and must operate in checking those doubts which are generally the associates of error. From infancy to manhood, from the narrowest state of his intellect to the utmost expansion it can assume, the Catholic finds, in the treasures of his religion,\* sufficient truth to satisfy all the cravings of his mind.

If, in his youth, he is indebted to his parents for the rudiments of his faith, it is because, as St. Augustine remarks, the relations of nature require such subjection. His feeble mind must be yet fed with the milk of Christian doctrine, because it is incapable of stronger nourishment. He then receives those seeds of Christian faith, of which he beholds in every future instruction, nothing else but a fuller development.† Examination, therefore, instead of awakening doubt, only strengthens conviction. From his pastor he learns the same doctrine which he lisped under his mother's tutelage, with this difference only, that it is accompanied with stronger reasons, which are accommodated to his growing understanding. Could we suppose that the activity with which man thirsts after knowledge, should prompt him to distrust the narrow source from which his science has been hitherto derived ; his distrust is checked or anticipated by the instruction, which refers him to more abundant sources of information. He hears his pastor confidently declare :—“ The doctrine which I preach is not mine, but that of him who sent me.”‡ Instead, therefore, of requiring that any rest their faith on his authority alone, the pastor raises the confidence of his

\* “ Depositorium dives (Eccl. Cath.) in quod Apostoli contulerunt omnia que sunt veritatis.”—Iren.

† See Delahogue “ De Actu Fidei, de Eccles,” pages, 110 et seqq. Ed. iv.

‡ John, vii. 16.

people to a still higher authority, on which his own is dependent. The Catholic, then, far from seeing his curiosity checked, finds it still invited to a more ample investigation. He hears the bishop preach from his episcopal chair; who, instead of arrogating any power to himself, declares that he, too, is only the organ of a Church, from whose decisions he cannot depart. The immutable decisions of this Church, to which the sincere and docile Christian is ultimately referred, he finds written in her liturgies and embodied with her public worship. They are identified with her ceremonies, they are palpable in her festivals; and, if he can trace back her history, they will meet him in every period of her existence. Thus he discovers nothing isolated or solitary in his inquiry; nothing partial or mutilated in his faith. Every testimony which he consults, is only a link which connects his belief with some other monument—thus, as it were, stretching through every age, and spreading over every country: in a word, he finds that the faith which he drank in his infancy, was but a partial stream conveyed to him from the pure, the ancient, and the universal doctrine of the Catholic Church.

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## CHAPTER X.

## THE HIERARCHY.

To disarray the Catholic Hierarchy, a principal object of the policy of the pretended Reformers.—Evidence from Scripture and from the ancient Fathers in favour of the divine institution of Bishops.—Nature and origin of the dignity of Metropolitans and Patriarchs.—A summary view of the history of the Sacred College.

FOR the great bulk of mankind, whose interests are involved in this inquiry, it is sufficient to know that the authority, by which they are to be regulated in things appertaining to religion, resides in the bishops and the Roman pontiff. The uninterrupted voice of antiquity proclaims that they are the successors of the apostles,\* and that as such, they have not ceased to enjoy that special protection, of which the last words of our Redeemer gave them such an assurance.† “We can number those,” says St. Irenæus, “who have been appointed by the apostles bishops in the Churches, and their successors to our own time, who neither taught nor knew such wild opinions.”‡ However, in a work devoted to the elucidation of the leading truths of religion, we cannot pass over the subject of the Catholic hierarchy. It is that on which the authority to which we appeal principally revolves. On the respective jurisdiction of the pope and bishops, many bulky volumes have been written, the authors of which often consulted their prejudices more than their reason. Following the general plan we have hitherto pursued,

\* “The ancient writers all agree with unanimous consent, that the order of bishops was made by divine appointment.”—Bingham Orig. Eccles.

† Matt. xxviii. 18-20.

‡ St. Irenæus adver. Hær. lib. iii. c. 3.

of vindicating Catholic doctrine without reference to particular opinions, we shall discuss in the two subsequent chapters the respective powers of the pope and bishops, in whom the legislative authority of the Church resides. Independently of the more natural order of ascending from the members to the head, we are induced to commence with the bishops, in order not to dissociate the pope's spiritual supremacy from the question of a temporal monarchy, as some individuals have fancied them to be essentially connected.

In vindicating the just prerogatives of the episcopal order, we have to contend with some who would reduce their authority to an absolute dependence on the pope: and with the others, who would lower them to a level with the presbyters of the second order. Like many other truths of the Catholic religion, the apostolical succession and authority of the bishops was revered during the revolution of ages,\* notwithstanding the discontent which the exercise of that authority had often awakened. But the spirit of the reformation, which attempted to remove all the ancient landmarks, could not be at rest without the annihilation of the episcopal order. As long as the orders of the hierarchy were drawn up "terrible as an army set in array,"† to oppose them, the leaders of the reformation despaired of making any progress. Hence, one of their first objects was to overturn the authority of the bishops, who laboured to arrest the diffusion of their opinions."‡ Accordingly, the despotism of ecclesiastics became a favourite and frequent theme of their denunciations. It was, of course, a gratifying topic to those whose avarice thirsted for ecclesiastical plunder,

\* "For the first fifteen hundred years, no Church of Christ, in any part of the world, was known to exist under any other government."—Daubeny.

† Cantic. vi. 3.

‡ The Reformers, not excepting even Calvin and Beza, for some time, affected to speak of the order and authority of bishops with respect. But the necessity of the case and the tenor of their policy urging them to headlong measures, "ere long," says Lesley, "they thought proper to eat their own words; to stifle, as much as they could, and carry on the war against the episcopacy itself."

and whose pride was impatient of ecclesiastical control.\*

Calvin was the first that attempted to reduce this levelling principle to the regularity of system. Having meditated, in France, a revolution similar to that which Luther had already achieved in Germany, his first aim was the overthrow of the Catholic hierarchy. To accomplish this project, he amused the citizens of Geneva with the pleasing sounds of religious freedom, until at length he succeeded in establishing in that city a species of ecclesiastical democracy.† The form of government which he introduced into Geneva, he laboured to extend wherever his opinions were adopted. It flattered the passions of the people, who saw themselves associated to a share in the new government. But this democracy wore but the form of freedom; and, under its specious disguise, Calvin exercised in Geneva the worst and most oppressive species of tyranny.‡ His disciples were zealous in propagating his opinions, but the nations of Europe were alarmed at the anarchy that followed in their train. England, on that account, though severed from the apostolical succession, has still preserved a decent image of the ancient hierarchy.§ In Scotland, however, after a fierce and sanguinary struggle, the opinions and discipline of Calvin prevailed.|| Every trace of episcopal authority was obliterated; and the country parcelled into independent

\* The candid Baron Stark admits that “the Reformation owed its success to a variety of passions; to the avarice of princes; to the love of liberty; to the hatred of Rome; to rivalries; to pretensions; to the ambitious views of different orders; to the dislike of celibacy amongst certain corrupted members of the priesthood,” &c.

† Maimbourg. *Hist. du Calv. An. 1541.* See the Reformer’s idea of ecclesiastical authority. *Inst. lib. iv. c. 4.*

‡ “Calvin devint pontife, et pour parler plus juste, calife de Genève.”—Maimbourg, *Hist. Calv. an. 1542.*

§ Bossuet thus describes the remodelled Church of England:—“Les évêques furent obligés à recevoir comme une grâce, que le roi donnât les évêchés à vie. On expliquait bien nettement dans leur commission, comme on avait fait sous Henri, selon la doctrine de Cranmer, que la puissance épiscopale, aussi bien que celle des magistrats séculiers, émanait de la royauté comme de sa source; que les évêques ne l’exerçaient que précairement, et qu’ils devaient l’abandonner à la volonté du roi, d’où elle leur était communiquée.”—*Hist. Variat. lib. vii. n. 76.*

|| Stuart’s *Hist. of the Reform. in Scotland*, book iii. vers. fin. Robertson, *Hist. of Scotland*, book iii. an. 1560.

congregations, each of which assumed the privilege of electing or deposing their own presbyters. With the annihilation of its only conservative principle, the doctrine of Christianity has almost fled from that country, and the name of Christian *congregation*,\* which has been assumed, is now but a thin disguise for the growing infidelity of Scotland. Yet this capricious system its votaries still call Christianity; and by adopting the name of Presbyterian, so familiar in Scripture, would fain persuade the people that their Church is fashioned according to the apostolical institution.

Though to vindicate the episcopal authority, it would be sufficient to trace its origin to the apostolic times; yet the Scripture furnishes clear testimonies in favour of its divine institution and jurisdiction. In vain is the word presbyter insisted on, as if to show that bishops were unknown.† It is a designation of age rather than of office; and as priests and bishops were distinguished by the gravity of their characters and a paternal solicitude for their flocks, the appellation of presbyter was adopted as equally significant of the functions of either.

Although bishops, as now understood, were once designated by the appellation of presbyters, it is a wrong inference to conclude that there existed between both no other marks of discrimination. Thus in modern language we apply the words minister and magistrate, to persons invested with different degrees of ecclesiastical or civil jurisdiction, without confounding their respective limits. And yet the common appellation of both orders of the Church is seriously insisted on, as a proof of the approximation, or rather identity, of their respective characters.

If we are to attach importance to names, the Scripture, in using the name of bishop, would furnish equal evidence in favour of episcopacy. But candour must

\* See the first Covenant of the Protestants of Scotland, in Knox.

† Blondel dates the distinction between priests and bishops from the middle, Salmasius from the end of the second century.

acknowledge, and it is the opinion of some ancient fathers, that the word bishop, in its origin, was no less flexible than that of presbyter, in its application to either order of the priesthood.\* Abandoning, then, an unprofitable discussion about ambiguous names, which may be equally marshalled on either side of the controversy, we will proceed to show the more striking difference of power that always marked the episcopal order of the hierarchy.

In the epistle which St. Paul addressed to Titus, we find the following remarkable words: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests in every city as I also appointed thee."† Now it must be remarked that Titus was not an apostle. Yet we find him invested with a plenitude of power, not only to govern the Church of Crete, but also to propagate the priesthood. It is remarkable that the apostle's concluding words dissipate the visionary theory of those who would make the bishop only the representative of the college of presbyters. We find no insinuation thrown out by the apostle, that the authority of Titus was derived from the priests or people, or that it was to be controlled by their inclinations. He recommends to him to ordain priests "as I also appointed thee:" words which imply that the authority of Titus depended not on the arbitrary institutions of man, but was derived from the appointment of heaven.

Another passage of the same apostle bears equally strong on the present argument. He admonishes Timothy not to receive an accusation against a priest, if not substantiated by the testimony of two or three witnesses.‡ Now, the power of receiving accusations

\* Those whose curiosity will not be satisfied with this slight notice of the controversy, may consult the second volume of the learned Treatise on the Hierarchy, by the Abbé de la Blandinière, published in continuation of the "Conférences d'Angers." See particularly the third question: "Les Evêques et les Prêtres ont-ils porté le même nom dans le commencement de l'Eglise?"

† Tit. i. 5.

‡ 1 Tim. v. 19.

and of awarding punishment, evidently implies superior jurisdiction ; and, therefore, the text of St. Paul proves the divine superiority of the episcopal order in which Timothy was enrolled. Besides, we read in the Apocalypse, that St. John was directed to communicate to the seven churches of Asia the admonitions and threats of the Almighty.\* It must be supposed, that in each of these churches, the first theatres of the labours of the apostles, there was a crowd of priests or presbyters, as they are called. Yet to one individual, designated by the name of the angel of the Church, the commands of God are particularly directed ; and to him, as especially entrusted with its government, is made the severe reproach of suffering the introduction of novel doctrines. How early, then, can we trace the origin of the episcopal hierarchy ; since it rose and shone on the Christian world, before the last star of the apostolical constellation had gone down.

If, however, its light appeared then but feeble, it is because it was obscured in the fulness of the apostolical splendour. But scarce had the glorious effulgence set upon the Christian world, when we behold it reflected in the episcopal order. St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Dionysius of Athens, and St. Clement of Rome, immediately appear as the successors of the apostles in the government of their respective churches.† The epistles of St. Ignatius and St. Clement are the earliest ecclesiastical records which antiquity has left us ; and in them we find the clearest testimony of the authority of bishops. “ I exhort you,” says St. Ignatius, in his epistle to the Magnesians, “ that it be your study to do everything in harmony, the bishop presiding in the name of God ; the priests in place of the senate of the apostles ; and the deacons, who are dear to me, as those to whom the mystery of Jesus Christ is entrusted.” These

\* Apoc. i.-iii.

† See Fleury for the lives of these, and of the other immediate successors of the Apostles.

words of this primitive and apostolical Father trace the mode of that decree, which was afterwards promulged in the council of Trent.\* And again, in his epistle to the people of Smyrna, this venerable martyr exhorts them to avoid divisions, as the source of all evils. "Follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ follows the Father: the priests as the apostles. Respect the deacons as appointed by the commandment of God. Let no individual do anything that regards the Church without the direction of the bishop. . . . Where the bishop is, there let the people be; as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." I should transcribe a large portion of his epistles were I to exhibit the different testimonies which they furnish in favour of the prerogatives of episcopacy. However, I shall close these extracts by the following passage:—"All ought to respect the deacons as established by the order of Jesus Christ; the bishop as him who is the image of the Father, and the priests as the senate of God and as the associates of the apostles."

The early distinction between the different orders of the hierarchy, is also recognised by Irenæus † Not to fatigue the reader, however, with minute reference, it will be sufficient to observe that the institution and jurisdiction of bishops are coeval with the earliest ecclesiastical records.‡ A catalogue of the bishops of the principal churches is preserved by Eusebius,§ which ascends to the time of the apostles. If they were not distinguished by the pre-eminence of their office, it is singular that the names of the bishops should have been thus uniformly recorded, while many priests of higher personal merits are forgotten. The extracts

\* Sess. xxiii. c. 4.

† *Adver. Hær. lib. iii. c. 14.* In chapter iii. he exhibits a catalogue of the twelve bishops, who continued the succession in the principal see from the days of St. Peter to his own time. See also Tertul. *de Bapt.*

‡ See *Witasse, de Ord.*

§ In the *Chronicle* published by St. Jerome. The very publication, not to mention the other works of this learned Father, nor the well-known doctrine of his contemporaries, is a sufficient reply to those who would rank St. Jerome among the impugnors of the rights of episcopacy.

which have been furnished by the epistles of Ignatius, sufficiently reveal the disingenuity of those who would fain persuade the credulity of the ignorant that there was no original distinction between priests and bishops. Blondel,\* one of the most zealous asserters of this theological theory, is followed by Mosheim, who has adopted a similar opinion. Waiving, for a moment, the strong and stubborn testimony of history, its own improbability is a refutation of their supposition.

According to their fanciful opinion, a perfect equality originally subsisted between priests and bishops, and continued for more than the space of a hundred years. From the commencement of that period, a sudden and universal revolution is effected; a new discipline is established; the original equality of the priests is dissolved; and the tyranny of one individual wrests from all the presbyters of his Church those prerogatives with which Christ had invested them. We know that pride and interest oppose stubborn obstacles to the exercise of authority; and that ingenuity is seldom wanting to elude its legitimate control. The mildest commands are sometimes received with a secret murmur of disapprobation, and not unfrequently met with resistance. But here the exercise of power would have been unjust, and all the force of pride and self-interest would have been strengthened by the specious and exalted motives of zeal for religion.

How, then, could such a revolution have been effected? Is it to be imagined that this usurpation of prerogative could have been silently introduced without exciting the vigilance or jealousy of those whose rights it gradually extinguished? Or can it be supposed that their privileges were forcibly wrested from them by an individual whom they hitherto considered their equal; while they could justify their opposition by the laudable motive of defending the precious deposit of Christ and his apostles against human encroachments? The authority of Pope Victor could not bend the obstinacy of

\* Apolog. pro sent. S. Hieron.

the Asiatics, while they speciously pleaded their attachment to the traditions of the apostles. To reduce them to a conformity with the general discipline of the Church was attended with a long and angry controversy; and it was only by the weighty authority of a general council that their resistance was finally subdued.\* I know that force is sometimes effectual in vanquishing opposition, and that the most mutinous are sometimes silenced by the dexterous distribution of wealth and honours. But during the interval in which this revolution is said to have taken place, the Christian religion was a reproach, and its professors lived in poverty. It was in vain, therefore, to appeal to the avarice or ambition of those whose independence the bishops laboured to annihilate. And as for force, they could not hope for the aid of the secular arm, when all who bore the Christian name were common objects of persecution. By what subversion, then, of every principle of human nature could it come to pass, that a discipline, established not in one Church, but through all the Churches of the earth; not by one apostle, but by all the apostles of Christ, could have been abolished by a strange and sudden revolution, while not one Church was found to cling to the ancient discipline, and not a single presbyter to register his resistance against so unjust and so unchristian a domination.†

If some writers have attempted to reduce the bishops to a level with the priests of the second order, from an attachment to democracy, others, from an equal zeal for a purely monarchical government, have attempted to derive their jurisdiction from the pope. Among the abettors of the latter opinion is Bellarmine, whose fame has extended far beyond the enclosures of the schools. With matters of harmless opinion I have little concern: since it is my object rather to illustrate the doctrines of the Catholic Church, than to involve myself or my

\* See Bede, de Rat. Temp.

† Arius, in the fourth century, was the first who asserted the equality of bishops and presbyters. Epiph. Her. 75. Aug. Har. 53. The Catholic doctrine subsequently enjoyed many ages of repose.

readers in the intricate opinions of scholastic theology. But when the nature of an opinion, supported by the credit of an illustrious name, may be calculated to mislead, the interests of truth require that such an opinion should be stripped of the illusion which the authority of a name may bestow. Although the cardinal's learning is always extensive, and his reasoning generally profound, it must be confessed that his arguments on the order of the hierarchy are contracted to that mechanical structure which is calculated to confound more than to convince. Nay, he is embarrassed by his own subtlety. In one part of his work he lays down as a fundamental truth, that the bishops are successors of the apostles,\* a principle which grafts the episcopal order on apostolic succession. But finding this principle at variance with his theory that the pope is the sole source of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, he endeavours to qualify it, by saying, that all the gifts of the apostles did not descend to the bishops.† Again‡ the same writer, discussing the respective rights of priests and bishops, asserts the supreme jurisdiction of the bishops, because they were represented by Aaron. But when he strives to accumulate all ecclesiastical jurisdiction into the hands of the pope, he strips the bishops of the privileges with which he invested them before; and the former, not the latter, is prefigured by the authority of Aaron.§ Without insisting on his further inconsistency, I shall only remark, that while he teaches the pope to be the source of all authority, he acknowledges that it is the doctrine of the Church, that the jurisdiction of bishops is by *divine appointment* superior to that of priests. Now, it requires no extraordinary sagacity to perceive, that if the jurisdiction of bishops be by divine appointment superior to that of priests, the former must be derived from Jesus Christ.

If I have animadverted on the inconsistency of a writer whose learning and virtues have entitled him to

\* De Cleric. lib. i. c. 13.

‡ De Cleric. lib. i. c. 14.

† De Rom. Pontif lib. iv. c. 25.

‡ See Bellarmine.

high respect, it was only for the purpose of showing that truth only derives stronger illustration from every attempt to weaken its influence. If the reader finds Bellarmine, who viewed with a profound reverence the authority of the Roman pontiff, still acknowledging the divine jurisdiction of episcopacy, in spite of the prejudice that would prompt him to controvert it, such an acknowledgment ought to strengthen his conviction. It is not injurious to the memory of any character to say that he is not altogether exempt from prejudices.

Truth and virtue may enlist prejudices on their side: nor is truth ever more triumphant than when we view its full and entire form, even through the representations of those who are more particularly taken with the contemplation of some of its noblest features. Such was Bellarmine. Occupied with the contemplation of the majesty of the head of the Church, he was near losing sight of the dignity of its chief members. But the majesty of the Roman pontiff, instead of being diminished, rather derives splendour from the high dignity of the episcopal order. The prerogatives of Peter are too ample to require the aid of flattery to enlarge them;\* and the Roman pontiffs, with a greatness of soul becoming their elevated station, have felt little jealousy at the privileges of their brethren. The vast difference between the head of a particular, and that of the universal Church, places the pope on an elevation far above the other bishops of the Christian world. Still there is a relation between his dignity and theirs. Whatever be the rights and prerogatives of the episcopal order, those of the pope, must, from the nature of his supremacy, be proportionably enlarged; and hence those who vindicate the eminent rank of the episcopal senate are in reality those who most effectually assert the majesty of him who is their chief, not only in honour, but in jurisdiction.

Whether the jurisdiction of bishops be of divine institution was warmly debated in the council of Trent.

\* "Non indiget Petrus adulatione nostra."—*Melchior Cano.*

To the credit of the learned Peter Soto, a Dominican, he forgot the prejudices of his order in his zeal for the hierarchy, and in an eloquent and argumentative oration, which is preserved by Pallavicini,\* defended the divine institution of the episcopal authority. George Zischowid, Bishop of Segna, supported the doctrine of Soto with zeal and ability, and, as we are told by Fra Paolo,† thus addressed the fathers of Trent, in favour of the rights of episcopacy: "Whoever could controvert the divine institution of episcopal authority, might, with equal reason, controvert the authority of councils, which are composed of bishops. An assembly, however numerous, must derive its authority from the same source as the individuals who compose it; and, consequently, if the bishops are not of divine appointment, their collected as well as individual authority must be human. If, then, the bishops have not derived their jurisdiction from Christ, why assemble them at Trent, from distant quarters of the world, to adjust matters of controversy; whilst he, from whom their authority and that of the council is derived, might settle them in a more summary manner? If their authority flows not from Christ, the assembly is then a conventicle of profane men, in which Christ does not preside; and it is therefore practising a deceit upon the Christian world to propose a general council not only as the most efficacious, but as the only means of healing the disorders and appeasing the troubles of the Church."

The force of the argument, conveyed in the preceding words, was felt by the assembly. The counsels of peace succeeded to the warmth of disputation. And accordingly the canons, which regard the orders of the hierarchy, were so shaped by the influence of the cardinal of Lorraine as to be particularly directed against the errors which were then overspreading the Church.‡ The councils which were convened in different ages for the purpose of extinguishing the heresies that frequently

\* Lib. xviii. c. 12. See also his letter to Pius IV. on the same subject, lib. xx. c. 13.

† Vol. ii. lib. vii. p. 387.

‡ Nat. Alex. in Hist. Ecclesiast. Sæc. vv. et xvi. Dissert. xii.

arose, gave weight and authority to those who defended the ancient and apostolical rights of the episcopal order. A number of errors were checked by the sole authority of the Roman pontiff, it is true, but for the extinction of others, the deliberate weight and influence of general councils was deemed necessary. After the solemn decision of those venerable assemblies the faithful were confirmed in the ancient faith.\* Without, however, the sanction of the Roman pontiff, who always presided, either in person or by his legates, over their deliberations, their decisions were not deemed the last irrevocable judgment of the Catholic Church. But the practice of thus assembling the bishops in times of extraordinary peril, and the veneration in which their decisions were held even by the popes themselves, prove that they were reckoned the hereditary depositaries of the power and the promises which Christ ere his ascension bequeathed to his apostles.

Those who wish to be accurately informed on the subject of the Catholic hierarchy will not confound the orders that are of divine with those that are of ecclesiastical institution. Of the former character are the bishops, priests, and deacons; of the latter are the cardinals and other dignitaries, who have been established to assist in the government of the Church. There are other important dignities of a more doubtful origin, such as those of patriarchs and metropolitans, which have given rise to a great variety of opinions.† According to some, these offices are merely of ecclesiastical institution; while others, whose

\* “Facit concilium plausibiliorem populo fidem, propter acceptissima multorum testimonia et iudicia. Nam et leges quæ communi optimatum consensu et rogantur et feruntur libentius populus accipit quam si a rege solum ederentur.”—Mel. Cano, de Loc. Theol. lib. v. pag. 181.

† See Nat. Alex. tom. viii. dissert. xix. In this dissertation, the learned writer discusses at length the sixth canon of the council of Nice; and deduces the difference between metropolitans, who ruled but one province, and patriarchs, who governed many, from the circumstance, that in the fourth canon the fathers of Nice had already regulated the office of metropolitans.

learning is equally extensive, trace their origin to the time of the apostles. In the epistles of St. Paul the acuteness of those writers discovers indications of the jurisdiction of metropolitans,\* if not of patriarchs. It is certain that the most of his epistles were addressed to the cities, which were then the capitals of the provinces in which they were situated; and that the Churches founded in them were afterwards invested with a metropolitanical or even primatial jurisdiction. Whence it is inferred that the apostles themselves established those dignities, and ordained that the bishops of the cities, of which the civil governors possessed a more ample authority, should be invested with a larger share of jurisdiction. Why the apostles should have accommodated themselves to the civil policy of the empire, it is not difficult to conjecture. Their object in instituting metropolitans, whose sway might embrace the entire province, must have been to preserve the tranquillity of the Church. It was, therefore, natural that they should have designated for their residence the metropolis, with which the litigants might have easier communication, and from which there could be a more free and ready circulation of intelligence. Such is the reason assigned by the council of Antioch, for the institution of metropolitans in the principal cities.† When St. Paul left Titus at Crete, “to appoint priests in every city,” he invested him with jurisdiction over the whole island. When the same apostle wishes to instruct the inhabitants of Asia Minor, he addresses his letter to Ephesus. Now, we know from profane history that Ephesus was the capital of that province; and from ecclesiastical history, that its bishop was metropolitan.‡ When he writes to the Corinthians, he does not address them

\* De Marca, Ussher, Beveridge, &c.. from this reasoning, hold metropolitans to be of apostolic institution.

† “Propter quod ad metropolim omnes undique, qui negotia videntur habere, concurrant.”

‡ Eusebius relates that Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, was the first among the bishops of Asia.—Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. v. cap. 24.

alone, but adds, “to all the saints who are in all Achia.” Now, ancient history informs us that Corinth was the capital of Achaia,\* another strong presumption that the ecclesiastical was fashioned to the model of the civil government, even from apostolic times. Again, when he addresses the Thessalonians, he adds: “And the rest of the brethren who are in Macedonia,” because Macedonia and Thessalonica stood in the mutual relations of province and metropolis. It is to this ancient division of the Churches Tertullian alludes in his book of prescriptions: “Achaia is next to you, you have Corinth; if you are not far from Macedonia, you have Thessalonica; if you can go to Asia, you have Ephesus; and if you are in the neighbourhood of Italy, you have Rome.”†

To some, these arguments may seem inconclusive, in proving that the dignity of metropolitan or of patriarch is coeval with the time of the apostles. They are not insisted on as evidence of an origin so remote; but at least they refute the opinions of those who assert it was only after the slow lapse of ages, that the principal cities of the Roman empire gradually rose to ecclesiastical jurisdiction.‡ According to a canon laid down by St. Augustine, and it is one founded in reason, an institution of which the origin is lost in antiquity, may be safely deemed coeval with the time of the apostles. Now the dignity of metropolitans goes back as far as the light of Church history can lead us.§ There is mention made of them in the council of Nice;|| and as to patriarchs, the fathers of that assembly, in adjusting the rights of the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, according to the model of Rome, began by this solemn declaration, “Let the ancient usages be observed;”¶

\* An. Flor. lib. ii. c. 16.

† De Præscript. c. xxxvi.

‡ Vid. Thomassin, Vet. et Nov. Eccles. Disciplin. tom. i. part. i., lib. i., c. 7 et 8.

§ Vid. Mamach, Orig. et Antiq. Christian. tom. iv. lib. iv. c. 4.

|| Can. iv., vi., vii. Collect. Labbæi, tom. xi. coll. 35.

¶ Can. vi. That the rights of these two sees were then patriarchal, see De Marco Concord. Sacerdot. et Imper. lib. i., c. 3.

words which are evidently expressive of their high antiquity. The name of patriarch, it is true, was not introduced until after the time of the council. But long before that period, the bishops of Antioch and Alexandria claimed and exercised all the rights of the patriarchal dignity.\* As for the bishops of Constantinople, who would afterwards fain rival, and who at length shook off the authority of the Roman pontiff, they then held no ecclesiastical rank. The dignity conferred on Byzantium by the imperial residence, inspired its prelates with the ambition of a more extensive jurisdiction; and accordingly, in the council of Constantinople,† Nectarius, the bishop of that city, was invested with the name and authority of patriarch. Jerusalem, too, long remained subject to the metropolitan of Cæsarea, until, from reverence to the place, which had been illustrated by the death of our Redeemer, it was raised, in the fourth century, to the honours of the patriarchate.‡

Rome, amidst the vicissitudes that elevated or depressed the dignity of other churches, remained firm and unmoved in the enjoyment of a universal supremacy. Hence, the reader will not confound the divine prerogatives of its pontiffs with those institutions of patriarchs or metropolitans whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction often fluctuated, with the political rise or fall of the cities in which they presided. Not so Rome; though the seat of empire had been transferred to the East, its bishops still retained their ancient and undisputed pre-eminence of authority—a proof that there was something in that authority which did not depend on the power of princes to bestow or take away.§

\* The former governed the fifteen provinces, which constituted the Eastern dioceses: the jurisdiction of the latter comprehended Egypt, the Pentapolis, and Lybia.

† Can. iii. This new dignity was approved in the council of Chalcedon, can. xxviii., and subsequently confirmed by the pope.

‡ Vid. *Le Quien. Orient. Christ. in quatuor Patriarch, digest.*

§ That the popes exercised authority over the four great patriarchates is fully proved by *Car. a S. Paulo. Geograp. Sac. lib. i.*

Before, however, I shall lead him to the summit of ecclesiastical authority, the reader may be gratified by a summary view of the origin and progress of the dignity of cardinals, which has long since eclipsed the splendour of bishops and of patriarchs.

Of all the orders that enter into the ecclesiastical hierarchy, that of cardinal is the one which has grown most beyond its primitive simplicity. To understand the name and nature of this office, we must remark that the appellation of cardinal was formerly bestowed on bishops, on priests, and on deacons, who were attached to a fixed sphere of jurisdiction.\* It is mentioned by Van Espen, that towards the close of the sixth century, a bishop of Isauria, flying from the ravages of war, took refuge in the island of Corcyra, where a dispute arose between him and the bishop of the place. To adjust this dispute, St. Gregory the Great wrote to the latter, to allow the Isaurian prelate to stop in his diocese, without, however, permitting him the exercise of any jurisdiction as a *cardinal prelate*. Those bishops, then, who were bound to the care of certain Churches were called cardinals: because they were the hinges on which the government of their Churches turned. In the first ages, the city Churches were governed by their respective bishops, aided by the councils and active labours of the college of presbyters.† When the growing numbers of the faithful rendered it inconvenient to attend the principal or cathedral churches, then the district was apportioned into parishes, which were entrusted to the particular care of some of the priests.‡ In Rome, the priests to whom the city was thus allotted, formed, along with the most dignified individuals of the cathedral church, the clergy or college of presbyters, who generally assisted the Roman pontiff in the government of the

\* Cohelii Not. Card.

† This is clear from the epistles of St. Ignatius the martyr, as well as from later authorities.

‡ Vide Marium Lupum Bergom. De Paroch. ante an. Christi millesimum.

universal Church.\* As the bishop of Rome was head of the Church, it was natural the honours of the Roman college should correspond with the dignity of the Roman Pontiff; and hence the name of cardinal, which before was indiscriminately bestowed on the fixed clergy of other Churches, was exclusively reserved to those of Rome, as being the hinges on which the government of the universal fold was supposed to revolve. At first the Roman cardinals were confined to priests and deacons, and it was only in the twelfth century that bishops were associated to their body. These attended the sovereign pontiff in the celebration of the divine mysteries, and consisted of the bishops of the six suburban or adjacent churches.† Amidst the changes of its temporal masters, Rome experienced many revolutions in the election of its bishops. Under the emperors of the East their sanction was generally required; and during the disastrous period of the middle ages, the freedom of election was often disturbed by the violence of the popular, or crushed by the weight of the imperial, faction, by which the city was alternately torn.‡ At length Alexander III. invested the cardinals with the exalted privilege of electing the pope,§ a measure which has contributed much to the repose of the Church. Still from the divisions of the sacred college the election of a new pontiff was occasionally protracted, until Gregory X., in order to prevent the recurrence of the long vacancy which preceded his own appointment, instituted the conclave.|| Innocent the Fourth conferred on them the red hat, and Paul the Second the scarlet cloak, as emblems of royalty or of martyrdom. Urban VIII. distinguished the cardi-

\* *Omni igitur actu ad me perlato, placuit contrahi Presbyterium.*—Cornel. ad Cyprian. Ep. vi.

† Vide Andreuccium Hierarch. Eccles. Tract. iii. They were first seven.

‡ See Fleury, *passim*.

§ “Dunque con legge ferme ed invariabile, fu stabilito in detto Concilio Lateranense iii. che l'elezione dei Pontefici appartanesse solamente ai Cardinali.”—De Novaes *Introd. alle Vite dei Sommi Pontef.* page 36.

|| Cap. iii. de Elect. in 6.

nals by the title of *Eminence*. Sixtus the Fifth had previously enlarged the number of the sacred college to seventy, to represent the seventy associates of Moses.\*

\* “Stabili Sisto V. il numero dei Cardinali di settanta, i quali dovessero assistere al Papa nel governo della Chiesa universale, non altrimenti che i settanta Anziani d’Israele assistevano a Mose nel governo della Sinagoga.”—De Novaes Introd.

The sacred college is now distributed into six cardinal bishops, those of the suburban churches, Ostia, Porto, Sabina, Palestrina, Frascati, and Albano; fifty cardinal priests, and fourteen cardinal deacons.

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## CHAPTER XI.

## SUPREMACY OF THE POPE.

Theories of the different forms of Government.—The modern admirers of Democracy influenced by Calvinistic prejudices.—The example of the last of the ancient republics inapplicable to the Catholic Church; form of its government a mixed monarchy, in which the authority of its chief is tempered by the Councils of the Bishops.—The supreme power of the Pope deduced from Scripture and the copious testimonies of the ancient Fathers.—His authority inexplicable on any other supposition than that of its divine institution.

ALTHOUGH there lies a wide field of religious controversy between the Catholics and Protestants, the supremacy of the Roman pontiff may still be deemed the leading article of their mutual opposition. Whatever may be the diversity of the tenets of the Protestants, the rejection of the pope's supremacy is an article of their common faith, and may be deemed the only bond of their union.\* Could they once be persuaded to admit that important truth, the adoption of the other tenets of the Catholic Church would be an easy and natural consequence. But in the mind of the Protes-

\* "Le seul article fondamental est de crier contre le Pape et contre l'Eglise Romaine."—Bossuet, *Hist. Var. lib. xi. n. 166.*

Bossuet was led to this reflection by observing that some of the heretics who preceded the Reformation, such as Wickliffe and Huss, are the peculiar favourites of Protestants, though they held tenets which are now reckoned fundamental errors. Huss celebrated Mass till the end of his life (Larroque, Lenfant); but perhaps in the opinion of these impartial judges the sacrifice lost its qualities of idolatry by the opposition of the priest to the authority of the pontiff.

"A-t-on jamais vu," asks an eloquent writer, "des Protestans s'amuser à écrire des livres contre les Eglises Grecque, Nestorienne, Syriaque, &c. qui professent des dogmes que le Protestantisme déteste? Ils s'en gardent bien. Ils protègent au contraire ces Eglises; ils leur adressent des complimens, et se montrent prêts à s'unir à elles, tenant constamment pour véritable allié tout ennemi du Saint Siège."—*Le Maître, Du Pape. Disc. prélim. p. xi.*

tant there exists a more steady and rooted antipathy to the authority of the Roman pontiff, than to the collected mass of all our doctrines. The reason is obvious. In the belief of any other article, there is nothing repugnant to their principles or prejudices. But the admission of the pope's authority, the speaking organ of an infallible Church, annihilates, at once, the pride of individual opinion, the great principle of their religion, and prepares the way for the reception of the Catholic faith. We have proofs of the truth of this observation in the lives of some eminent Protestant divines, whose indefatigable application led them to consult the writings of the primitive fathers. The result of their researches was a strong attachment to Catholic doctrines and practices.\* Yet they adopted those tenets because they were the result of their own inquiry; and, instead of departing from the great principle of their faith, they imagined that they were thus illustrating it, by shaking off the influence of early impressions. They would rather embrace the entire of our creed, on the principle of investigation, than admit one solitary article on the principle of authority. In the former case, the pride of the understanding is flattered, in being the uncontrolled arbiter of the creed which it professes. In the latter, the same pride is offended, because the pope's authority would appear like a dead weight on the intellect, which would thus check its exertions, and dissipate the pleasing sound of religious freedom. Hence it is not surprising that this point has been combated and defended with a peculiar zeal by the advocates of either religion.† On this important

\* See a singular instance in the Pamphlet of the Rev. Mr. Wix, on the Reunion of the Churches.

† Doctor Hurd, a Protestant bishop, declares that "the circumstance of making and believing the pope to be Antichrist, is the first leading principle of the Reformation." The acknowledgment of Sterne proclaims the practice of many an eminent Churchman of the day: "When I have little to say," confesses that witty but mercenary man, "or little to give my people, I have recourse to the abuse of Popery. Hence I call it my *Cheshire Cheese*. It has a two-fold advantage; it costs me very little, and I find by experience that nothing satisfies so well the hungry appetites of my congregation. They always devour it greedily," &c.

subject, I shall confine myself to a temperate view of the controversy, such as it exists between Catholics and Protestants, without wasting attention on those points that are warmly debated in the Catholic Church between the advocates of rivals schools.

Some have, in the extravagance of their flattery, striven to exalt the pope's authority to a pitch to which the pretensions of the most ambitious never rose. And others, jealous of what they called the liberties of their national hierarchy, would fain preposterously subject the head to the collected majesty of the members. Between these opposite extremes there is a wide space, diversified with a variety of more or less moderate opinions. In all discussions where freedom of opinion is allowable, one ought to be disposed to follow wherever the light of argument may lead, however revolting to his prejudices may be his conclusions. Aloof from the hopes or fears that have swayed the opinions, while they affected not the faith, of the French or Italian schools, we shall take no part in their intestine contention. This declaration of our neutrality may not be without its effect on the Protestant mind, since, in our view of the pope's authority, he will recognise the naked convictions of a Catholic, undistorted by the medium through which that authority may be seen, on either side of the mountains.

In the outset of this inquiry, it has been customary with controvertists to enter into a comparative view of the different sorts of government. They have begun with its first, and, I may say, its elementary forms,—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy; and have then contemplated the different combinations which arise from the mixture of some, or of the entire, of those elements.\* Considering the question in its abstract or ideal relation, they have not failed to give the preference to an unmixed monarchy; and, viewing

See Bellarmin de Rom. Pontif. lib. i. caps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

it in its connexion with the weakness and imperfections of man, they have still leaned towards the side of monarchy, attempered by some infusion of the spirit of the other forms. To support this theory, they have abundantly drawn on antiquity; the most venerable names among the philosophers, orators, and historians, have been exhibited in its defence; and even the majesty of Homer's numbers has been introduced to animate the heaviness of a solemn and tedious argument.\*

Having in this way established the superior excellence of the monarchical form of government, they ventured to lay down, as a position, that Christ was able and willing to adopt the most perfect model; and thus, by an *à priori* argument, they concluded that the government of the Church is monarchical.† Perhaps some degree of prejudice may be allowed to have had a part in the formation of such a theory; but, if pre-conceived notions have influenced the minds of those who devised it, candour will acknowledge that a larger share of prejudice mingled in the speculations of the Calvinists, whose *à priori* partiality for republicanism in the state made them also fashion the Church to a similar form. It is easy, in the tranquillity of retirement, to construct Utopian theories, which will comprehend every ideal excellence, and exclude every practical imperfection. Our business is not now with such speculations, which we shall cheerfully abandon to those by whose ingenuity they were created. The path of speculation, though splendid, is delusive. I shall, therefore, confine myself to an examination of the form which Christ really adopted—a course which, though it may be the more severe, is still the most satisfactory. Should it, however, appear, from the balance of good and evil, which are mingled in every system, that any possessed a decided claim to preference, it might not be presumption to say, that such would have been the form of our Redeemer's adoption.

\* Οὐκ ἄγαθον πολυκοιρανίη. εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω  
εἷς βασιλεὺς.—Iliad., β. 204.

† Bellarmin, Cajetan, Turrecremata, &c.

Now, whatever may be the diversity of opinions among mankind, and however the fancies of some may be charmed by the pictures which the admirers of republics have drawn of their excellence, all would readily agree to vest the supreme power in one person, were his wisdom and his virtue commensurate with his authority. Such a system would combine strength and simplicity; its harmony would not be suspended by the complexity of its parts, nor its powers weakened by their opposite tendencies. Thus, the government of the world, assuredly the most perfect we can conceive, is conducted by the operation of the most simple monarchy. In human governments, however, where authority is not always directed by wisdom, and where the power of doing good is joined to that of doing evil, the most fervent admirers of abstract monarchy would adopt some modification. They would consent to lower the lofty standard of abstract excellence to human circumstances; and sacrifice some of the *beau idéal* of simplicity, for the sake of lessening the chances of the abuse of unlimited power, by putting some control on the despotism of the individual by whom it is wielded.\* Hence they would cast the form suited to our present circumstances in the mould of a mixed monarchy, possessing the solidity of a pure one, without its despotism; and tempered by some control, without being enfeebled by unnecessary restrictions. Now the Church is an institution, divine in its origin, yet human in those by whom it is administered; and, therefore, if analogy were to direct us, we should conclude that, because it is divine, it is directed by the great principle of monarchy that pervades all nature; and that, because it is human, that principle is modified according to the exigencies of all human institutions. These may appear to be the assumptions of mere speculation; but they are principles of speculation in accordance with the wisest practice. And surely we ought not to

\* Bellarmin has the candour not to deny that a tempered monarchy is preferable to a pure one.—*De Rom. Pontif.* lib. 1, c. 3.

be reproached with fondness for theory, when the world is filled with so many projectors, whose fancies are fraught with the visions of a political and moral millennium; and who would abandon all the practical truths that are grounded on experience, in order to deviate into the paths of a delusive and dangerous speculation. But that we may subject our fancies to the doctrine of Christ rather than to our own conceptions, let us learn what was his object in the institution of his Church.

The most superficial reader of the New Testament will readily perceive that Christ wished all his followers would be knit together, as well by an identity of faith as by a communion of charity. To illustrate the closeness of the connexion that should bind them, figures the most expressive of an intimate union are crowded together. Christ himself likens the Church to a sheepfold, and himself, to a pastor that guards its enclosure.\* The apostle compares the union of the faithful to the connexion subsisting between the elements, of which the matter of the Eucharistic sacrifice is formed.† Again, he exhibits the intimacy of this union under the more striking image of the members of the human body, intimating that as the pain or pleasure of one member is felt through the entire frame, so the members of Christ's mystical body are linked together by a real sympathy of joy and of suffering.‡ To show that the harmony of which he speaks is not confined to the sole exercise of charity, but that it likewise embraces all the doctrines of faith, he adjures the Romans "to mark them who cause dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, and to avoid their communion."§ The nature, then, of the Church of Christ, whose members are so closely united together, dissolves the specious theories of the Calvinists on the primitive equality of the presbyters, and refutes the learned dissertations of Blondell on the independence of the early churches.

\* John, c. x.

† I Cor. x. Vid, S. Augustin. Tract. 26 in Joan.

‡ I Cor. xii. 12 et seqq. § Rom. xvi. 17. 18.

We may safely lay down as an incontrovertible truth, that infinite wisdom guided the councils of the founder of the Church, and that infinite power could enforce their execution. Now experience teaches, that a principle of republicanism is not calculated to promote that harmony which ought to connect the members of the Church. Nor is it productive of stability. However our adversaries may be captivated with the ancient republics, on which they dwell with rapture, it is not difficult to show that their example is inapplicable. These republics were generally confined in their extent, and often, like that of Athens, limited to a single city. Consequently the republican form might be preserved, though not without many a struggle; and hence if the Catholic Church, like that of Judea, were confined to a single nation, the analogy might, perhaps, be admissible. If the extent and greatness of the Roman republic should be objected, we must first remark, that after the series of their conquests they were obliged to alter their form of government to uphold the weight of the empire. Besides, the example would be far from favourable to the Calvinists; since the Roman republic, instead of being divided into small and independent states, formed one vast body pervaded by the authority which resided in the senate and people of Rome. And hence, in order to justify their form of government by its example, the Calvinists, instead of establishing so many independent congregations, should fix in some one college of presbyters a jurisdiction that would extend to the remotest limits of the empire of Christ. To compress, then, into a few words the force of this argument: monarchy is the form of government that regulates the divine order of Providence. Whatever may be the advantages of republicanism, it is always productive of division, and generally of weakness. Whatever may be the defects of monarchy, it is generally accompanied with durability and strength. And hence we must suppose that Christ, by the institution of an attempered monarchy, excluded the elements of

division and weakness from a society which was divine in its immediate institution, and which was destined for a firmer array in its composition, a wider space in its extent, and a longer period in its duration, than any other empire that ever appeared on earth. Should it seem to some individuals that those observations have more of gratuitous assumption than of positive argument, we shall only beg of them to accompany us to the inspired writings, and the early history of the Church, from which it will appear that the evidence in favour of the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors, is too positive to require the aid of assumption or analogy.

To convince any unprejudiced reader of the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors, I should refer him to the clear and frequent testimonies which the Scripture supplies. Surely the greatest admirer of scriptural doctrine, if his mind be not warped by strong prejudices against the supremacy of the Roman pontiff, must be struck with the clearness and cogency of those testimonies. Whatever promises were made to the aggregate of the other apostles, were specially and individually made to Peter. On account of the splendid profession of his faith, Christ constituted him the rock on which the edifice of his Church was to repose. And on account of the generous warmth of his charity, he was vested with a power to feed, to direct, nay, to govern, the whole flock of Christ. What an accumulation of prerogatives, each of which would impart supremacy! Yet we find them clearly laid down in the inspired writings. I shall not fear to waste the patience of my readers, by fully transcribing passages that are pregnant with such instruction. "And Jesus came into the quarters of Cesarea Philippi: and he asked his disciples, saying: Whom say men that the Son of Man is? But they said: Some, John the Baptist, and others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say I am? Simon Peter answered, and said: Thou art Christ the Son of the living God. And Jesus

answering, said to him : Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona : because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee, that thou art Peter ; and upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in the heavens : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in the heavens.”\* And again, when Jesus appeared to his disciples, after his resurrection, he thus accosts Peter : “Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him : Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him : Feed my lambs. He saith to him again : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him : Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him : Feed my lambs. He saith to him the third time : Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he said to him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said to him : Lord, thou knowest all things : thou knowest that I love thee. He said to him, Feed my sheep.”† Such are the testimonies on which we clearly establish the supreme authority of St. Peter over the universal Church. It is not within the compass of literal or metaphorical language to express this power in clearer terms. In one place he is designated as a rock, on which the Church is erected ; and to convey an idea of the unshaken immobility of the foundation, Christ assures us that the gates of hell—a name synonymous with its powers, shall not prevail against it. Nay, the word is expressive of more than powers. We know that those who became possessed of the gates of a fortress, were invested with all its strength.‡ We also know that it was at the gates of the cities the judges of Judea dispensed justice ;§ whence the word

\* Matt. xvi, 13 et seqq.

† John, xxi, 15, 16, 17.

‡ Gen. xxii, 17, et alibi passim.

§ “Her husband is honourable in the gates, when he sitteth among the senators of the land.”—Prov. xxxi, 23. Deut. xvi, 18 et alibi passim.

*gates* became also expressive of wisdom. And therefore the *gates of hell* imply that all the counsels and strength of the infernal powers shall be exerted in vain against that Church which has Peter for its foundation. The power of loosing and binding sins, which was shared among the other apostles, was individually conferred on St. Peter alone,\* to express its plenitude. And the metaphor of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ confided to him, is emblematic of the most ample authority. Like the gates, the keys by which they were unlocked, were always the most expressive sign of the dominion of any city; and the tendering of them to any individual, has been at all times considered an acknowledgment of right to its possession.

The language which we read in the Gospel of St. John is not less expressive of the supreme power of St. Peter. Under the metaphorical images of flock and pastor, Christ declares that the authority of St. Peter was to extend over the entire Church, embracing, under the names of lambs and sheep, all the individuals who were to be included within its fold. The expression, *feed my flock*, while it conveys the idea of a royal power, yet mitigates that power by a paternal relation; and it is remarkable even in profane writers, that the most complimentary language they were in the habit of using towards the greatest of their kings was to call them the shepherds of their people.† It is then true, that any of the titles which are so profusely applied in the Scripture to St. Peter would establish his supremacy. What, then, ought to be the impression made upon our minds by an attentive consideration of the union of them all?

To detail all the testimonies which prove the precedence of St. Peter, would extend this chapter beyond its just proportion. Some, it is true, have displayed much ingenuity and research in their collection. How-

\* Matt. xvi. 19.

+ Πειθοντό τε ποιμένι λαών

Σκηπτούχοι βασιλῆες, ἐπεσσεύοντο δὲ λαοί.—Iliad. β 85, 86.

ever, it is not so much on the force of particular texts I should wish to rest, as on their frequency and coincidence; and though we may allow that the zeal of some interpreters has discovered circumstances of precedence which perhaps never entered into the mind of the inspired writers, yet it cannot be denied that the striking coincidence between the many passages in which this precedence is evident to every reader, bears a manifest impression of design. "Peter," says Bossuet, "appears the first on all occasions: the first to confess the faith; the first to express his obligation of love; the first of all the apostles who saw Christ after his resurrection, as he was the first to bear testimony to this fact before all the people. We find him first, when there was question of filling up the number of the apostles; the first who confirmed the faith by a miracle; the first to convert the Jews; the first in receiving the Gentiles; in short, everything concurs to establish his supremacy. The power divided among many imports its restriction; conferred on one alone, *over all and without exception*, it bears the evidence of its plenitude. All receive the same power, but not in the same degree, nor to the same extent. Jesus Christ commences by the chief, and in the person of this chief develops all his power—in order that we should learn that the ecclesiastical authority, being originally centred in the person of one individual, has been diffused only on the condition that it should always be reflected back on the principle of its unity; and that all they who share in it, should be inseparably connected with that see, which is the common centre of all Churches."\*

This is a picture of the supremacy of St. Peter worthy of the mind by which it was designed and the hand by which it was executed. The reader may be no less gratified by the variety of scriptural images through which St. Francis of Sales contemplated the majestic prerogatives of the same apostle. "Is the

\* Bossuet Disc. sur l'Unité de l'Eglise, première partie.

Church," says the saint, "likened unto a house? It is placed on the foundation of a rock, which is Peter. Will you represent it under the figure of a family? You behold our Redeemer paying the tribute as its master, and, after him, comes Peter as its representative. Is the Church a barque? Peter is its pilot; and it is our Redeemer who instructs him. Is the doctrine by which we are drawn from the gulf of sin represented by a fisher's net? It is Peter who casts it: it is Peter who draws it—the other disciples lend their aid; but it is Peter that presents the fishes to our Redeemer. Is the Church represented by an embassy? St. Peter is at its head. Do you prefer the figure of a kingdom? St. Peter carries its keys. In fine, will you have it shadowed under the symbol of a flock and a fold? St. Peter is the shepherd and universal pastor under Jesus Christ."\*

The supremacy of St. Peter is a tenet so clearly laid down in Scripture that it would scarcely be controverted by Protestants, were it not to involve the appalling consequence of the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff. Had the dignity of Peter been merely personal, it would long since have ceased to be disputed; and the grave which enclosed the apostle's ashes would probably have extinguished the passions that could have been hurt by the exercise of his supremacy. But the authority of Peter lives in the persons of the Roman Pontiffs, his successors; and this living authority will not cease to keep alive that pride and opposition, which cannot but be wounded by its exercise. Hence the mutinous of every age have laboured to heave off the weight of the Pope's supremacy. Nay, such has been the zeal of some in endeavouring to overturn the superstructure, that they have not scrupled to endanger the very foundations of revelation in the attempt. By such indefatigable labours they have at least proved their conviction of the intimate union between the supremacy of Peter and that of his successors. Indeed, it requires

\* Controverses de S. Franc. de Sales. Disc. xlii. (Le Maistre, du Pape, lib. i. c. 6.)

no ingenuity to establish the obvious inference. If, among the apostles, whose souls were attuned to harmony and order by the living action of the spirit of peace, one was still invested with supreme authority over the others; are we not to acknowledge in such an institution a model for their successors? Surely the control of such an authority would be more necessary at a distant period, when the piety of the members of the Church might subside, from the admixture of human passion. And, therefore, as all her members were to be linked together in the bond of unity, the necessity of the medium of a common and visible head, from which the principle of union might be conveyed to the most distant of the members, must be evident to every dispassionate mind.

On this important subject the testimonies of antiquity are so crowded that, while we study to avoid prolixity, our judgment is embarrassed by the difficulty of preference. While the infant Church was an object of persecution, it cannot be surprising if we should not be able to discover those clear traces of that regular and perfect government which became visible on the restoration of peace.\* Yet, even then, we can perceive sufficient evidence of the authority of the Roman Pontiff over all the Churches of the Christian world. The testimony of one who conversed with a disciple of the apostles must undoubtedly impress on the reader a feeling of veneration; and this testimony is recorded in the language of Irenæus.

“We can count those whom the apostles appointed bishops in the Churches, and their successors, to our time, who have not taught such reveries. But since it would be tedious to number the successions of all the Churches, we shall content ourselves with noting the tradition of the greatest and most ancient of all

\* “La plus indispensable polémique n'appartient guère qu'à ces temps de calme où les travaux peuvent être distribués librement, suivant les forces et les talents . . . par la nature même des choses, les confesseurs et les martyrs doivent précéder les docteurs.”—Le Maistre, Disc. prélim.

Churches known throughout the world, and founded at Rome by the glorious apostles Peter and Paul. By this tradition, which it has inherited from the apostles, and by this faith, which it has announced to mankind and preserved to our days, through the succession of its bishops, we confound the unlawful conventicles that are formed by malice, blindness, self-love, or vain-glory. For this is the greatest and most ancient Church, with which, on account of its more powerful principality, every other Church must be in accordance, in which the tradition of the apostles is always preserved.\* The blessed apostles, then, having founded this Church, entrusted to Linus the function of episcopacy, of whom St. Paul makes mention in his epistle to Timothy.† His successor was Anacletus; and next to him, the third in order after the apostles who was invested with the episcopacy, was Clement, who had seen the holy apostles and discoursed with them, having yet before his eyes their recent doctrine and tradition. The brethren of Corinth having been distracted by a great schism during the pontificate of Clement, the Roman Church wrote an authoritative letter to the Corinthians, to bring them back to peace; and to renew among them the faith and tradition which they had received from the apostles.

Such is the precious testimony of Irenæus, which has been preserved to us, and which is the more valuable on account of its high antiquity. The force of the preceding passage has been so strongly felt in favour of the pope's supremacy, that all the arts of criticism have been exhausted in endeavours to elude it. But the language is too stubborn to be distorted by any ingenuity. That the reader may be more strongly impressed with the weight of this testimony, it may be useful to inform him, that Irenæus tells us, in the same place, he saw Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist. But independently of his testimony in favour of the more powerful principality of the

\* Iren. advers. Hær. lib. iii. cap. 3.

† 2 Tim. iv. 21.

Church of Rome, with which it was necessary that every other should be in accordance, there is another circumstance related in the same passage, by which the pope's supremacy is strongly illustrated. The reader may perceive I allude to the pastoral letters, which Clement, the Roman pontiff, addressed to the infant Church of Corinth, at the urgent request of its members.\* Now, what could have prompted the distant Church of Corinth to call for the interference of St. Clement more than of the neighbouring bishops, if his jurisdiction over the entire flock of Christ was not universally acknowledged? We have no similar example of such early interference on the part of other bishops, beyond the limits of the Churches entrusted to their care. As to the epistle of St. Ignatius to the Romans, it was rather written to dissuade them from preventing his martyrdom, than with a view of exercising any pastoral jurisdiction. We cannot, then, be reproached with want of early evidence on this subject, when we can collect that evidence from the few authentic memorials of the two first ages.

Tertullian, after directing the curiosity of those who were solicitous for their salvation to the principal Churches, which preserved the monuments of the apostles, concludes with adverting to "the authority of Rome, that happy Church, into which the apostles poured their doctrine and their blood."† St. Cyprian, the professed admirer of Tertullian, expresses similar veneration for Rome, in one of his letters to Cornelius, in which he complains that the schismatics of Carthage sought protection from the Roman pontiff: "They presume," he says, "to embark for Rome, and to proceed to the chair of St. Peter, that principal Church, from which the unity of the priesthood is derived, bearing letters from the schismatical and the profane, without reflecting on the character of the Romans (whose faith was commended by the apostle), who are inaccessible

\* See Fleury. *Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. ii. cap. 33.*

† Tertul. *de Præscript. cap. xxxvi.*

to perfidy.”\* “I am in communion with your holiness, that is, with the chair of Peter,” says St. Jerome. “I know that the Church has been built upon that rock: whoever eats the lamb outside this house is a profane man. Whoever will not be in the ark, shall perish in the flood.”† Eusebius, in his ecclesiastical history, assures us that Peter, the prince of the apostles, carried the light of the Gospel to Rome, conducted, in his opinion, by the providence of God, where he promulgated the doctrine of salvation.‡ And Leo, one of the greatest of his successors, declares that the most blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles, is destined for the citadel of the Roman empire, in order that the light of truth, which was revealed unto the salvation of all nations, might be more effectually diffused from the head to the extremities of the world.§

Those early testimonies afford sufficient evidence that the supremacy of the Roman pontiffs was universally recognised in the very infancy of Christianity: and that supremacy is connected with the fact of their succession to all the rights and privileges of Peter, the first bishop of Rome.|| In proportion as we descend the attestations of the fathers of the Church, in favour of this supremacy, accumulate. But if I forbear their introduction,¶ it is in order to introduce the still more striking evidence of that power, in its constant and peaceful exercise, in every age of the Church.

I shall not repeat the instance already cited, in the instructions which were addressed to the Church of Corinth, by Clement, who was at once the cotemporary and one of the first successors of St. Peter.\*\* In the

\* Epist. 59 ad Cornelium. See also Epist. 45 ad eundem.

† Epist. 14 ad Damasum.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. ii. cap. 14.

§ Serm. 1. de SS. Apost. Petro et Paulo.

|| See Hook de Capite Eccl. Secunda pars. p. 247.

¶ See Bellarmin de Rom. Pontif. lib. i. cap. 25, &c. A selection of passages on the subject will be found in Le Maistre, du Pape, lib. i. cap. 6.

\*\* In Cotelerius PP. Apostolic. tom. i. p. 143, &c. See also Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. iv. cap. 23.

second century, the records of which, though not equally barren, are still very scanty, we find Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, coming to Rome, to adjust with Anicetus the celebrated controversy regarding the paschal time.\* To show that he did not come to treat with him on terms of equality, but rather to accept the decisions, or suspend the threats, of a superior, Victor, one of the immediate successors of Anicetus, inflicted, or threatened to inflict, on the Asiatics the punishment of excommunication. In the account of this dispute, as it is recorded by Eusebius,† the reader will find such distinct mention of the *thunders of the Vatican*, that he may fancy he is reading the history of the Middle Ages, else he must be persuaded, notwithstanding the assertions of Protestant writers, that those thunders were wielded at a much earlier period than they generally assign.

When the famous Paul of Samosata troubled the eastern Church by the introduction of opinions as novel as they were derogatory to the honour of Jesus Christ, peace was restored through the interference of the Roman pontiff. Paul having been deposed in the synod of Antioch, still kept possession of the episcopal palace, protected by the influence of Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra. Though Aurelian, the Roman emperor, was requested to adjust this dispute, he referred it to the mediation of the Italian bishops and Roman pontiff, declaring that the majesty of Rome would enforce their decision.‡ The conduct of the emperor, on that occasion, reveals to us the general impression of the pagans themselves, that those in communion with the Church of Rome were the only true Christians.§

In the same century, Dionysius, the patriarch of

\* S. Hieron. de Scriptor. Ecclesiast.

† Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. v. caps. 23, 24, 25, 26. The controversy between the Roman Pontiff and the Prelates of Asia, on the subject of the Paschal festival, is briefly sketched in the three last chapters of the fourth book of Nicephorus.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. vii. cap. 30. Niceph. lib. vi. cap. 29.

§ This is the remark of Fleury—an authority not to be suspected. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. viii. cap. 8.

Alexandria, was suspected of having advanced some heterodox opinions regarding the Trinity; and these suspicions were carefully conveyed to the successor of St. Peter. To exculpate himself from these charges, the bishop of Alexandria sent to the bishop of Rome his apologetic books, in which he fully satisfied him of his orthodoxy.\* It would appear extraordinary that the prelate of a see of such extensive jurisdiction as that of Alexandria should have thus laboured to satisfy the bishop of Rome, unless his supremacy over the entire Church had been universally recognised. In the succeeding age St. Athanasius, who was forced from his Church by the intrigues and violence of the Arians, sought protection from Julius, the Roman pontiff, by whose authority he was again restored to the throne of Alexandria.† When the sentence of deposition was passed against St. John Chrysostom, in the synod of the Oak, which was swayed by the influence of Theophilus of Alexandria,‡ he solicited the interposition of Innocent, the Roman pontiff, to shield him from the iniquitous sentence.§ In all these instances, we find the authority of the popes exercised and acknowledged, not only in the western, but in the great oriental Churches, which possessed a patriarchal jurisdiction.

Nor let it be insinuated that the appeals to which I have referred were those of men who turned in their distress to any quarter from which they might hope for protection.|| No, theirs were not expressions of fealty, wrung from their misfortunes, but afterwards forgotten in the hour of prosperity. The same attesta-

\* Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. vii. cap. 26. Athan. de Sent. Dion. See Fleury. lib. vii. cap. 54.

† Sozomen. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. iii. cap. 8. The clear and forcible expression of the historian is peculiarly worthy of attention: “*οἷα δὲ τῆς πατρῴων κηδεμονίας αὐτῷ προσηκῆσης δια τὴν ἀξίαν τῶν θρόνων, ἕκαστῳ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκκλησίαν ἀπέδωκε.*” And because, on account of the dignity of his see, the care of all pertained to him, he restored each one (of the ejected bishops) to his own Church.

‡ Ibid. lib. viii. cap. 17.

§ Vita S. Joannis Chrysost. Opp. tom. xiii. p. 9, ed. Montfaucon.

|| This the sarcasm of Gibbon, after Wetstein. It is re-echoed by Protestant writers.

tions of deference and respect for the authority of the Roman pontiff, are found in the acts of all the general councils of the East. The first eight of these assemblies were all held in the Eastern Church; and in no synod held in the West during the Middle Ages do we find the supremacy of Rome more solemnly recognised. The fathers of Nice expressly declare that this supremacy was always the prerogative of the Roman see;\* a prerogative which was there exercised in the delegated authority of Osius, Bishop of Corduba, and the presbyters Vitus and Vincent.† When the ambition of the bishops of Constantinople prompted them to aspire to a more ample authority than was claimed by their predecessors of Byzantium, they were still content with ranking next to the bishops of Rome.‡ The fathers of Ephesus, who assembled to condemn the errors of Nestorius, thus profess their subjection to the supreme authority of Rome: "Obliged by the holy canons and the epistle of our most holy father and associate in the ministry, Celestine, bishop of the Roman Church, and with eyes overflowing with tears, we come to pass against him (Nestorius) this melancholy sentence."§ It is remarkable that the Fathers confess they were *obliged* no less by the authoritative letter of Pope Celestine than by the canons of the whole Church. Yes, the authoritative letter; for it appears from the acts of the council, that the pontiff had given special instructions to his legates, in which he required the acquiescence of the entire assembly. The legates were faithful to their trust; and one of them, Philip by name, after setting forth the prerogatives of Peter the prince of the apostles, declares, with the concurrence of the assembled prelates, that he still lives and rules in the person of his

\* Can. vi. (ut in Actione. 16. Conc. Chalcedon).

† Theodor. lib. i. cap. 7. That Osius presided is beyond all doubt from the fact that his name stands first among the subscriptions to the acts of the council. Gelas. lib. i. cap. 5.

‡ Council of Constantinople. l. can. 2.

§ Act i.

successors.\* Protestant writers may amuse their readers with a fanciful account of the comparatively recent origin and progressive growth of the Papal power.† Yet, whoever attentively reads the history of the first four councils in the East, will find that the authority of the pontiff was as much respected there as in the four that were held during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in his own palace of Lateran.

To illustrate more fully this subject, I shall briefly refer to the Council of Chalcedon, which condemned the errors of Eutyches and his adherents. The legates of the Roman pontiff, after having declared that they were commanded by his holiness not to suffer Dioscorus to sit among the judges of the council, read the epistle of St. Leo to the assembly. Scarcely was the epistle concluded, when the fathers unanimously acclaimed: "This is the faith of the fathers: this is the faith of the apostles. Such is our belief: such is the belief of the orthodox. Anathema to him who believes not thus: Peter has spoken through Leo: such was the doctrine of the apostles."‡ This was not a mere effusion of admiration on hearing the sound and apostolical doctrine of Leo. They afterwards unequivocally declare, that all the honours of supremacy belong to the bishop of ancient Rome;§ nay, they adjure St. Leo to ratify their decisions by his decrees.¶ To accumulate the other testimonies that confirm the

\* Act iii.

† "A torto dunque accusate l'antica chiesa di essersi lasciata spogliare dei suoi diritti o di avervi almeno in parte o per vergognosa viltà, o per ignoranza, o per indegna adulazione rinunziato, coll' amettere ciecamente senza esame e senza giudizio i pontificii decreti."—Il trionfo della Santa Sede e della Chiesa, per D. Mauro Cappellari, ora Gregorio XVI.

This celebrated work, remarkable for the closeness of its reasoning and the extent of its erudition, laid the foundation of the fame of this illustrious pontiff, and formed an early step in the degrees of elevation by which he rose to the throne of St. Peter. It is a living instance of the influence exercised in the Catholic Church by virtue and learning beyond that of any other government in the world.

‡ Act ii.

§ Act xvi.

¶ In relatione Synodi ad S. Leonem.

popé's supremacy would be to write the history of the entire Church. It is confessed in the writings of every father; it is found in the acts of many of the particular, and of all the general, councils; and mingles itself in every part of the government of the Church. Were the reader only seriously to weigh the different councils over which he presided, the laws which he promulgated, the heresies which he extinguished, and the injured bishops whom he redressed, he would readily perceive that the ancient and the universal supremacy of the pope is one of the best authenticated facts on historical record.

Nay, this truth has been acknowledged by Protestants, the most enlightened of whom have declared their full acquiescence in this tenet. Grotius,\* and Leibnitz,† and Casaubon,‡ and Puffendorf,§ and Melancthon,|| some of their most respected names, have leaned towards the Catholic doctrine of an ecclesiastical monarchy. Whether they contemplated the abstract nature of government, or viewed its effects in the history of the Church, they hesitated not to acknowledge that the sovereignty of the pope was essential to the peace and good order of the Church. In the noble system of universal harmony which the speculative mind of Leibnitz had conceived, the pope's universal supremacy was the spring that was to guide the dependent machinery. Grotius perceived that the controversies which sprung from the rejection of the pope's power were thickening in their progress. With a mind prophetic of the disastrous consequences to which such licentiousness could not fail to lead, he declared that without the clue of the pope's authority, the Protestants could never disentangle themselves

\* "Sine tali primatu exire a controversiis non poterat, sicut hodiè apud Protestantés."—Votum pro pace Eccles.

† See his Correspondence with Bossuet, passim.

‡ Exercit. xv. in Annal. Bar.

§ De Monarch. Pont. Rom. (quoted by Le Maistre, p. 81.)

|| "Primum igitur, hoc omnes profitemur . . . ut Romanus Pontifex præsit omnibus Episcopis, &c."—Articles presented to Francis the First.

from their theological labyrinth. Calvin hesitates not to adopt the idea of St. Leo, that God placed the citadel of his religion in the midst of the earth, that all might be connected by its influence.\* And Protestants confess this practical truth, by erecting in every country in which their principles prevail, some tribunal to which they submit their controversial disputes. Such conduct may appear to the reader utterly at variance with the spirit of their religion. He may be at a loss to reconcile the consistency of such a practice with the maxims avowed by the reformers. But I am not vindicating their consistency. I am only citing the testimonies they have borne to the supremacy of the pope; and, if such testimonies appear strange to the reader, he may be induced to pause and weigh the evidence of a religion that attempts to reconcile such contradictions.

Wherever the doctrine of Christianity has spread, it has been always accompanied by the cementing tenet of the pope's authority. Nay, in those countries which have been separated from a communion with the Church of Rome, the supremacy of its pontiffs is still speculatively recognised. Such is the Church of Russia, long the associate of the Greeks in the misfortunes of their schism. Shut up in the difficulties of the Sclavonic tongue, but little known to the western countries of Europe, its peculiar rites and doctrines were hitherto almost inaccessible to our curiosity. These obstacles have been lately subdued by a learned individual of the French nation, who spent a long time in Moscow and Petersburg, and became, after diligent and patient study, a master of the Russian literature. To him we are indebted for some valuable observations on the religion of the Russian empire. He has collected, with

\* "Cultus sui sedem in medio terræ collocavit, illi unum antistitem præfecit quem omnes respicerent, quò melius in unitate continerentur."—*Instit. lib. vi. § 11.*

Some of Luther's opinions are to the same effect. They may be seen in *Besuet, Hist. des Variat. lib. i. n. 21.*

no less judgment than industry, out of the rituals and liturgies that are in constant use in that Church, some important attestations in favour of the pope's supremacy. In some other testimonies connected with this subject, I have availed myself of the references of this writer,\* nor shall I blush to follow such a guide, while I lead my reader through the dark and tangled paths of the theological literature of Russia.

In a work known in their language by the name of *Akaphisti Sedmitchnii* (weekly prayers), and in another called *Minea Mesatchnaia*, which corresponds with our lives of the saints for the different months of the year, there are as fervent effusions of devotion to the memory, and of respect for the power of St. Peter, as any that are to be found in the Roman Breviary. "St. Peter, hail!" exclaims the Russian Church, in one of her hymns, "prince of the apostles! apostolical primate! immovable rock of the faith in recompense of thy confession, eternal foundation of the Church, pastor of the flock, and bearer of the keys of heaven, chosen from among all the apostles to be next to Jesus Christ himself, the chief foundation of his holy Church. Hail immovable pillar of the orthodox faith, prince of the apostolical college. Thou hast been the first bishop of Rome, the honour and glory of that great city: on thee the Church is founded."† The same Church has translated into her dialect, and still repeats in her liturgies, the language of St. Chrysostom: "God has said to Peter, thou art the rock, and he gave him this name, because on him, as on a solid rock, Jesus Christ founded his Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; for the Creator himself having laid its foundation, which he strengthened by faith, what force can prevail against it? What could I add to the praises of this apostle, and what can be imagined more sublime than the discourse of our Redeemer, who calls

\* The quotations are from the second edition, printed at Lyons, in 1821, 2 vols. 8vo.

† *Le Maître du Pape*, lib. i., c. 10, pp. 91-92.

Peter blessed, who calls him the rock ; and declares that on this rock he will build his Church? Peter is the rock and foundation of the faith ; it is on Peter, the supreme apostle, that Christ himself has conferred authority in saying, I give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c. What shall we then say of Peter? O Peter, object of the complacency of the Church, light of the universe, immaculate dove, prince of the apostles, source of orthodoxy.”\*

Perhaps, however, it may be imagined that the admiration of the Russian Church is confined to the person of St. Peter, without extending to his successors. A few extracts more from its authorised books, will reveal the important fact, that it is equally explicit in its reverence for the Roman pontiffs, during several succeeding ages. A hymn, composed to the honour of St. Clement, bishop of Rome, concludes with these words: “Martyr of Jesus Christ, disciple of Peter, thou didst imitate his divine virtues, and didst thus show thyself the true heir of his throne.”† The merits and prerogatives of St. Sylvester are thus characterised: “Thou art the chief of the sacred council ; thou hast illustrated the throne of the apostles. Holy prince of bishops, thou hast confirmed the divine doctrine, and closed the impious lips of heretics.”‡

Similar are the sentiments which are expressed for the memory of all the Roman pontiffs, whose virtues exalted them to the calendar of the saints. However, not to crowd too many passages together, I shall close this reference to the theology of the Russian Church, with the expressions which she applies to the first and third of the Leos: “What appellation shall I now bestow on thee? Shall I name thee the herald and firm support of truth, the venerable chief of the supreme council (of Chalcedon), the successor to the throne of St. Peter, the heir of the invincible Peter, and the inheritor of his empire.”§

\* Different passages of St. Chrysostom, adopted into the liturgical books of the Greek Church.—Le Maistre du Pape, pp. 93, 94.

† Le Maistre du Pape, p. 94.

‡ Ibid. p. 95.

§ Ibid.

When Leo, the Armenian, renewed the persecution which his predecessor of the same name had kindled against the Catholics in the preceding century, desirous to abolish the worship of images, St. Theodore, a monk of Constantinople, generally known by the name of the Studite, thus writes to Leo the Third, who then sat on the apostolical throne: "Thou supreme pastor of the Church which is under heaven, succour us in this imminent danger to which we are exposed; fill the place of Jesus Christ. Stretch forth thy protecting arm to assist our Church of Constantinople, and prove thyself the successor of the first pontiff of thy name. He thundered against the heresy of Eutyches; smite thou, in like manner, that of the Iconoclasts. Lend an ear to our prayers, O thou chief and prince of apostleship, chosen by God himself to be the pastor of his flock; for thou art Peter in reality, since thou dost occupy and illustrate the throne of Peter. It is to thee Jesus Christ has said, 'confirm thy brethren.' Behold, then, the time and occasion to exercise thy rights; assist us, since God has given thee power; for it is for this purpose that thou art appointed prince of all."\*

But the Church of Russia not only celebrates the praises of the Roman pontiffs, but recites the instances in which their supremacy was often exercised in extinguishing the errors, or deposing the persons, of the bishops of Constantinople. Speaking of St. Celestine, she remarks, "that firm in word and works, he walked in the path which had been traced by the apostles, and deposed Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, after having clearly exposed, in his letters, the blasphemies of this heretic.† In the life of St. Martin, she characterises his intrepidity by saying, "that he sprung like a lion on the impious; and separated from the Church of Jesus Christ, Cyrus, patriarch of Alex-

\* From the collection of the Sermons and Epistles of the Fathers of the Church, called Sobornic; selected for the use of the Greek Church.—Le Maistre du Pape, p. 97.

† Proloc. St. Celestin, 8th April.

andria; Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople; and Pyrrhus, with all their associates.”\*

If I have been thus copious in my reference to the Russian Church, it is because these testimonies are probably new to the English reader. Some of them may be found, it is true, in the history of the eastern Church, and are only translated from the acts of its early councils. But viewed through the medium of a Church which is deemed hostile to the pope's supremacy, they possess more lively interest; and in their adoption into its liturgies or rituals, may be considered as an expression of its creed. It will no doubt excite surprise that a Church which thus celebrates, in such magnificent terms, its belief in the prerogatives of the Roman pontiffs, should still refuse to submit to their authority. But instances of such contradiction between principles and practice are not unfrequent. The more indisposed any nation appears to adopt the pope's supremacy, the more forcible are the testimonies which it continues to bear to the ancient exercise of that prerogative. Such monuments, therefore, are not without their value. Temporary causes may check, for some time, the influence of the soundest and most incontestable principles. The human mind may be drifted along by the tempest of human passions from the ancient path through which it steered under the guidance of reason. But when the violence by which it is agitated gradually subsides, those monuments which were merged amidst the storm again appear over the surface, pointing the course from which it strayed, and warning it to return.

I have thus conducted the reader over the Eastern and Western, the ancient and modern Churches, placing before him the most creditable vouchers of the perpetual supremacy of Rome. Yes, it is derived from the fountain of revelation, and has descended in an unbroken course through the Catholic Church to the present times. Having examined such a cloud of wit-

\* Mineia Mesatchnaia, St. Martin, 14th April.

nesses, and weighed the adverse prejudices by which they were actuated, what ought to be his reflection on considering the unanimity of their depositions? He views the whole Christian world united in their homage to one individual, and acknowledging him as the viceroy of heaven. A belief so widely spread and so deeply rooted, and which has survived the vicissitudes of time and revolutions of opinion, must have had, he will say, the same origin as Christianity. What else could have given it birth, or so long sustained its existence? An empire may be established by force, but it soon dissolves when once the power by which it was founded is withdrawn. Individuals may extend the more enviable influence of their virtues or their genius, an influence which, though respected for a time, cannot always support their degenerate successors. From a love of country, or other prejudices equally dear, certain opinions may be cherished, which at length give way to the influence of time. But here we find an empire, in the establishment of which force not only had no share, but which has actually resisted the utmost efforts of violence. If we are told of the vices of some of the popes, it shows how solid was the authority, which was still respected in the degenerate successors of those pontiffs, whom their virtues had ennobled. And as for love of country, so far from favouring the growth of this authority, it was more or less sacrificed, together with the train of patriotic prejudices, in its adoption.

In vain will it be said, that the supremacy of Rome arose from the circumstance of its being the capital of the Roman empire. Providence, it is true, directed St. Peter, as Leo remarks, to the capital of the world, in order that the faith might be more easily diffused from the centre to the extremities. But if the power of the pope be only the growth of human policy, why did not that power accompany the translation of the seat of the empire to Byzantium? The rising majesty of Constantinople soon rivalled, and at last eclipsed, the ancient patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria.

They, too, had been illustrated by the residence of kings, yet they gradually yielded to the aspiring pretensions of the bishops of Constantinople. While Rome then sat in solitude, deploring the migration of wealth and empire to the capital of the East, the tutelary spirit of St. Peter forbid that his authority should be ever exiled from a city which he had illustrated by a long residence and consecrated by his blood.\* In vain will we be told of the exalted power of St. Paul, which seemed to rival that of St. Peter. Be it so. Who are the successors of the apostle of the Gentiles? The Roman pontiffs, if any claim the inheritance. How ample, then, the prerogatives of the pope! Those who would fain divide the authority of St. Peter with St. Paul, instead of affecting his claims, accumulate his privileges, since both poured all their authority and blood into that pure fountain from which his authority is derived. Sacred source of charity and faith! May it ever be my lot to enjoy the communion of the one, and to drink of the fountain of the other, and to be ever united with that see, which is the mother of all Churches, and in which the plenitude of all their power resides. †

\* See Milner's End of Religious Controversy, Lett. xlv.

† "C'est cette chaire tant célébrée par les Pères, où ils ont exalté comme à l'envi la principauté de la chaire apostolique, la source de l'unité, et dans la place de Pierre, l'éminent degré de la chaire sacerdotale; l'Eglise-mère qui tient en sa main la conduite de toutes les autres Eglises; le chef de l'épiscopat, d'où part le rayon du gouvernement; la chaire principale, la chaire unique, en laquelle seule tous gardent l'unité. Vous entendez dans ces mots S. Optat, S. Augustin, S. Cyprien, S. Irenée, S. Prosper, S. Avite, S. Théodoret, le concile de Chalcedoine et les autres; l'Afrique, les Gaules, la Grèce, l'Asie, l'Orient et l'Occident unis ensemble, &c."—Bossuet. Sermon sur l'Unité, I<sup>re</sup> partie.

## CHAPTER XII.

## ON THE TEMPORAL SUPREMACY OF THE POPES.\*

Adverse opinions on the Pope's Infallibility.—Fears of the restoration of the Temporal Power of the Popes groundless and visionary.—Mutual independence and alliance of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Authorities.—Obedience to the Secular Powers enforced by the Precepts of the Redeemer and his Apostles, as well as by the Lives and Writings of the Primitive Christians.—Independence of the Imperial Authority recognised by the early Pontiffs.—The Christian Martyrs the best Champions of Freedom.—Ignorance or disingenuity of those who represent the Catholic Doctrine of Obedience as unfavourable to the interests of Society; its principles adapted to the best forms of Government.

THOUGH the spiritual supremacy of the pope has been universally acknowledged, it would be difficult to define the precise limits of his jurisdiction. Nor, indeed, is it incumbent on him who vindicates the existence of a legitimate authority, to fix the boundaries of its legitimate exercise. The necessity of a supreme authority in religion will appear palpable to all, who reflect on the weakness and wanderings of the human mind. That this authority chiefly resides in the successors of St. Peter, will appear no less incontestable to those who weigh the testimonies of Scripture, and the uniform submission with which the pious and enlightened of every age have bowed to their spiritual decrees. By the fathers of the Council of Florence it has been solemnly decreed, that all Christians are bound to obey the supreme authority of the Roman pontiff.† This is sufficient for the bulk of

\* By "Temporal supremacy of the Popes" throughout this chapter is meant what is generally called the power of deposing princes, &c.

† "Definimus sanctam Apostolicam sedem et Romanum Pontificem in universum orbem tenere primatum, et ipsum Romanum Pontificem esse successorem B. Petri et verè Christi Vicarium, totius Ecclesiæ Caput, et omnium Christianorum patrem et doctorem existere, et ipsi in beato Petro pascendi, regendi et guber-

Christians to know. Whether he be, on that account, privileged with infallibility, is a question that exercises the subtle disputation of adverse theological schools.\* It is one of those controversies which employed the superfluous leisure of the scholastics, who expended their time and talents on every subject on which difference of opinion was allowable. However, since submission in matters of faith involves the full acquiescence of the understanding, it might be difficult to reconcile the obligation of subjection to a spiritual power with the possibility of its leading us astray. It is observed that the obedience required by the council of Florence to the authority of the pope may not be such as to embrace the full homage of the understanding to his sole and exclusive decisions. But, where there is such plenitude of spiritual power, and such assurance of a divine protection fortified by the commentary, which history has preserved, of the uniform and untainted purity of the faith of Rome,† it would imply no ordinary presumption in any individual to controvert the doctrine that issues from such a source.

Nor is the controversy less prejudicial to the repose of the Christian world, which has been often agitated by the question of the relative authorities of the bishops and the Roman pontiff. Indifferent must they be to the unity of Christ's body, who would fain thus introduce a schism between its members. A head without the members would be as monstrous and unsightly an object as the members without the head;‡ and there-

nandi universalem Ecclesiam a Domino nostro Jesu Christo plenam potestatem traditam esse; quemadmodum etiam in gestis Œcumenicorum conciliorum, et in sacris canonibus continetur."—Labbei Collect. tom. xviii. col. 527. See also the Council of Trent, Sess. xxv. de Reform., cap. 2.

\* Since the time when the above observation was made this question has been defined as divinely revealed, and of Catholic faith, by the Council of the Vatican, anno 1870.

† Conc. viii. Gen. Act. 1. "L'Eglise Romaine ne connaît point d'hérésie—Pierre demeure dans ses successeurs."—Bossuet, Sermon sur l'Unité. "L'Eglise Romaine n'a jamais erré."—Fleury, Disc. sur l'Eglise Gallic.

‡ "Le corps n'est non plus vivant sans le chef, que le chef sans le corps. Quiconque se separe de l'un ou de l'autre n'est plus du corps et n'appartient plus à Jesus Christ. Toutes les vertus, le martyre, les austérités, et toutes les bonnes œuvres, sont mutilés hors de l'Eglise et de la communion du chef de l'Eglise, qui est le pape."—Pens. de Pasc., p. 202.

fore those who amuse themselves with such idle fancies transgress as much against the rules of symmetry and good taste as against the principles of theology. The doctrine, then, that places the collected majesty of the members above the head, is no less revolutionary than unnatural. Whether collected or dispersed, the relative functions of the head and members are still the same; and to say that the pope rules over the Church in its dispersed, but not in its collective, capacity would be (and I transcribe the remark of Mosheim)\* as if one were to say that the head rules over each member of the human body without guiding the whole; or that a king commands each city and village of a province, without ruling the province itself. Bodies, from their collective or representative capacity, may be unquestionably invested with prerogatives which belong not to the individuals. But to enlarge the collective rights of the episcopal body to a superiority over their head is a proposition no less fraught with schismatical consequences than it is repugnant to the language of our Redeemer, and to the usages of the first and purest ages of the Church.

If it should happen that the peace of the Church is disturbed by the competition of doubtful claimants, as was unfortunately the case;† then it may become necessary for the bishops to interpose their mediation, in order to terminate the disastrous contest. Such a measure would be only the exercise of one of those conservative principles that are found in the Church, to heal its disorders and perpetuate its existence. But who ever thought of converting an extraordinary event, recurring only once in the lapse of ages, into the ordinary and settled practice of government? As well might you say that the tempest, which purifies the atmosphere, while it brings ruin in its train, is the ordinary mode of respiration, and the preservative of life. Yet, such is the process of reasoning adopted by those

\* Diss. ad Hist. Eccles. pert. tom. i. p. 512.

† Particularly at the time of the council of Constance.

who, from the acts or decrees of the council of Constance, would conclude that the assembled body of the bishops supersedes the authority of the Roman pontiff. What? because the Christian world was once divided between the pretensions of three rival candidates to the throne of St. Peter, whose adverse claims it was impossible to adjust: because it was found necessary to withdraw allegiance from those whose authority was doubtful on account of the equal authority of their competitors, and to humble the individuals who sacrificed the peace of the Church to their personal ambition: because, in short, it was found necessary to have recourse to a vigorous operation to prevent the danger and scandal that would ensue from the monstrous exhibition of three heads, must it be seriously inferred, that the same operation can be resorted to in severing the natural head from the members?

Of the dangerous and schismatical tendency of the opinion which would subject the Roman pontiff to the collective jurisdiction of the episcopal body, we have a sad illustration in the violent measures of the turbulent bishops of Basil, who attempted to depose Eugenius from his pontifical throne.\* But there was soundness enough in the Catholic body to disregard their pretensions; and though they erected a false idol in his stead, the people adhered with unshaken reverence to their legitimate pastor. If the decrees of the council of Constance required a commentary, the reader cannot find a more appropriate one than that which was furnished, after the lapse of less than thirty years, in the conduct of the prelates assembled at Basil. But is it meant to exalt the pope's authority beyond the reach of any control; and, by consequence, to subject again to his arbitrary will the destiny of empires and the majesty of kings? No, the phantom of the pope's temporal dominion has passed away with the opinions from which it rose; nor is there the least danger of its revival.

\* See the acts of this council.

Like every other fleeting opinion which obeys the revolutions of time and fashion, it had its origin, and zenith, and decline. To restore it to the world, you should bring Europe back to the same state of barbarism and anarchy into which it was plunged in the middle ages; and again refit the human intellect to the same political notions which prevailed during that disastrous period of society.\* While princes and legislators study to promote the welfare of the people over whom they are placed, they have nothing to apprehend from the power of the Roman pontiff. A milder system of legislation and a greater regard for the interests of the subject have dissipated the fears of any foreign temporal authority.

Yet however strange the genealogy may appear, the opinion of the pope's temporal authority was less the offspring of the schools of theology than of the despotism of princes. When the people were crushed to the earth under the iron weight of a feudal tyranny, they naturally turned for protection to that citadel in which the meek spirit of the Christian religion was believed to reside. I am not the apologist of this power. I am only explaining the circumstances from which it rose; and deducing from the disappearance of those circumstances, the certainty that it will never be revived. I wish to show that this opinion has never been incorporated with the Catholic creed; and while I shall unfold to the reader the causes from which it sprung and which aided its progress, princes may learn that, if they have been terrified by the thunders of the Vatican, like the maimed forger of Lemnos,† who was hurled from his throne, they themselves were the artificers of the bolts that smote them; and that, as long as they rule with clemency and justice, they may hear the thunder of the Vatican at a secure distance, without ever being hurt by its lightning.

\* See the judicious reflections of Dr. Lingard on this subject, in the *Life of King John*.—*Hist. of Eng.* vol. iii. cap. l., ed. 8vo.

† *Lucian. Dial. de Sacrificiis.*

Though the deposing power of the pope was never more than a mere opinion, it must be confessed it had strenuous supporters, especially in the Italian schools. A few individuals of other nations might have adopted the doctrine. However, its influence was only partial and confined. Bellarmine, sensible that the extent to which preceding writers had pushed this opinion was so prejudicial to the repose of nations as to prevent its general adoption, laboured to modify it in such a way as would insure its general currency without compromising the dignity of the pope. The cardinal's labours did not, however, realize his hopes. His work was interdicted in France; it was ordered to be burnt in Rome. Thus, while he endeavoured to reconcile the contending parties, he forfeited the favour of both.

If the Italians have claimed for the pope the plenitude of secular and spiritual jurisdiction, others have rushed into the opposite extreme, and sternly insisted that the union of both powers in the same individual is utterly incompatible. How far the interests of religion and society may be promoted by an alliance between the Church and state, is a problem on which different writers would arrive at different results. But amidst the fluctuations of controversy, one ought to hold the balance with an even hand, and to extend to one Church, if its claims be equally founded, the same indulgence which he extends to another. I have therefore often wondered not a little, on reading the fervent invectives of Protestant writers against the temporalities of the Catholic Church, while they forgot that the prelates of the Church of England might, by the mere substitution of one name for another, be the objects of their censures.\*

But whatever may be the wisdom of their alliance,

\* The historians who inveigh with most warmth against the temporal possessions of the Catholic Church, seem to forget that the sole blessing of the Reformation, regarding them, consisted in the transfer of the same possessions to other individuals, without, however, that obligation of sharing them with the poor, which bound their ancient proprietors.

it is certain that the union of the Church and state in every country is merely a matter of policy, since both these authorities are equally independent in their primitive institution. The existence of civil authority in some shape is coeval with the origin of society itself. In the simplicity of the patriarchal state, the functions of king and priest were generally discharged by the same individual. However, the offices became soon distinct, for the active scenes of a civil or military life but ill accord with the meek and pacific spirit of religion. The variety of forms which the civil authority assumed does not affect its original independence. It was generally accommodated to the circumstances of the people; but in every change which it underwent, though protected by the aid, it still refused subjection to the authority, of the priesthood. If the pagan emperors united in their own person the distinct offices of sovereigns and pontiffs, it was rather with a view of strengthening their power by the union, than of subjecting the one to the other. Neither in the laws of Moses nor of our Redeemer is there any evidence of any change in the relative independence of the civil and spiritual authorities. The original boundaries of either jurisdiction were left untouched, the rights of the civil magistrates were not trenched on, and the frame of society remained the same as before, save in the slow and gradual improvements which it received from the influence of a divine religion. If the priesthood of Judea seem to have occasionally interfered with the power of its princes, it would betray great ignorance of the history of that nation to extend the analogy to the condition of other countries. The rulers of Judea were in strict language, only the vicegerents of the Almighty, who was, in a special manner, the sovereign of Judea; and, consequently, if they were unfaithful to their trust, they were admonished by the prophets, who were at the same time the messengers of God's threats and the ministers of his vengeance.\*

\* See Hook. *Relig. Nat. et Rev. Princ.*, tom. ii. p. 174, de *Forma Reipublicæ Hebræor.*

Had Christ conferred on the rulers of his Church the extraordinary power of releasing subjects from their duty to the civil authorities, we should be able to discover some traces of its existence, either in his own precepts or those of his apostles. Yet, instead of ambitioning the dominion of the world, the gospel breathes an aversion to all its maxims. It would be hard to prove that our Redeemer conferred on his apostles, or their successors, a power which he himself refused to claim or exercise. Though Lord of heaven and earth he pays tribute to the minister of Cæsar, in token of his fidelity to the civil authorities.\* St. Paul repeats the same maxims in his instructions to the Romans,† nor did St. Peter imagine that the supremacy with which Christ had invested him released him from similar obligations. To pay tribute unto Cæsar, he was ordered by our Redeemer to take a piece of money out of the mouth of a fish;‡ and, as “the servant is not above his master,” the apostle might have received in this miraculous transaction a lesson for the future conduct of all Christians. The princes to whom Christ and his apostles thus inculcated the obligation of tribute and subjection were not men whose virtues could challenge the willing allegiance of the human heart. When Christ commanded to pay tribute to Cæsar, the Roman empire languished under the tyranny of Tiberius, who sought in the obscure island of Caprea to hide his vices from the detestation of mankind.§ And St. Paul preached his doctrine of submission to the ruling powers, when Nero laboured to extinguish the Christian name.

The lessons which its founders taught were faithfully practised by the first disciples of the Christian religion. Nay, when subjected to the cruellest torments, they were patient under suffering, and following the advice of our Redeemer, they prayed for their persecutors. Nor was their patience the effect of weakness. It is painful to find some modern writers, in their zeal for a

\* Mark, xii. 17.

+ Rom. xiii. 7.

‡ Matt. xvii. 20

§ Tacitus.

favourite system, forgetting the principles of Christianity itself, and in their endeavours to torture the plain language of St. Paul, stripping the primitive Christians of the merit of martyrdom. The apology which Tertullian boldly addressed to the Roman senate in behalf of the Christians, sufficiently attests their strength and numbers.\* But independently of his testimony, we may oppose to those writers the authority of others, who ascribe to a blind fanaticism the eager cheerfulness with which the martyrs courted sufferings and death.† It is unnecessary to caution the reader against the injustice of an imputation which would be no less a blot on the memory of those champions of the faith. But it shows that their conduct ought not to be ascribed to the impossibility of resistance; and that between the adverse charges of weakness and fanaticism there is sufficient room for truth to triumph.

In the sanguinary persecutions which successively raged during the first three centuries, the fidelity of the Christians continued unshaken. Instead of interposing violence between the subjects and the supreme power, the pastors of the Church exhorted the faithful to patience, and in their patience the interests of religion finally triumphed. Had they resisted they might, it is true, have obtained a name among those who have been ennobled by the fall of tyrants. But what they would have obtained in military renown, they would have lost in Christian virtue. The religion of Christ was not like that of Mahomet to be propagated by violence and arms. "Its shield was faith, its sword the word of God," "its wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the world of darkness."‡ Hence the patient fortitude with which the Christians suffered death struck the pagans with wonder. Their astonishment was soon converted into admiration of the religion which taught such heroic virtues; conversion soon succeeded to their admiration, and in the just language

\* Apologet. cap. xxxvi.

† Gibbon, Decl. and Fall, cap. xvi.

‡ Ephes. vi. 12.

of Tertullian, "the blood of the martyrs became the seed of Christianity."\*

If, then, the blood of the martyrs became the prolific seed of Christianity, we are indebted to them for the other valuable blessings that have followed in its train. If, therefore, its heavenly spirit has mitigated the severity of despotism, and gradually introduced a more liberal jurisprudence, are we not beholden for this change to the individuals who chiefly contributed to the propagation of that religion? By resistance they might have cut off one tyrant. But another would have started up in his stead, who would inflict similar evils and provoke similar vengeance. To cut off every despot, who should abuse his power, would be as endless a labour as that of Hercules in combating the Hydra of Lerna.† In this sanguinary struggle between the oppressed and their oppressors, the progress of Christianity might have been checked, and the lovers of freedom might still experience only the same disastrous alternations of tyranny and servitude that afflicted the world until that period. It was not then by the death of a tyrant that liberty was to flourish, but by the extirpation of those vices on which tyranny grew. To purge the world of those passions which were the sources of misgovernment was the labour which the martyrs undertook. These were to be eradicated before the Christian religion could develop its fruits to the world. Against these monsters the martyrs declared war, generously sacrificing life in the struggle. Instead of being then the supporters of tyranny, they were in reality the assertors of freedom; and if Curtius‡ or Leonidas§ have obtained the praises of the world for having sacrificed themselves for the transient liberties of Greece or Rome, what ought to be our gratitude for the heroism of those champions who died grappling with the tyrants without whose

\* Apologet. cap. i.

† "Lernæus turbâ capitum circumstetit anguis." Æn. viii.

‡ Plut. in Paral. lib. vi.

§ Val. Max. lib. iii. cap. 2.

defeat the world would have been as yet a stranger to the blessings of liberal and regulated governments?\*

The first Christians then did not suffer because they wanted military courage. As long as the fidelity they owed to the emperors required no condition incompatible with their faith, they freely exposed their lives, even for those by whom their religion was persecuted. But while they gave unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, they knew that God possessed a right over their conscience, which man could not usurp; and as soon as these rights were invaded, rather than become traitors to their God, they cheerfully laid down their lives for their religion. In the midst of persecution, they were sustained by the consoling language of the apostle. "Most dear, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you. But rejoice, being partakers of the sufferings of Christ, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be happy; for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his spirit, resteth upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or as coveting the goods of others. But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God in that name."† It was on those inspired precepts the moral duties of the primitive Christians were formed; and in the fidelity with which they discharged their civil obligations to the state, they taught princes a lesson of their paramount fidelity to their God. Such is the noble sentiment that breathes in the language of St. Julian. "Seven times I have served in war," replies the martyr; "I have

\* See a forcible illustration in Theod. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. iii. cap. 15. "Dans ces cruelles persécutions qu'elle endure sans murmurer, pendant tant de siècles, en combattant pour Jésus Christ, j'oserai le dire, elle ne combat pas moins pour l'autorité des princes qui la persécutent...N'est-ce pas combattre pour l'autorité légitime que d'en souffrir tout sans murmurer?"—Boss. Sermon sur l'unité, premier point.

† I Pet. iv.

never refused to obey my commanders ; and instead of shrinking from the contest, I have often plunged into the tide of battle before any of my companions. But if I have been faithful in such combats, do you imagine that I shall be less so in the one that is of much greater importance ?”\* Similar was the courage displayed by the soldiers of the Theban legion, who, under the reign of the cruel Maximian, obtained the crown of martyrdom. Their number, which amounted to six thousand six hundred men, might have enabled them to offer a vigorous resistance when the emperor proposed to them the alternative of death or of sacrificing to the gods. Their reply evinced that they were no less distinguished for bravery in professing their belief than fidelity to their commander.

“ Oh, emperor, we are your soldiers ; but we are also servants of the true God. We owe you military service, it is true, but we owe Him our innocence. As long as you shall not constrain us to offend Him, we are ready to obey you, as we have hitherto done. Can you believe that we shall preserve the fidelity that is due to you, if we are wanting in that which we owe to God? Our first oath has been taken to Jesus Christ, the second to you : shall you confide in the second if we prove unfaithful to the first ?”† Such was the language of those distinguished soldiers of Christ, who shed their blood near the lake of Geneva, the place of whose execution still retains the name of St. Maurice, their leader, as if to reproach, by the memory of their martyrdom, the sanguinary principles of the reformers of Switzerland. To ascribe the patience of such individuals to weakness, is an insult, which is sufficiently repelled by the authentic records of their conduct and language.

But if it should still be insinuated that the Christians were comparatively weak and few in number during the first persecutions,‡ it will not be denied that,

\* Acts of St. Julian, quoted by Bossuet, cinquième Avertiss. n. xii.

+ Act. Mart. Bossuet, 5<sup>me</sup> Avertiss. n. xvi.

‡ That such, however, was not the case, see the Apologet. of Tertull. passim. Cyp. ad Demetr. Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. viii. cap. 14, &c. &c.

under the reigns of Constantine and his sons, they became the strongest and most formidable body in the empire. Yet under the emperor Julian, who attempted to extinguish their religion, their fidelity was as unshaken as under the preceding persecutions. Should the reader entertain any doubts about the extent of the Christian religion at that time, they will, doubtless, be removed by the testimony of Gregory of Nazianzen, who remarks, "That as the doctrine of Christ was now extended on all sides, and prevailed among all, to attempt to change the Christian religion was nothing less than to expose everything to hazard, and to upset the Roman empire."\* However, in the expedition which he undertook into Persia, Julian was accompanied by his Christian soldiers, who shed their blood in his service. Nay, that his army was chiefly composed of Christians, we learn from this circumstance, that when Jovian, who was unanimously elected to succeed Julian, wished to decline the command, because he was a Christian, the soldiers cried out, with one voice, "We are all Christians, and educated in the faith of Constantine and Constantius."† From the rise of Arianism in the fourth, to its final extinction in the seventh century, the Catholics underwent many and severe persecutions, from their attachment to the faith. While the East suffered under the Roman princes, Constantius‡ and Valens,§ Italy and Africa were no less exposed to the cruelties of Huneric and Genseric.|| and the other Gothic and Vandal kings, who had embraced the Arian heresy. Yet during this double epoch of persecution, which the Christians suffered from Pagan and Arian princes, none of the Roman pontiffs ever interposed his spiritual power to release them from their civil allegiance.

\* Orat. iii. in Julian.

† Socrat. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. iii. cap. 22. Sozom. lib. vii. cap. 3. See also St. Augus. in Psalm, 124.

‡ St. Athan. Apolog. ad Const.

§ Socrat. lib. iv. cap. 32.

|| See St. Fulgent. ad. Tras. lib. i. cap. 2.

The opinion is of a more recent origin, and it is only in the tenth century we discover the first of those testimonies that are cited by its advocates in its defence. From that period citations are multiplied in its favour; but it can scarcely be supposed that a doctrine so important could have so long eluded the discovery of the most enlightened Christians. In estimating, therefore, the weight of the authorities that are quoted, we ought to adopt the wise maxims of the fathers of Florence, who on those disputes which divided the Eastern and Western Churches, resolved to confine themselves to the authors who had written before the schism, and whose minds were not under the influence of those prejudices which warped the judgment of subsequent writers. This reasonable maxim will aid us much in forming an accurate judgment on the question, by enabling us to get rid of that mass of intervening testimony which is industriously placed between us and the primitive fathers.

The writings of Irenæus and Justin Martyr furnish us with the strongest and most cogent recommendations of obedience to the civil authorities—an obedience which they exemplified by the patience with which they endured martyrdom. The former, contemplating the indissoluble connexion that exists between authority and order, assures us that society, and the supreme power by which it is preserved, are derived from the same source; and the latter, forming the rule of his duties according to the instructions of Christ and St. Paul, declares that the first Christians were wont to pray that the emperors might unite wisdom with the exercise of their authority. “But,” continues Justin, with a holy intrepidity, “should you disregard our prayers, we shall not be the sufferers; finally persuaded that each one shall suffer in eternal fire the forfeit of his guilt, according to the measure of the power with which God has invested him.” The obligation of obedience is thus exhibited by Tertullian, judiciously qualified by those limits which religion imposes, “With

regard to the honour due to kings and emperors, it is clearly prescribed to us to demean ourselves with submission towards them, according to the precept of the apostle, to be subject to magistrates, princes, and powers; respecting, however, the boundaries of religion, in order to keep aloof from idolatry. Wherefore we have the example of the three Hebrew brothers to direct us. who, though in other respects obedient to the king Nebuchodonosor, most courageously refused to worship his image, knowing that a homage resembling that which was paid to the Almighty was idolatrous. Daniel, in like manner, who was obedient to Darius, continued to discharge his civil functions as long as they were not prejudicial to the interests of religion. But when religion was endangered, he felt no more apprehension from the lions than the others did from the flames, into which they were cast by the king's edict.”\*

Similar is the language of Athenagoras in the apology which he addressed to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his son Commodus.† In these pure and authentic monuments of the primitive faith and practice of the Christians, there is not a single expression insinuating any right in the Roman pontiff to absolve subjects from their civil allegiance. Nay, St. John Chrysostom expressly declares that the duty of civil subjection extends to every member of society, whatever may be his dignity or rank. “Though he were an apostle or an evangelist, or a prophet, or whoever else he may be, he is comprehended in the words of St. Paul, *let every soul be subject to the higher powers*. Nor is piety subverted by this subjection. Nor is your profession dishonoured, though it be necessary that you should exhibit respect to your prince.”‡ To quote the other fathers of the Church would be to repeat the same sentiments, varying only in the language. Having profoundly meditated the inspired writings, they found in the precepts of Christ and his

\* See the Analysis to the writings of Justin and Tertullian in the *Bibliothèque des Pères*, tom. i. 8vo.

† *Fleury*, lib. iii. cap. 47.

‡ *Biblioth. des Pères*, tom. iv., p 336.

apostles the duty of obedience to the constituted authorities expressed in the most simple and unequivocal terms. This language they applied to the governments under which they lived, leaving the improvement of society to the progress of time and the beneficial influence of their holy religion. Instead of retarding the gradual benefits which might flow from the cultivation of political science, they endeavoured to cherish that peace and tranquillity without which science would languish and civilisation be retarded.

To the testimonies of the Fathers, we may add the united suffrages of Roman pontiffs, distinguished for the zeal with which they defended the interests of religion. The emperor Anastasius, a zealous supporter of the Eutychian heresy, sent into banishment the patriarch of Constantinople.\* The Roman pontiff, Symmachus, remonstrated with him, but he disregarded the counsel, and treated the legates of the Holy See with indignity. That the popes, however, did not then imagine they possessed the power of absolving subjects from their civil allegiance, we learn from the language which both Symmachus and Gelasius, one of his immediate predecessors, addressed to the Greek emperor. "There are two powers by which this world is ruled (I transcribe the words of Gelasius), the sacred authority of pontiffs and that of kings: of their relative obligations, those of the priests are the more weighty, since they must answer before the divine tribunal for the rulers of men. But, as to what regards the order and discipline of society, even the most exalted dignitaries of religion are bound to obey the laws of those to whom the empire is entrusted by the disposition of heaven."†

Symmachus, notwithstanding the indignity with which his legates had been treated, was content to interpose only the meek authority of religion. "Let us compare the dignities of the emperor and of the pope. They are as different as the nature of the spiritual and

\* Evagr. Schol. lib. iii. cap. 32.

† Epist. viii.

civil functions over which they preside. You, emperor, receive from the pontiff baptism and the other sacraments; you supplicate the aid of his prayers and the grace of reconciliation. In short, you administer human concerns, he dispenses to you the divine treasures. Therefore, that I may avoid the invidious term of superior, the honour is surely equal. You may say that *we ought to be subject to every power*. We indeed recognise human authorities in their proper spheres, and until they aspire to power contrary to that of God. But if every power is from God, much more so that which presides over religion. Recognise in us the authority of God, and we shall recognise the same in your person.”\*

The sentiments contained in the epistles of the preceding pontiffs are also expressed in the writings of the first and second Gregories. “I,” says Gregory the Great,† personifying the Redeemer, as if he were addressing the Emperor Maurice, “I have subjected my priests to your authority, and yet you withdraw your soldiers from my service.” And Gregory the Second, in one of his letters to Leo the Isaurian, draws an accurate line of distinction between the spiritual and secular authorities. “Pontiffs have been placed over the Church, not interfering with the concerns of state; let the emperors follow their example by not interfering in the concerns of the Church, and confining themselves to those things with which they have been entrusted. As the pontiff has no power of looking within the enclosures of the palace, and disposing of royal dig-

\* Epist. vii.

† “Ad hæc, ecce per me Servum suum ultimum et vestrum respondebit Christus dicens: Ego te de Notario . . . Imperatorem feci. Ego Sacerdotes meos tuæ manui commisi, et tu a meo servitio milites tuos subtrahis. Responde ergo piissime Domine Servo tuo quid venienti et hæc dicenti responsurus es in iudicio, Domino nostro.”—Epistol. lib. ii., Ep. 62. I should prefer the intrepidity of this pontiff, boldly reminding the emperor of his trust, whilst he acknowledged his divine appointment, to the flattery of modern bishops, who, whilst they talk of the constitution, blush not, as on a late memorable occasion, to abuse the maxim that the king can do no wrong into an assertion that he is incapable of any moral delinquency.

nities ; neither is it lawful for the emperor to remove the veil of the sanctuary, nor take a share in the election of the clergy. You persecute us and crush us with the weight of military despotism, while we, naked and unarmed, having no earthly or carnal forces to protect us, invoke the aid of Christ, the Prince of Armies.”\*

From the history of the Church during its earlier ages, we might collect a greater number of testimonies that were considered quite distinct in their nature. Those that have been cited have a peculiar force, since some of the emperors I have referred to were the partisans of those errors which disturbed the peace of the oriental Churches. Such was Anastasius, a zealous protector of the Eutychian heresy ; and such also was Leo of Isauria, who proscribed under the most sanguinary penalties the worship of images.† Had the popes then imagined that they were invested with the power of absolving subjects from their sworn fidelity to their prince, there could not have been a more necessary occasion to wield it than when those emperors meditated the destruction of the Catholic religion. Yet so far from adopting such an opinion, Gregory the Second strenuously laboured to support the declining influence of Leo in Italy, while this prince was kindling a cruel persecution against the Catholics in the East.‡

While the Protestant reader is conducted over those venerable monuments of Catholic times, he may fancy that he meets at every step the appalling apparition of the divine right of kings. Frightened by a spectre from which he has been taught to recoil from his infancy, he may be tempted to lay down the book which he has perused so far, and resolve to listen no longer to a writer who would fain revive such obsolete principles. But should he accompany me a little farther, his fears may gradually vanish, and after mature reflection he may become a proselyte to the opinion that the Catholic religion, by securing the stability of governments, is

\* Ep. 2a.

+ Theoph. in Chronogr. ad An. 9 Leonis.

‡ Paul. Diac. de Gest. Longob. lib. vi. cap. 40.

the best auxiliary in the establishment of political freedom. If the Protestant has been alarmed at the idea of the indefeasible right of kings, he has been terrified no less by the repeated thunders of the Vatican. The testimonies, then, that I have just cited were adduced less in reference to the rights of kings, than to allay the fears that have been entertained against the deposing power of the Roman pontiffs. They may contain some expressions regarding the authority of kings not palatable to ears familiar to the sounds of liberty and revolution. But while they may excite one alarm, they are calculated to dissipate another; nor ought the Protestant to be much displeased at the tenor of those principles which protect all his civil institutions against any encroachments of the papal authority.

Among the artifices of controversy, nor are political writers free from their influence, there has been none more prejudicial to the progress of truth, than the attempt to load an abstract principle with consequences with which it is unconnected. Of the mischievous effects of such disingenuity, we shall produce many instances, when we shall have occasion to strip the Catholic doctrine of those distortions with which it has been covered. Thus, the doctrine of obedience to the constituted authorities, which the Catholic Church inculcates, has furnished a prolific theme of ridicule and disingenuous declamation. From the language so frequently used by the Fathers, that the power of kings is from God, some have affected to infer, that Catholics believe there is in a royal race some divine and transmissive property, which entitles each of its descendants, in spite of every reverse, to ascend the throne of his ancestors. Perhaps the flattery, of which some have been so profuse, towards the worst as well as towards the most virtuous princes, may have, to a certain extent, propagated such an idea. This language of adulation, of which royal panegyrists have been so unsparing, has been made the test of Catholic orthodoxy; and sentiments have been traced to the religion of a people, which

ought more justly to be ascribed to their national character. Hence, it is said, *we* would fain be persuaded that the crowns of monarchs are as inalienable as the sceptre of Juda; and that their descendants, like those of Aaron, to whom the priesthood was transmitted, could not be deprived of the inheritance by the shock of any revolution. By developing this imputed principle into the consequences with which it is naturally pregnant, Catholics should never acquiesce in revolution, however finally established; and those of Ireland, for example, should be still looking for the phantom of an English king, among the royal family of Savoy or Sardinia.

Such is not the doctrine taught in the Catholic Church: and if it has been advanced by some of its members, the Church is not accountable for their reveries. The advocate of peace and order, it would not sanction a doctrine which, instead of giving stability to government, would be perpetually upsetting the firmest monarchies of Europe. If, by virtue of their reverence for what is called the indefeasible right of royalty, the Catholics of Ireland should be obliged to seek for the object of their loyalty in Sardinia, why not, by an extension of the same absurdity, be obliged to transfer their allegiance to a still higher source? Then, so far from stopping among the Stuarts—a family that ought not to have any attractions for Irishmen—they ought to ascend to the last Milesian House that swayed the sceptre in each of our provinces, and look now for their lineal heirs among the peasantry of Ireland. By the application of the same principle, no dynasty in Europe would remain secure; and society would be utterly unhinged, by the contention of adverse claimants. The abused truth, then, of the divine right of kings means nothing more than that the obligation of preserving the order and peace of society, flows from a divine source. This order has no essential and indissoluble connexion with royalty; and much less with the members of any particular race. Monarchy, it is true, may be deemed the fittest of all the various kinds of governments, to

uphold and perpetuate public order; but a well organised society may exist under other forms: and thus the principle of the divine right of kings is as applicable to the doge of Venice, or the consuls of Rome, or the grand dukes of Tuscany, as to a hereditary monarchy. Whether the supreme power be vested in one, or divided among many individuals, it is equally respected by the principles of the Catholic Church. It may be shared with a hereditary peerage; the people may be associated to its counsels; but as its end is always the public good, in order to ensure that end the more effectually, the Church gives to every established government, the aid of a divine sanction. Like every human institution that is subject to the vicissitudes of time, governments may be modified by the progress of public opinion. Instead of disdaining the improvements of science or experience, the Catholic Church would recommend their adoption. But violence, or the application of physical force, on the part of subjects, she unequivocally condemns. Revolutions may take place notwithstanding, and a legitimate monarch may, by a successful appeal to arms, be hurled from his throne. Instead of adopting a system of political ethics, as fatal as it is unprincipled, of judging of the action by the event, she condemns the rebel, though she may acquiesce in the effects of the rebellion. The most splendid success that crowns rebellion can never justify the breach of duty by which it is achieved. Let it, however, acquire stability, the former rulers forfeit their right to the government; because their right was rather founded on their connexion with the public peace, than on any unalienable attributes of royalty. When therefore that connexion with society is divorced, by a settled alliance with another family—which new alliance could not be sundered without again subverting the public order—all the right that resided in the former occupants of power is transferred to the individual by whom they are succeeded. Were the obsolete claims of a deposed dynasty to be perpetually revived, the peace of society would.

be continually agitated. That peace was the end of their appointment; their appointment the means by which that end was to be secured; and as the means must hold a subordinate relation to the end, it would be reversing the clearest principles of political science, to sacrifice the fixed order of society to the interests of a particular race.

Such is the legitimate application of the doctrine of the divine right of kings; nor is it applied in a different sense by the ancient fathers of the Catholic Church. Symmachus and Gregory the Great speak of the divine right of the emperors whom they addressed. Yet Anastasius, instead of inheriting an ancient and indefeasible title to the empire, was the first who illustrated his family by the purple. And if Gregory has been reproached with speaking of Phocas, the usurper of the throne of Constantinople, with the same reverence as he did of Maurice, whom that tyrant had dethroned,\* the reproach only illustrates the truth, that the Church is less concerned for the personal interests of princes than for the safety of society. Its order is from God; and he, therefore, who disturbs this order, resists the ordinance of the Almighty. There must be, in every state, a supreme and absolute authority. In a free country, the monarchy may be called limited, on account of the restraints which are imposed on it by the constitution. But though monarchy may be limited, there is still in the state an absolute authority, which it is unlawful to resist; and this authority resides in the government, including the executive and the legislature. Constitutional checks may therefore temper the power, and modify the form, of government, but they never can annul the obligations of obedience. Nor does this language differ widely from the principles that are laid down by the most eminent Protestant jurists. Grotius, though he leaned to liberty, insists on the sacred obligations that bind the subject to the state. Blackstone

\* Niceph. Hist. Eccles. lib. xviii., cap. 37. 40.

supposes that there is as much of absolute power in the British Constitution, composed as it is of king, lords, and commons, as was ever exercised by any government. Nay, what are his ideas of the absolute force of English laws, we may learn from his frequent allusion to the omnipotence of parliament. Paley himself, who, as has been before observed, softens down the most rigid principles of the Gospel, by a refined and arbitrary interpretation, requires conditions to justify revolution, which place it beyond the operation of the ordinary principles of human conduct.\* Revolutions are events that are seldom influenced by the nice calculations of civilians. They are like the earthquake or the hurricane, beyond the reach of the ordinary and ascertained laws of society; nor is it possible for human foresight always to prevent their recurrence. In the philosophical language of Burke: "Society is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great *primeval contract of eternal society*, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact, sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place. This law is not subject to the will of those who, by an obligation above them, and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law. The municipal corporations of that universal kingdom are not morally at liberty, at their pleasure, and on their speculations of a contingent improvement, wholly to separate and tear asunder the bands of their subordinate community, and dissolve

\* Nay, he would not justify the independence of America, unless it were to enlarge the happiness of the parent state.—Princ. of Moral Philos., b. vi. cap. 3, p. 329.

it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles. It is the first and supreme necessity alone, a necessity that is not *chosen, but chooses*; a necessity paramount to deliberation, that admits no discussion and demands no evidence, which alone can justify a resort to anarchy. This necessity is no exception to the rule; because this necessity itself is a part of that moral and physical disposition of things to which man must be obedient by consent or force. But if that which is only submission to necessity should be made the object of choice, the law is broken, nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast forth and exiled from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing despair.”\*

Notwithstanding all the influence of religion to preserve the peace of society, still it will be convulsed by the shock of revolution. Instead of fomenting the inflammable materials that are still at the bottom of the crater, the Church labours to repair the damages which the face of society has already sustained from the eruption. But, though adverse to revolution, she is not hostile to the assertion of constitutional rights; nor do we forget that the apostle who so strongly recommends obedience, urged his claims as a Roman citizen, and appealed from the judgment of a vexatious and iniquitous faction to the tribunal of Cæsar.† Thus the doctrine of the Catholic Church is favourable to every form of established authority: it advocates peace, it represses licentiousness and disorder. Governments may entirely yield to the fury of popular violence, or be slowly modified by the influence of deliberative wisdom; while the guardian spirit of religion, which lives in the Catholic Church, still watches over the interests of society, transmigrating through every change, and surviving every revolution.

\* Reflections on the French Revolution, p. 144.

† Acts xxv. 11.

## CHAPTER XIII.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE TEMPORAL POWER OF  
THE POPES.

The Spiritual Authority and eminent virtues of the Popes, the first and chief source of their temporal influence.—Their authority recognised and respected by the Barbarians who overran the Roman Empire.—The decline of the Power of the Greek Emperors in the West productive of a large accession to the influence of the Roman Pontiffs.—This influence considerably increased by the Donation of Charlemagne.—The Popes the Arbiters of the quarrels of Europe.—Zeal of Gregory the Seventh provoked by the disorders of the Church.—The Rights of the Church invaded by Princes before the Civil Rights of Princes were assailed by the Popes.—The influence of the Priesthood exercised in behalf of the People to mitigate the violence of Feudal Despotism.—Some contré necessary for every authority.—Singular coincidence between the ancient Defenders of the Temporal Authority of the Pope and the most popular modern Writers on Government.—Some beneficial consequences to Society from the Temporal Power exercised by the Popes.

AFTER having thus developed the distinct duties of the civil magistrate, which some of the most illustrious of the Roman pontiffs have acknowledged, it is not as difficult as might be imagined to explain away, if not to justify, the ancient encroachments of the pope on the authority of princes. Though I fully disclaim any right in the Roman pontiff to interfere in the temporalities of independent states, yet the best apology that can be offered for the claims of his predecessors will be found in an impartial review of the causes, beginning, and gradual progress of the temporal power of the bishops of Rome.

In the infancy of the Church, when the profession of the Christian faith was a reproach, and its dignities were only the avenues to suffering and death, it is no wonder that we find no vestige of a secular authority claimed or exercised by its sovereign pontiffs. Yet,

even then the bishops of Rome derived much consideration from the spiritual supremacy which was recognised in the reverence and obedience of the whole Christian world. The wealth which the piety of some of the martyrs bequeathed to the Church, and which the popes distributed in charity to the poor, soon excited the jealousy and provoked the rapacity of the persecutors of religion. The truth of this observation is exemplified in the acts of Lawrence, the deacon of Xystus, who suffered the cruellest torments rather than reveal the treasures with which he was entrusted.\*

From the conversion of Constantine, and the translation of his capital to Byzantium, the bishops of Rome acquired, without courting it, a vast extent of political influence. While Italy was exposed to the inroads of the barbarians, and the feeble successors of Constantine were unable to repel their incursions, the authority of the popes was their last stay in upholding the empire of the west. The veneration inspired by the virtues and august character of the successors of St. Peter cannot be better attested than by their repeated and successful efforts in saving Rome from the ravages of war. Twice was the mediation of St. Leo interposed for the safety of the city, and twice was the fury of the northern chiefs appeased by the charms of his eloquence. Awed by the meek deportment and majestic figure of the Roman pontiff, Attila retired from Rome, though he came breathing nought but blood and slaughter.† There is an ancient tradition that the conqueror was terrified by the apparition of St. Peter and St. Paul, whose threats seconded the entreaties of their successor. Critics may reject the legend,‡ but the naked fact conveys an equally instructive lesson; and whether we attribute the victory over the wrath of Attila to the eloquence and piety of Leo, or the supernatural terror of the apostles, the event is equally illustrative of the triumphs of religion. Again his prayers

\* Serm. St. Leonis in natali St. Laur.

† Vid Baron. ad an. 461.

‡ Dissert. 1, Quesnel, in Opera St. Leon.

were listened to, even by Genseric, the most inexorable of the barbarians. In vain did he entreat him to respect the city; it was delivered up by the stern chief to pillage; yet the supplications of Leo induced him to spare the three principal churches, which still retained the treasures with which they were enriched by the liberal devotion of Constantine.\*

The growing distractions of the Eastern empire gave the popes an increased ascendancy in the West; and emperors, who were the least disposed to acknowledge their power, were still obliged to pay court to individuals who possessed such extensive influence over the faith and opinions of mankind. Had St. Gregory the Great wished to assert a temporal sovereignty, he would have easily succeeded. Possessed of an extensive patrimony, which he generously expended in the service of the poor; and having devoted his life to the mitigation of the evils of pestilence and famine which raged throughout Rome, St. Gregory derived, from the exercise of his zeal and benevolence, the enviable title of the Father of the People. Yet so far from converting the influence which arose from his virtues into a source of political power, we perceive from his epistles to Maurice that he still respected the imperial authority. Such, however, was the weakness of the oriental princes, that the Italians gradually turned their attention to the popes, as the only individuals capable of affording them protection. This appears from a letter of the same pontiff addressed to John, the bishop of Constantinople, stating, that whoever was placed on the throne of St. Peter found himself perplexed between the cares of a spiritual pastor and a temporal magistrate.

In proportion as the emperors of Constantinople became unable to afford succour against the perpetual inroads of the barbarians, they were gradually losing

\* "In grazia pero di S. Leone, preservo Genseric dallo spoglio le tre principali Basiliche di S. Giovanni e dei due principi degli apostoli."—Elemente della storia dei Sommi Pontefici; Roma, Novaes, 1821.

the affections of their Western subjects.\* The crisis of their revolt was accelerated by religious antipathies; and Leo, the Isaurian, by proscribing the worship of images, alienated the minds of the Italians. Though they tendered to Gregory, the Roman pontiff, the allegiance which they withdrew from Leo and his son Copronymus, yet we are assured, by Anastasius,† that the pope, far from accepting their proffered homage, retained the Italians in their fidelity to their emperor, as long as he possessed the semblance of authority in the West.

However, it is from this period that we may date the origin of the temporal power of the popes. Long since exposed to the hostile neighbourhood of the Lombards, and but ill-defended by the exarchs of Ravenna, who represented the declining authority of the Greek emperors, the popes sought aid from the warlike nation of the Franks. Accordingly, Stephen, the successor of Zachary, travelled over the Alps, and waited, in person, on Pepin, the French king,‡, to interest him and his subjects in defence of the holy city against the incursions of the barbarians. Pepin listened with respect to the entreaties of the pope; and in two successful expeditions banished the Lombards out of Italy. Grateful for the friendship which he had experienced from Zachary,§ he bestowed upon his successor all his conquests beyond the Alps, which then comprehended the exarchate of Ravenna—a part of which is still known by the name of the Romagna.|| In the vicissitudes of intestine war that desolated Italy during the middle ages, the ecclesiastical estates sut-

\* Paul. diac. de Gest. Longob. lib. vi. cap. 49. This writer, speaking of the indignation of the Italian army at the destruction of the sacred images, declares that, “nisi eos (exercitus) prohibuisset pontifex (Greg. II.) Imperatorem super se constituere fuissent aggressi.”

† In Vita Greg. III.

‡ Anast. in Vita Steph. II. tom. i. p. 201. Gregory the Third had previously despatched two embassies to Charles Martel for a similar purpose.

§ Vid. Annales Franc. Fuldenses, ad an. 752. (Sandini in Zach.)

|| Baron ad an. 755.

ferred considerable revolutions. Portions of them were alienated through the ambition of some families, and again reannexed to the patrimony of the holy see. But whatever of temporal possessions is still retained by the popes may be originally traced to the donations of Pepin and Charlemagne his son. Such is now the extent of his temporal authority; and as to its foundation, it is, perhaps, more deeply laid than that of any monarch in Europe. It is derived from an original cession, founded on rightful conquest, and confirmed by the possession of more than a thousand years.

On this real and solid foundation of a limited temporality was raised the imaginary superstructure of a universal secular dominion. In the minds of many individuals, ideas of the pope's spiritual sovereignty mingled themselves with his civil jurisdiction; and as the one was unbounded in its extent, it gradually became the standard for fixing the limits of the other. His character, as common Father of Christendom, gave the pope a preponderating weight in the councils of Europe; and the frequency of the disputes by which its peace was troubled, called for the mild and equitable mediation of religion. From the dismemberment of the Roman empire into different fragments, until they assumed the form of regular governments, a long period intervened of anarchy and convulsion. During this wild interval between the dissolution of the ancient empire and the rise of the modern dynasties, the different conquerors fiercely contended for the dominion of the vanquished nations. The barbarians of the North imported with them the ideas of military independence, by which they were characterised in the woods of Germany. Courage is deemed the first virtue in a savage state of society; and it is astonishing how long the same idea sways the human mind in its progress to refinement. Hence personal prowess and military heroism were the predominant titles to distinction during the immature civilisation of the middle ages.

From such a principle pervading the rude mass of society, nothing was to be expected but interminable anarchy. Hence, no titles acknowledged, no possession regarded; in the rude conception of a savage, strength gave the best claim to superiority; and the sword was converted into a sceptre by which justice was to be ultimately awarded. If the spirit of religion had not allayed this ferment of society, the consequences would be most disastrous. But fortunately the sternness of the Northern chiefs was subdued by the influence of Christianity; and a reverence for its teachers supplied the defects of a more perfect jurisprudence. The respect that was felt for its subordinate ministers rose in proportion for its more exalted dignitaries; and the pope, who was constituted the chief of the Catholic Church, was deemed the representative of all the collected majesty of religion. Hence the disputes arising from conflicting claims and doubtful titles were referred to his arbitration. The equity of his decisions, by inspiring confidence in his justice, gradually increased the number of appellants to his tribunal. Appeals, which arose from the distracted state of society, were gradually confounded in the opinions of those times with the rights of the successor of St. Peter; and from being the chosen umpire of contending monarchs, he was deemed by many the disposer of their crowns.

The coronation of Charlemagne was also construed by the jurists of the middle ages into a right of transferring the empire of the Romans. We may be less surprised at their process of reasoning, when we reflect that Grotius, notwithstanding the prejudices of a Protestant and a Republican, acquiesced in the opinion that the pope was the legitimate representative of the ancient people and senate of Rome, to whom belonged the right of electing the emperors.\* The

\* *Quare et populum Romanum eundem esse dico qui olim fuit quamquam extraneorum accessione admixtum, et imperium penes eum mansisse, tanquam penes*

ceremony of anointing used on this occasion, strengthened the opinion; and the second translation from the degenerate descendants of Charlemagne to Otho, seemed to be a full recognition of the pontiff's authority.

Notwithstanding so many favourable opportunities of extending their own dominions, we do not find that the pretensions of many of the Roman Pontiffs rose to any immoderate height. They often interfered, it is true, in the concerns of other princes, but seldom with the view of enlarging their own possessions. If we examine, with impartiality and candour, the transactions of Europe, and reflect that the opinions of those ages recognised, in some measure, the temporal authority of the popes, we shall be less scandalised at the ambition of a few, than edified by the uniform moderation of the many, who were content with the exercise of a spiritual jurisdiction.

In reading over the events of the middle ages, in the accounts of some modern writers, one would be led to imagine that during four or five centuries the popes were employed in little else than in deposing the princes of Europe. Their quarrels with the emperors of Germany are represented as shaking the security of all the thrones in the Christian world; and the occa-

corpus in quo esset ac viveret.—Nec quod imperatores postea Constantinopoli quam Romæ habitare maluerunt, de jure populi Romani quicquam imminuit. Sed tunc quoque electionem factam a parte sui quæ Constantinopoli habitabat, unde Byzantinos Quirites vocat Claudianus, ratam populus totus habuit: jurisque sui monumentum non tenuè servavit in urbis suæ prærogativa, et in honore consularatus aliisque rebus. Quare jus omne quod hi qui Constantinopoli habitabant ad eligendum imperatorem Romanum habere poterant, pendebat a voluntate populi Romani: et cum illi contra mentem ac morem populi Romani femine Irenes subiissent imperium, ut alias causas omittamus, merito populus Romanus illam concessionem sive expressam sive tacitam revocavit, et per se Imperatorem legit, ac voce primi civis, id est episcopi sui (quomodo et in Judaica republica rege non existente, prima erat summi Pontificis persona) pronuntiavit.”—*De jure Bel. et Pacis*, lib. ii. cap. ix. § II.

Were an Irish Catholic civilian to put forward the principle of the Protestant Grotius, he would be instantly involved in the charge of holding ultramontane doctrines, for Britain was once included in the Roman empire, to which the Roman people had a right of nominating a master.

sional instances in which they interposed to release subjects from their allegiance, seem to the reader to have been the ordinary and uninterrupted occurrences of that period. That some pontiffs claimed the extraordinary privilege of absolving subjects from their fealty to their sovereigns, cannot be contested. But the examples were comparatively rare; and hence the disingenuity of those writers who labour to confound the power assumed by a few pontiffs with the ordinary prerogatives of the Papal authority.\*

To form a fair and dispassionate judgment of the acts of the Roman pontiffs, we should bring back our ideas to the period in which they lived, and analyze the nature of the prevailing jurisprudence. Whoever attentively weighs those circumstances may be disposed to divide with the princes the odium of those quarrels. By ascending to their origin, he will perceive that the Popes did not put forward their extraordinary claims, until their own rights were invaded; and that those claims were less the result of wanton aggression, than of just defence or fair retaliation. The feudal system, which then pervaded society, was incorporated with the ecclesiastical jurisprudence of the times. Benefices, a word familiar to the canon law of the middle ages, and now in universal use,† was unknown in the early ages of the Church. It is a word of barbaric origin, expressing ecclesiastical revenues, but, like every civil tenure, subject to certain conditions of fealty and actual service. Those feudal possessions were gradually annexed to the episcopacy; and their proprietors had therefore the twofold relations of bishops and temporal vassals. The right of investing them with their temporal hereditaments,

\* "Combien compte-t-on de souverains héréditaires effectivement déposés par les papes? Tout se réduisait à des menaces et à des transactions. Quant aux princes électifs, c'étaient des créatures humaines qu'on pouvait bien défaire puisqu'on les avait faites; et cependant, tout se réduit à deux ou trois princes forcenés, qui, pour le bonheur du genre humain, trouvèrent un frein (faible même et très-insuffisant) dans la puissance spirituelle du pape."—Le Maistre, lib. ii., cap. v. p. 236.

† Institut. jur. Can. a Cavallario, tom. iv., cap. 43

belonged, of course, to the secular authority. As the appointment of persons of such ample possessions and powerful influence must have been considered by the emperors a desirable object, hence, an easy transition from temporal investiture to ecclesiastical institution. This encroachment on the spiritual authority, on the part of the emperors of Germany, naturally awakened the zeal of the Roman pontiffs. The scandalous barter of ecclesiastical benefices, and the flagrant simony which infected a great portion of the clergy, were crying abuses which followed in the train of the secular power, and which loudly demanded the vigorous interposition of the popes. Their spiritual interference was ineffectual, their remonstrances were disregarded; and it was only when every expedient of mildness and persuasion was exhausted in vain, that they had recourse to the terrible engine of opposing to the exorbitant claims of the emperors, the equally exorbitant pretensions of hurling them from their thrones.\*

The reader will find the justness of these remarks exemplified, by a reference to the celebrated quarrel between Gregory the Seventh and Henry the Fourth, emperor of Germany. Gregory was the first that resorted to the expedient of releasing subjects from their civil allegiance;† and of all the Roman pontiffs, there is none against whom Protestant writers have declaimed with more severity. Yet, the crimes and obstinacy of Henry, together with the deplorable degradation of religion in Germany, may afford, in the judgment of the candid, a sufficient apology for the conduct of Gregory.‡ Licentious, rapacious, and tyrannical, the vices of the emperor were no less fatal to the happiness of the state than to the interests of religion. His profligacy violated every restraint of nature and decorum;

\* See Maimbourg *Histoire de la Décadence de la l'Empire apres Charlemagne*, Liv. iii.

† “*Lego et relego Romanorum Regum et Imperatorum gesta, et nusquam invenio quemquam eorum . . . regno privatum,*” &c.—Otto Frisingens, lib. vi., cap. 35.

‡ See Baron. *Annal. Ecclesiast.* ad an. 1074, 1075.

and in the distribution of ecclesiastical honours, the ministers of his pleasures were the objects of his preferment. The freedom of the Church was oppressed by his tyranny; and the dignity of religion was degraded, while its holy functions were profanely entrusted to persons infamous for concubinage and simony.\*

The lofty spirit of St. Gregory was moved with a holy indignation, on seeing the house of God converted into a place of money changers. He first had recourse to persuasion and remonstrance; but the evil, instead of being eradicated, only ripened into a deadlier inveteracy. In the hope of bending the obstinacy of Henry, he deputed to him some of the most eminent prelates of the Roman Church; whose influence was seconded by the interposition of Agnes, the mother of the emperor.† The monarch dissembled for a time; but instead of consenting to the abolition of the abuses of which the pope complained, he assembled, at Worms, a schismatical council to oppose his authority.‡ Finding that persuasion was ineffectual, Gregory resorted to the sentence of excommunication.§ The emperor was soon deserted by a number of his friends; and, in the fear of forfeiting the affections of his subjects, swore to fulfil the conditions required by the pope, in order to obtain reconciliation. Reconciliation was accordingly obtained||—the royal promises were forgotten; and, to use the language of a cotemporary historian, all the obligations by which the emperor had bound himself, were as easily dissolved as the labours of a spider. Fatigued by the repeated promises of Henry, which he had as repeatedly violated, and despairing of any lasting peace, the electors of Germany raised Rodolph, duke of Suabia, to the throne, and plunged the empire into civil war.¶ As yet the pope

\* See Maimbourg, cited in note, p. 320.

† Bar. An. Eccles. ad an. 1076.

‡ See the Acts in Labbe, tom. x. Conciliab. Wormatiens. an. 1076.

§ Greg. VII., Epist. lib. iii. ep. vi.

|| Baron. An. Eccles. ad an. 1077.

¶ Otto Frisengens, lib. vi. cap. 35.

had delayed to hurl the sentence of deposition against the emperor. He hoped that time might work a salutary change in the royal mind; and that, without any injury to his crown, the interests of religion might be amicably adjusted. But his hopes were disappointed. Time, instead of appeasing the anger of Henry, afforded him an opportunity of inflicting farther injuries on the Church. Fresh complaints were preferred against him: that he banished those prelates who were zealous for the purity of discipline; that he had detained some in prison, and put to death the archbishop of Magdeburg; that he filled Germany with blood and rapine, and violated the temples of religion.\* Unable to subdue the obstinacy of a prince who had slighted every overture of accommodation, and anxious to rescue religion from the yoke which oppressed it, Gregory, at length, hurled against the emperor the sentence of deposition, declaring that, by his crimes and prevarication, he had forfeited his right to his crown and the allegiance of his subjects.†

Such is the simple historical account of this celebrated quarrel, which has been since the incessant theme of mutual recrimination. Though the pretensions of Gregory may be now resigned, by the most zealous Catholic, yet the impartial reader, whatever may be his religious feeling, may be induced to absolve, perhaps applaud, the motive that swayed the Roman pontiff.‡ The genuine records of the eleventh century present us with a frightful picture of the state of reli-

\* De Berault Bercastel. Hist. d'Eglise, lib. xxxiii.

† Baron. Annal. Ecclesiast. ad an. 1080.

‡ “Se ai tempi di S. Gregorio fosse vissuto un qualche papa dell' antica Chiesa, avrebbe forse usato piu mansuetudine e circospezione nell' uso delle censure?”—Il bon uso della logica in materia di Religione del Canonico Alfonso Muzzarelli, tom. ix., p. 144; Firenze, 1823.

See the entire of the article entitled “Gregorio VII.,” in which, with copious references to the acts and letters of the holy pontiff, and a cogency of reasoning illustrative of the just title of the work, the learned theologian satisfactorily vindicates the character and conduct of one of the greatest popes that ever governed the Catholic Church. Its perusal must leave on every unprejudiced mind the impression so well expressed in his own words: “Che un lume superiore governava e diregeva la prudenza del Santo Pontefice e che percio con troppa presunzione si attacca la sua stima tante secoli dopo da alcuni piccioli uomini de gabinetto.”—Page 129.

gion in Germany. Benefices were set up to sale, without any regard to the merits of the candidates; and the consequence of this scandalous simony was, that ignorance and licentiousness followed in its train.\* Amidst such profligacy and profanation, the ministers of religion were degraded: nor was it to be expected that they could have had much influence in enforcing the counsels of the Gospel, while the bishop of Constance allowed his clergy to keep wives, or rather concubines, in defiance of the canons of the Church. The reader may be shocked at the recital of such scandals, but it is only by at least glancing at them, that he will be able to form an impartial judgment of the character of Gregory.

As supreme head of the Church, it was the duty of the Roman pontiff to watch over the integrity of its faith, and to enforce the observance of its discipline. The wholesome laws which had been passed to preserve the sanctity of marriage, were disregarded by many of the European princes; and the canons of the Church requiring the celibacy of the clergy, were, in many instances, shamefully violated.† To check those abuses required all the vigour and energy of the popes. In vindicating the laws of marriage, they were not only actuated by a zeal for the holiness of that rite, but likewise influenced by a regard for the peace of Europe, which would have been perpetually exposed by the recurrence of doubtful claims, which the practice of divorce would have generated.‡ In enforcing the laws of celibacy, they were watching over the purity of religion, which loses its majesty when coming in contact with a married priesthood.§ Without the

\* Baron. *Annal. Ecclesiast.* ad an. 1075.

† See Baronius, ad an. 1074. Voltaire himself confesses that "Il résulte de toute l'histoire de ces temps là, que la société avait peu de règles certaines chez les nations occidentales; que les états avaient peu de lois, et que l'Eglise vouloit leur en donner."—*Essai sur l'Hist. Gen.* tom. i., cap. xxx.

‡ "Les mariages des rois sont autre chose que des actes de famille: ce sont, et c'étaient surtout alors (the times of which we are treating), des traités politiques qu'on ne peut changer sans donner les plus grandes secousses aux états dont ils ont réglé le sort."—*Lettres sur l'Histoire*, tom. ii., let. 46.

§ See the candid opinions expressed on this subject in reference to the clergy

popé's interference these two objects could never have been obtained. A clergy who were the creatures of his will, could never have opposed a sufficient barrier to the passions of their sovereign; nor could he feel much zeal in reforming a clergy whose vices would be the fittest instruments in extending the indulgence of his own. Such was, exactly, the mutual influence of those evils in propagating each other, when Gregory opposed himself to the tide of immorality that threatened to inundate the Church. Protected by a prince who felt an interest in their degeneracy, Gregory could not reform the German clergy without coming in contact with the passions and the power of Henry. The one was as anxious to hold his dominion, as the other was to rescue religion from bondage. Hence, a powerful struggle between vice and passion on the one hand, and zeal and virtue on the other; and if, in the heat of this mighty contest, Gregory was hurried beyond the legitimate boundaries of his authority, it must be confessed that his errors lean towards the side of religion and virtue.\*

To instance the other examples which history has recorded, would require a detail of circumstances more adapted to the nature of an historical work, than to a comprehensive view of the Catholic Church. Let it suffice, that in the contests of the popes with the princes of Europe, it will be discovered that the purity of religion, rather than political ambition, generally influenced their councils. Fortunately for the interests of Christianity, its ministers were supported by the authority of the Roman pontiff. Without it, the ma-

of the Church of England, by Dr. W. King, in his *Political and Literary Anecdotes of his own times*. The question of the celibacy of the clergy is treated with great dignity and feeling, by *Le Maistre du pape*, lib. iii., cap. iii.

\* Fleury, who cannot be reproached with flattering the failings of popes, writes of him: "Ce Pape, né avec un grand courage, et élevé dans la discipline monastique la plus régulière, avait un zèle ardent de purger l'Eglise des vices dont il la voyait infectée, particulièrement de la simonie et de l'incontinence du clergé."—*Disc. iii.*, n. 17. A cotemporary German historian, quoted by Maimbourg (*Décad. de l'Empire*, an. 1074) gives the character of Gregory in these words: "Virum sacris litteris eruditissimum et omnium virtutum genere celeberrimum."

jesty of the priesthood would have sunk under the overwhelming torrent of corruption.\* There is no example of a national hierarchy having preserved its apostolic dignity and independence when once deprived of the aid of the successors of St. Peter. This connexion with the holy see and the consciousness of the protection which it afforded, infused into the priesthood of every country a lofty spirit, which preserved it from the infection with which its contact with courts and kings would have tainted it. The independence of the clergy afforded a counterpoise against the evils of despotism; and it is to their influence the people were indebted for whatever of liberty they enjoyed. These blessings, however, flowed from the source of the pope's authority, which, by pervading all Christendom, mingled itself with all its institutions, renovating, by its informing spirit, the decaying vigour of religion. Protestant writers dwell, with an invidious complacency, on the abuses which found their way into the Church before the period of their supposed reformation. If their complaints be suggested by a zeal for piety, it is a matter of just surprise that they inveigh with such warmth against a pope who zealously laboured to eradicate those evils. Gregory was one of the most zealous reformers that the Church ever witnessed, and, had his labours been seconded, Luther would not have been supplied with such topics of reproach against the lives of ecclesiastics. To rescue the clergy from the contempt into which their vices had brought them; to restore the relaxed discipline of the Church; and to mitigate the rigours of a cruel and oppressive despotism, by confining princes to the limits of their secular jurisdiction, were the laudable projects in which he was engaged. Had he been less zealous for the public good, he might have more effectually consulted for his own ease and safety. But in the magnitude of the trust with which he was invested, personal

\* "Le St. Siège seul put s'opposer au torrent et mettre au moins l'église en état d'attendre, sans une subversion totale, la réforme qui devait s'opérer dans les siècles suivans."—Le Maître du Pape, lib. ii. cap. vii.

considerations disappeared from his view;\* and it is not a little surprising, that a reformer who was the inexorable enemy of vice in every shape, should have provoked the implacable enmity of the admirers of the Reformation.

Though in their contests with some of the princes of Europe the popes were chiefly influenced by a zeal for religion, yet there was a peculiarity in their relations with the emperors of Germany which partook of political considerations. From the coronation of Charlemagne, at Rome, the Roman people transferred to his descendants the allegiance which they voluntarily proffered to him. But when the sceptre passed from his feeble successors to a strange family in Germany, the Romans thought themselves released from any obligations of fealty to a house whose title they never acknowledged. The German princes undertook to enforce their pretensions by arms, while they were deemed by the Italians as invaders of their country.

The cruelties which were inflicted on Italy during these expeditions, especially by Frederic Barbarossa, who razed Milan to the ground, inspired the Italians with an unconquerable aversion to the foreign yoke.† The popes, with a patriotism worthy the early ages of the republic, and which, had they been any other than popes, would have awakened the admiration of Protestant writers, laboured to free their country from the rule of the barbarians. The indignities which they endured from the capricious cruelty of those princes fully justified their love of independence. Not content with the exercise of political power beyond the Alps, the emperors of Germany assumed a control over the election of the Roman Pontiffs. Hence the frequency of those ecclesiastical dissensions by which Rome was shaken, from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries; and hence the occasional instances of persons forcibly seated on the pontifical throne whose vices dishonoured the sanctity of their station. Hence, too, the

\* See Denina *Revoluzioni della Germania*, tom. ii. cap. v.

† Voltaire admits that the cruelties practised in the ruin of this city more than justified all the opposition of the popes to the sway of the German emperors.—*Essai sur l'Hist. Gen.* tom. ii. cap. lxi.

angry and protracted struggle between the Church and Empire, as it is called, which forms one of the most interesting topics in the history of that period. Two celebrated parties, known by the names of Guelphs and Gibelins attached themselves to either cause.\* The Colonna, under the appellation of Gibelins, espoused the quarrel of the emperors. The Ursini, under the name of Guelphs, were the champions of the liberties of Italy and of the Church. By an illusion not uncommon in history, which connects effects with causes which are in reality only pretexts in the hands of the designing, writers ascribe to the Church those wars which were waged for political purposes. By the specious names of the Church or the Empire, did these celebrated factions strive to disguise their hereditary feuds ; but though the keys and eagle were their symbols, religion was often but the pretext, revenge was not unfrequently the motive, of their quarrels.

Between these rival factions it frequently happened that the liberties of the Church were equally oppressed. In the alternations of defeat or victory which fluctuated between their adverse banners, the independence of the popes was equally disregarded ; and the freedom of their election was either invaded by popular violence or oppressed by imperial despotism. The vices of some of the pontiffs who then sat on the chair of St. Peter are made subjects of reproach by writers hostile to the Catholic Church. The examples would have been more frequent, had it not been for the vigour and virtues of some popes, who, blushing for the shame of their predecessors, laboured to shake off that foreign yoke which was the cause of those scandals which the Church could not control. Liberty, so highly prized for its happy influence on civil life, is not less propitious to the growth of virtue in the Church. To arraign, then, those pontiffs who were chiefly

\* Spond. Contin. An. Ecclesiast. Baron. an. 1228. "Trassero queste due diaboliche fazioni la loro origine dalla Germania, come già feci vedere," &c. Muratori Dissert. sop. le Antich. Ital.—Dissert. li.

instrumental in establishing the reign of both, may be said to betray a secret partiality for vice and despotism. While liberty and virtue, then, are held in estimation, those popes must be entitled to the gratitude of mankind, who, finding the Church enslaved by vice and tyranny, rose in their might, and, like the strong infant mentioned in ancient story, strangled the opposite factions that threatened to annihilate all its energies.

Perhaps it may appear to some that my reflections on the temporal authority of the popes have been extended to a disproportionate length. But my best apology is the novelty as well as the necessity of such a view to Protestant readers. It is difficult to peruse any of our celebrated English historians without imbibing strong prejudices against the papal authority. The bishops of Rome have been generally represented by them as ambitious individuals, who frequently disturbed the repose of Europe to extend their own authority. However, one circumstance is industriously concealed, that many of the princes of those times *voluntarily* put their kingdoms under the protection of the holy see, in order to secure them against usurpation. When, therefore, the popes interfered, it was less in the character of supreme temporal sovereigns than as guardians, to whom an important trust had been voluntarily confided.

Besides, in the impressions which generally prevailed of a deposing power in the pope, there is one feature which draws them into close alliance with the doctrines of some modern writers. It is an opinion received among Protestants, and sanctioned by the authority of Locke, that sovereigns hold their crowns in trust for the good of the people—a trust which, if abused, it is in their power to recall. That their authority is a trust for the good of the people is a doctrine in which Catholics, too, willingly acquiesce. But, with regard to the tribunal to which those who abuse power are accountable for their misdeeds; and who it is that may lawfully exercise vengeance, there is a wide diversity of opinion. At all events, experience teaches one

certain truth which no opinion can control, that tyrants always have reason to dread the forfeiture of their power. There must be necessarily some control on the exercise of arbitrary sway; and those who will not place it in clemency and justice, will, in spite of the lessons of moralists and divines, find it in the mutinous breasts of their subjects. Religion will never cease to condemn the introduction of crime to check the excesses of government. But where religion abandons the throne, it likewise abandons the breast of the subject; and the iron sceptre of a Mahometan Sultan is generally seized by the hand of an assassin.\* According, then, to the tenor of its religion, or the temper of its people, there will be found in every country some counterpoise against the evils of despotic government. This counterpoise will, in different nations, be found in the spirit of religion, or the dictates of self-interest, or the force of established custom, or the obligations of some compact, or in the fear of the dagger; but in all, it will manifest itself in a milder or more terrific form. In the Middle Ages, when the science of legislation was but imperfectly understood, it was found in the mediation which the sovereign pontiff practised between princes and their subjects. In modern times, it is found in the more liberal system of policy that pervades the European states, and in the influence of public opinion.

In some kingdoms of Europe, monarchs are perpetually reminded of the convention by which they hold their throne; and the people are flattered by sentiments expressive of their own supremacy. In this theory there may be such a violation of a compact on the one hand as to sunder the obligation of fealty on the other; and tyranny may be so rigorously exercised as to release subjects from their allegiance. If

\* Louis the Fourteenth, a magnificent and absolute prince, is reported to have one day said, in the presence of his courtiers, "Je ne vois pas de plus beau gouvernement que celui du Sophi"; to which the Marshal d'Estrées replied, with equal dignity and courage, "Mais, sire, j'en ai vu étrangler trois dans ma vie."

so, and I am only stating an opinion which Protestants hold,\* it would be desirable to ascertain in some measure the extent of suffering or oppression which might justify the change of masters. He who would undertake the decision of such a question would not, surely, be assuming the right of disposing of the sovereign authority. He would be only endeavouring to ascertain the circumstances in which acknowledged principles might have their legitimate application. The lust of power natural to man might blind sovereigns to their own misgovernment: the jealousy of the people might tempt them to imagine that their rights were invaded to such a degree as to forfeit their obedience. Were the decision of so complex a question to be left to some arbiter, remote from the influence and passions of the contending parties, and equally revered for his virtue and his wisdom, a nation might be spared the effusion of blood and the shock of revolution. Singular as it may appear, the solution which the doctrines of Protestants afford for this difficulty, differs but little from the ancient opinion of the deposing power, by which they are alarmed. When titles were insecure, when power was despotic, and subjects alternately slaves or rebels, a sort of virtual compromise between the parties was the result; and they imagined they could not better provide for their mutual safety than by confiding their claims and quarrels to the disinterested arbitration of the common father of the Christian world.† I am not the advocate of either opinion, I am only showing that the notions which then prevailed are not so remote from those of some moderns as is

\* See Paley Prin. of Mor. Phil. book vi. cap. iii.

Addison, notwithstanding the prejudices of his country and religion, draws a favourable character of the Roman pontiff. "Their prince (the pope) is generally a man of learning and virtue, matured in years and experience, who has seldom any vanity or pleasure to gratify at his people's expense, and is neither encumbered with wife, children, nor mistresses; not to mention the supposed sanctity of his character, which obliges him, in a more particular manner, to consult the good and happiness of mankind." Remarks on Italy. Addison's Works, vol. v., p. 219, Tickell's edition.

generally supposed. There is an affinity in principle between them, concealed, however, from common observation by reason of the different mediums through which they are viewed. It might have been an erroneous notion that the pope could decide on the tyranny which released subjects from their allegiance. It may be an erroneous notion that subjects can declare when they themselves are freed from the like obligation. These abstract opinions I shall freely abandon to their respective partizans: insisting, however, that those who formerly admitted in the mediation of the Roman pontiff a safeguard between the tyranny of despots and the rights of the people, cannot be arraigned with much consistency by the foes of arbitrary power and the apologists of revolution.

To compress into a narrow compass some of the principal reflections that have been spread over this chapter, the spiritual and temporal authorities of the pope are altogether of a distinct nature. The one is founded on the doctrine of the Catholic Church which no revolution can alter; the other has shared all the vicissitudes of human opinion. The one has been derived from a divine source which no human power can alienate; the other has gradually yielded to the same human influence from which it rose. The person who would form an equitable judgment of the pontiffs, by whom the temporal authority was exercised, should take an ample review of the whole structure of society at that time. Men, in different stages of civilization, are not fitted for the same regulations; and political notions, which might be pernicious in one age, might have a beneficial tendency in another. We may applaud the enlightened principles of legislation which now prevail. They are, however, the wise accumulation of experience and of time, and could not be gathered at an earlier period. Estimating the inconvenience of any system, we should not forget its advantages; and the laws of justice would require that, while the evil effects of the vast authority once possessed by the popes are carefully detailed, they

should be balanced against the good of which it was undoubtedly productive.

To the exertions of the Roman pontiffs, the most enlightened nations of Europe are chiefly indebted for their conversion to the Christian faith. The extensive influence which they possessed enabled them to protect those religious communities which preserved, amidst ignorance and war, the ancient relics of literature and civilisation.\* Those who interfered most in the political affairs of Europe had generally for object the preservation of peace and morality, against the incessant inroads of turbulence and licentiousness. When their political power was at its height, it was pointed against the enemies of Christendom; and became a centre round which the distracted chieftains of Europe rallied to defend their liberties and their religion, against a barbarous and demoralising despotism. Whatever may be the variety of opinions on the policy of the holy wars, it will scarcely be controverted that they were instrumental in saving Europe from the Mahometan yoke. It required a mighty influence to rouse the nations to a sense of the dangers that menaced them, and to sustain that enthusiasm which soon evaporates after experiencing disasters. That influence was found in the authority of the Roman pontiff, which was the soul that animated those armaments through so many expeditions. Benefits are seldom sufficiently valued but by their privation: and whoever dispassionately contrasts the glory and happiness of Europe with the degraded condition of the East, will not fail to acknowledge that we are chiefly indebted to the Roman pontiffs that the cross has not been supplanted by the crescent; that polygamy and despotism have not been substituted for the blessings of our liberties and our religion.

\* Infidels themselves join in this acknowledgment. The learned reader need not be reminded of the judgment of Gibbon.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE NOTES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The Catholic Church marked by the profession of determinate doctrines.—The dogmatical spirit of the first Reformers.—Its termination in religious indifference.—The mutual indulgence of errors, the natural consequence of their hostility to truth.—The distinction between essentials and non-essentials, not only fanciful, but subversive of the interests of truth and virtue.—The Church of Christ characterised by the visible and palpable notes: Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity.—Its Unity inconsistent with heresy or schism.—Its Sanctity, illustrated by the holiness of its doctrines and institutions, as well as by its influence on the lives of its professors.—Its Catholicity, in the wide diffusion of its empire.—Its Apostolicity, not only in the validity of the orders of its priesthood, but in the legitimate and continuous succession of its hierarchy.

To exhibit the train of evidence which preceded and attended the establishment of the Church, as well as the authority with which it is invested, has been the object of the preceding chapters. In them the reader has been led through a series of ancient prophecy, which announced the splendours of the Christian Church, and has been enabled to view the miraculous wonders to which it owed its origin. Destined for immortality, it must have had some conservative principles to perpetuate its existence, and secure it against those shocks of time or revolution, to which all human empires at length became victims. He has been, therefore, brought to examine the nature of its constitution, and discovered a sure pledge of its perpetuity, as well in the promises of its founder, as in the wisdom of the form of government which he adopted.

In the view which has been already placed before the reader, there is, if he is satisfied of its correctness, much to persuade him of the truth of the Catholic religion. In the splendours of its hierarchy, the apostolical succession of its bishops, and the supremacy of

the Roman pontiff connected with that of Peter, and uniformly acknowledged in every age, he may perceive that the Catholic Church is nothing else but primitive Christianity, perpetuated through a visible and hereditary succession. However, after thus viewing some of the leading features of its character, he may not be sufficiently convinced of the true likeness which arises from their connexion with others which he has not yet contemplated. It is not sufficient to exhibit some solitary marks which the inquirer after truth may, perhaps, imagine he can discover in other Churches. Thus, as episcopacy is claimed by the Church of England as well as the Christian Churches of the universe in communion with Rome, this point of resemblance to the Catholic Church might, perchance, satisfy and deceive a superficial observer. The preceding pages, in which the Church has been discussed, have been devoted not only to the vindication of truth, but also to the removal of deep and ancient prejudices. Some of its marks have not been as yet introduced, and the force of others may have been less felt in the necessity in which I was placed of directing a large portion of my attention to the removal of the misrepresentations that have been heaped upon them. I have reserved for this chapter the grateful task of condensing its chief evidence, and showing, by its striking contrast with other churches, that it is the Catholic Church alone, in communion with the bishop of Rome, that still can claim the name of spouse, so expressive of its indissoluble union with Christ.

As the Christian Church is nothing else than the Christian religion, professed by some human society, it may be termed *a society of believers in the genuine doctrines of Christianity*. This is an acceptation of the term which cannot be offensive to the pretensions of any Christian, whatever may be his particular creed. There is no exclusive monopoly about such a notion of the true Church of Christ; nor any arrogant appropriation of its privileges to one particular body. With-

out, as yet, determining who are the true believers in the genuine doctrines of Christianity, the words are sufficiently comprehensive to reconcile the most jealous of the sectaries. It cannot, therefore, be asserted that the ground which we choose is too narrow for any others to stand on; since the foundation is sufficiently broad for the claims of all the Christian Churches of the universe.

That Christ has revealed a doctrine, to the belief and practice of which he has annexed salvation, and of which the rejection involves eternal death, is a truth to which all must subscribe who seriously profess the Christian religion. He is the good pastor,\* and the flock that will not hear his voice are in danger of falling into the hands of the hireling, and of being led to drink poisonous waters. He is the door† through which alone one must enter, in order to find admission into the fold. He is the vine‡ on whose stock the branches must be engrafted, in order to retain the vigorous principle of life. If there is, then, any truth clearly laid down in Scripture, it is, that, without the penalty of forfeiting eternal life, no individual can reject the authority of Jesus Christ, nor disbelieve his doctrine. He that has said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,”§ has likewise declared, “He that believeth not shall be condemned.”||

This is a truth which is confessed by all Christian societies. It is retained in the public creeds of the Protestant Churches. Nay, it is written in the more faithful and imperishable records of their own actions; else why assail the Catholic Church with such hostility under the pretence that it had apostatized from the ancient faith? If the speculative doctrine of Christ be a matter of mere indifference, why in the infancy of the Reformation, shake the peace of Europe with such continual discord, that, amidst the collision of

\* John, x.

† John, x.

‡ John, xv.

§ Matt. xix. 17.

¶ Mark, xvi. 16.

opposite systems of faith, charity seemed to have been exiled from the world. By comparing the sentiments of the first Protestants with those that are now put forward by their descendants, we perceive that a revolution has been effected in their opinions; and that the stern scruples which would enter into no compromise with doctrines which were considered erroneous, have been gradually subdued into the most tranquil indifference. But it is only the indifference of error. Those who are involved in the same guilt must treat each other with a mutual indulgence; yet still, under the insinuating language of liberality and toleration, there lurks the same hostility to truth which has never ceased to characterise the followers of error.

From this hostility to truth springs the amiable uneasiness which is pretended to be felt for the fate of the Mahometan and the Pagan. Companionship in misfortune is an old and poetic source of consolation; and every modern wit who mistakes infidelity for genius, labours to soothe the pangs of his own conscience by sympathising in the afflicting lot of all the unbelievers of the earth. But surely, the thick errors in which some nations may be involved will not justify the wilful rejection of the truth on the part of others who have enjoyed better opportunities of knowing it. It would, therefore, be wiser to consult for our eternal safety by a judicious use of the means with which Providence has furnished us for the investigation of our duties, than petulantly turn away from them, in idle commiseration of the dreary and unequal destiny of those who seem to be excluded from the knowledge of truth and the hope of immortality. No wise man would fling himself from a secure harbour during the storm because he is unable to reconcile it with the merciful providence of God that numbers are perishing in the deep.

Whatever may be the condition of infidel nations, reason itself suggests that they are more entitled to compassion from the Divinity than those who, in the

language of the apostle, detain the truth in injustice.\* To refute the paradoxes of those writers who assert, that religion is the accident of climate or education,† would be to retrace much of the ground over which we have already passed. We should again remind the reader that, far from stupidly acquiescing in the local superstitions of the countries in which they received their birth, those who embraced Christianity resigned all the divinities to which they were fondly devoted, to adopt a religion which had no connexion with their country or its prejudices. To wonder why all do not receive the same truths of revelation is to wonder why all have not the same degree of intellect, or that all are in possession of free will. Men may renounce the blessings of religion in the same way as they plunge into anarchy; and error, dark and gloomy, is as naturally the consequence of their licentiousness, as tyranny is the reward of rebellion. And when a nation once loses its religion, seldom is it restored. The spirit of truth.

\* Rom. i. 18.

† Were the writers who seriously insist that religion is a matter of accident, because man is a Christian in Europe and a Mahometan in Asia, to contrast the meekness and persuasion that accompanied the establishment of the Catholic religion with the violence and persecution by which the Koran has been propagated, they would find that there is but little weight in the observation. Of those who are in error, the lot is left to the Almighty. But if it be insinuated that we ought to renounce truth and virtue, because others are plunged in error and vice, and that God could not suffer such inequality between his creatures; then for the same reason men of superior reason should resign the advantage, to reduce themselves to the level and ignorance of the most imbecile of their fellow-creatures! One nation placed in a climate more propitious to the arts and refinements of life, should strip herself of all the advantages of manners and civilization, lest her superiority over the savage tribes of the wilderness, fix the stain of partiality on the Deity! Another, which had laboriously erected fences for the protection of morals, should break them down, in order that the people, by sharing in the vices, may more sincerely sympathise in the degraded condition of their neighbours! In short, if the Divinity must be deemed partial and unjust because some individuals are placed in worse circumstances than others, then we should do away not only with revealed, but even with natural religion, which all have not equal means of attaining; the distinction between vice and virtue should cease; punishments as well as rewards should disappear; an angelic nature should not enjoy its blessedness whilst it believed that another was in pain! Thus the stripling unbeliever, who takes his lessons of religion from Volney, and weeps with him over the melancholy inequality of the human race, will not be content with his meditations on the ruins of ancient empires: no, his sympathy for human wretchedness shall not cease, till all mankind are consigned to the gloomy equality of impiety crime, anarchy, and annihilation.

outraged in one country, shifts to another in which it is better received, and rarely does it return to the threshold, against which its retiring ministers have shaken off the dust from their feet.\*

If Christ has established a society to which the fruits of his sufferings are confined, he must, in his unbounded zeal for the salvation of the human race, have marked that society with characters, which could not mislead. As all have been invited by our Redeemer into the bosom of his fold, the poor as well as the rich, the illiterate as well as the educated, these characters should be so evident that no one could mistake the door through which it is necessary to enter. They must, therefore, be strong, prominent, and splendid, obvious to all who are interested in knowing them, and such as to be seen by a sort of intuition, rather than to be discovered by slow and painful examination. Among the adverse claimants to the genuine doctrines of Christ there can be only one society in possession of it. It follows, therefore, that the characters of truth must be so peculiar to that society, that the sincere inquirer may not be exposed to mistake or doubt, by discovering them in any other. Marks, therefore, of an ambiguous nature, such as may be found in an heretical society, though they may be properties of the true Church of which it will never be divested, cannot lead to its discovery. The Scriptures, then, the sacraments, the liturgies, and the portion of the Christian doctrine which heretics retain, are common spoils, which may be plundered by the deserters of the Catholic Church, and by the exhibition of which numbers may be seduced to join the standard of revolt. Since then, these may be found in the camps of rebels to the authority of the Church, it is clear that they are not the ensigns to distinguish the

\* To this general rule England is, thanks to the Almighty, becoming an exception. From the quarry of its ancient orthodoxy a pebble is broken in Oxford, which promises to increase and to crush in its progress the empire of error under which that nation has so long groaned.

soldiers of Jesus Christ, unless, indeed, we adopt the modern paradox, of which the absurdity can only be equalled by the effrontery with which it is put forward, that the perusal of the Scriptures is the only discriminating feature that characterises the members of the true Church.

To the minds of those who seriously insist on so extravagant a position, the most opposite opinions must appear to be equally true, and truth and error must differ, not in reality, but in name. With them, it matters little whether one adores the divinity of the Son of God, or accuses his worship of idolatry. Were it probable that the true Church is to be found wherever there are readers of the Bible, it might be said, with equal justice, that the true Church was among the Philistines, when they got possession of the ark; and that they honoured the God of Israel, when they placed his ark and their own idol on the same altar. In either case, the possession of the symbol of God's covenant may only expose it to profanation. If the possession and perusal of the Scriptures be the only mark of the true Church, the commands of Christ to yield to any other authority must be vain and nugatory. In such a religious theory, the words: "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican,"\* can have no distinct import or application. Every assumption of spiritual authority, exercised by any society, is despotic; disobedience is impossible, unless a man disobey himself; and "to avoid a heretic,"† must have been a superfluous caution, since a heretic, in the modern system, is an imaginary phantom.

In vain shall we be referred to the famous distinction between *essentials* and *non-essentials*, to mark the boundaries of the true Church. Those, we are told, who err on essential points, are outside the pale of the true Church, and of salvation; while those whose errors

\* Matt. xviii, 17.

† Tit. iii, 10.

are not essential, remain within the boundaries of both. A distinction, which involves consequences no less important than the interests of salvation, should have been clearly defined. The mark which separates the society of true believers from all others, should be visible to all. Yet, in spite of all the labours of Jurieu, and of all those who have followed him in the same inquiry, and though a century and a half have elapsed since it was first sought, the nice and attenuated line that separates the essential dogmas of Christianity from essential error has yet eluded discovery.\* Were we to expect precise notions on this point, it should be particularly from him who framed the distinction. According to Jurieu, those are essential errors which dishonour the divine nature, endanger man's happiness, and are opposed to the unanimous consent of all Christians in every age. How vague and undefinable, after all, is the boasted creed of Jurieu, which promises to discriminate between essential truth and error! Until men are agreed as to the errors which dishonour the divine nature, or affect man's happiness, it is in vain to attempt to fix the boundaries between essentials and non-essentials. Yet however broad his principles, they were still too narrow for the growing indifference of Protestants; and the more philosophical minds of Locke and Chillingworth would fain reduce all that is necessary for a saving or justifying faith to the simple and solitary article, that Christ was the Messiah.†

\* To every assertor of the doctrine of essentials and non-essentials, we may justly address the words of Locke: "Who made him a judge or divider between them? who gave him the power over the oracles of God, to set up one and debase another at his pleasure? some, as he thinks fit, are the choicest truths: and what, I beseech him, are the other? who made him a chooser, where nobody can pick and choose?"—Second Vindication of the Reason. of Christian. Works, vol. ii., p. 638.

† Locke's Reason. of Christian. Works, vol. ii. p. 516. Locke, it is true, was much incensed at the charge, that he narrowed Christianity to this solitary point; and labours, in his first and second Vindications, to repel the imputation of Socinianism. Yet his defence rests on the principle, which is the only one tenable by Protestants, *that no one* is obliged to believe any article whatever, but as it appears to his own understanding, clear from the Scriptures. See his Second Vindication, p. 640; and his Definition of a Christian, p. 637.

Here these philosophers thought they could take a firm position. This single article, they fancied, would form a true criterion of the essential creed, and a common centre for the union of all Christians. Yet their expectations were illusive. Although Locke might assume a dictatorship in philosophy, his test of religious orthodoxy was but little calculated to distinguish truth from error. The solitary article into which he laboured to simplify the sum of the Christian's belief, is still so complex in its nature as to expand into a most prolific source of disagreement on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is not, surely, a matter of little importance to the Christian, whether he is to believe that Christ is a mere creature, gifted by the Almighty with the most extraordinary graces, or the partner of his divine nature, and entitled to divine homage. Yet this article, on which opinions vary into these wide extremes, Locke would render the rallying point of Christian orthodoxy. The belief in Christ's redemption does not necessarily exclude errors of the most serious nature, since the Socinian, who denies his divinity, yet freely professes that Christ is the Redeemer. When Jurieu wrote, he was supposed to have enlarged the pale of the Church, to an extent which would gratify the boldest latitude of opinion. But since his time, his system has been so improved or disfigured by the zeal and ingenuity of its votaries, that the inventor himself might now pass for a bigot, and his principles would be characterized as intolerant by the licentiousness of the present age.

From the failure of the labours of Locke and Jurieu to describe the line between essentials and non-essentials, and from the variety of opinion that still distracts the followers of the system, we may conclude that their exact limits are undiscoverable; or rather, indeed, they may be said to have been discovered by all, since all are made judges of what is essential in religion. None will, therefore, be so foolish as to shut himself out from the pale of the true Church, while he can extend

its boundaries according to the measure of his judgment or his feelings. One, it is true, may behold a mote in his neighbour's faith, while a beam would not obscure the purity of his own. It is in vain, then, to accuse any individual of having violated the essentials of Christianity, whilst himself is the judge. We cannot, therefore, be surprised at the various and ludicrous exhibitions of folly which this system has presented. The distinction has proved but a feeble fence against the progress of error, nor has it been less fatal in its consequences, than fanciful in its conception. By enlarging the precincts of faith, it has loosened the foundations of morality. If the understanding claims the privilege of rejecting the dogmas which it cannot comprehend, the heart will not be less mutinous under those precepts which are repugnant to its feelings. Let us suppose the doctrine, that justification is never forfeited, is not ranked among the errors that destroy the essentials of Christianity, then every fanatical profligate may belong to the Church, and be assured of his salvation. Let an individual but once erase the belief of hell's torments out of his creed, mortal guilt will instantly lose all its horror. Thus the limit which Jurieu set to the true Church, having no defined position, will be extended or contracted according to the capricious alternations of opinion; and migratory as the god Terminus among the Romans, will recede at the approach of every error, until truth shall not find a single refuge to shelter herself against the overwhelming influence of irreligion and of crime.

A system, which has thus reduced morality into mere sentiment, and converted Christianity into a problem, can never determine the limits of the true Church. The advocates of the uncontrolled licence of interpreting the Scripture, may gravely say that those essential truths are contained in the inspired writings. If so, are they not still so mingled with errors in the commentaries of those writers, that you might as well attempt to extract light and order out

of the primitive chaos, as endeavour to learn those truths from their discordant systems. In presenting, therefore, the Gospel to all, they may be casting pearls before swine: whilst to the Christian religion in the custody of the Catholic Church, which guards it from profanation, we may justly apply the language of the Psalmist: "O God of Hosts, . . . Thou hast brought a vineyard out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the Gentiles and planted it. Thou wast the guide of its journey: thou plantedst the roots thereof; and it filled the land. The shadow of it covered the hills, and the branches thereof the cedars of God. It stretched forth its branches unto the sea, and its boughs unto the river."\* And the subsequent part of the same Psalm appears equally to characterize the advocates of the licentious system, which throws open the Church to the influx of all the sectaries, who, after laying waste its enclosures, rifle all its richness, and scatter its sweetness to the wind. "Why hast thou broken down the hedge thereof, so that all they who pass by the way do pluck it. The boar out of the wood hath laid it waste; and a singular wild beast hath devoured it. Turn again, O God of Hosts; look down from heaven and see, and visit thy vineyard."†

To shape my arguments to the reigning errors of the times, I have dwelt at some length on this modern paradox of essentials, in order to show how delusive are its principles, and how dangerous its consequences. As this distinction, as undefinable as it is arbitrary, upholds and justifies the most opposite sectaries, it can never lead to a knowledge of that Church, whose characters must be peculiar and incommunicable, such as no force can wrest from her, and no imposture can ever assume. Concerning the number of marks of the Church, there may be an apparent discordance of opinion. But the seeming disagreement arises from confounding those properties of the true Church, which are transferable to false conventicles, with those distinguishing marks which

\* Psalm lxxix.

† Psalm lxxix. 13. et seq. 1.

belong to her alone. Of the former there are many, such as the possession of the inspired writings, the administration of the Sacraments, and the existence of a priesthood validly ordained. Though the true Church can never be divested of those properties, they may still be found among heretics or schismatics, and are, therefore, only marks of an ambiguous nature. Thus the Greeks preserve a hierarchy whose members are validly ordained: the Protestants retain some of the sacraments; and the Scriptures are in the possession of the Unitarians and Socinians; whence we are to conclude that properties, which are communicable to such various and erroneous systems, can never form the discriminating features of truth. Of marks of this nature the number is indefinite, and may be extended or contracted according to the ingenuity of different writers.

But amidst much apparent discrepancy concerning these secondary properties, there is an unanimous agreement on the great characters by which the true Church is exclusively distinguished. These are unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity, contained in the Apostles' Creed—the common religious symbol of all Christians, and explicitly set down in the confession of faith of the Nicene fathers. They are also frequently found in Scripture, and have furnished the fathers of the Church with the most forcible arguments against the heretics and schismatics of their times.

The unity that should connect the different members of Christ's Church is characterised by Christ and his apostles in the most forcible figures of human language. The faithful are compared by our Redeemer to a flock enclosed within the same fold, who enter by the same door, and are obedient to the same pastor. "He that entereth in by the door (of the sheepfold) is the shepherd of the sheep, to whom the porter openeth: and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he hath led out his own sheep, he goeth before them: and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice.

But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. I am the door," continues our Redeemer, "if anyone enter in by me, he shall be saved: and he shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures."\* From this parable, it appears, that the followers of Christ are no less distinguished than the sheep of the same fold, by obedience to one common authority. If, by that authority, we were to understand only the law of Christ interpreted according to each one's caprices, it would follow, that all who bear the Christian name, and affect subjection to our Redeemer, are included within the boundaries of his spiritual fold. But to show that the mere profession of the Christian name is not a proof of subjection to the Christian pastor, our Redeemer himself thus cautions us in another place: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."† The clothing of sheep, which is assumed by the ravenous wolves, shows that under the guise of reverence for the great pastor of the Christian fold, there may lurk an unmitigable aversion to his authority.

To exemplify the closeness of the union by which Christians are linked together, St. Paul reminds them that there is but "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."‡ That this is not a mere nominal, but a real and substantial union, the apostle shows by likening it to the sympathy that connects, through the medium of a common head, the different members of the human frame. "For as the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body; so also is Christ. For in one spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and in one spirit we have all been made to drink: for the body also is not one member, but many."§ This familiar metaphor of the human body, composed

\* John, x.

‡ Eph. iv. 4, 5.

† Matt. vii. 15.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 14.

of a variety of members, yet united by the influence of a common spirit, is minutely dwelt on by the apostle, in order to impress the important lesson of unity on the Christians of his time.

The sanctity of the Church is announced by the prophets of the Old, and celebrated by the apostles of the New Testament. The Church is thus personified by Isaias: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation: and with the robe of justice he hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth her seed to shoot forth: so shall the Lord God make justice to spring forth, and praise, before all the nations."\* And St. Paul, in similar language, exhibits her as "a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle. . . . holy and without blemish,"† purchased by Jesus Christ, and purified in the blood of his redemption. To guard, however, against misconception, these passages are rather applicable to the aggregate society of the Church than to all the individuals of which it is composed. In their full and unqualified extent, they represent the Church triumphant, purged from every stain: while the Church militant may be compared to the net sinking under the indiscriminate draught of clean and unclean fishes, yet in spite of the partial impurity of the burden, destined to be brought to the shore.‡

Were I to detail the proofs of the Catholicity of the Church, I should cite numberless passages from the inspired writings. To this character are applicable all the testimonies of the ancient prophets, transcribed in the preceding chapters, which predict the reign of the Messiah, and the conversion of the Gentiles. Isaias thus describes the extent of her dominion:—"The Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about

\* Isaias, lxi. 10, 11.

† Ephes. v. 27.

‡ Matt. xiii. 47, 48

and see; all these are gathered together, they are come to thee; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee. . . . The children of them that afflict thee shall come bowing down to thee, and all that slandered thee shall worship the steps of thy feet, and shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Sion of the holy one of Israel. . . . And thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and thou shalt be nursed with the breasts of kings. . . . And thy people shall be all just, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hand to glorify me. The least shall become a thousand, and a little one a most strong nation.”\*

In this passage we behold a striking picture, not only of the extent of the Church, but also of the permanence of its reign, as well as of the sanctity with which its members shall be clothed, until it finally reposes where, in the language of the same prophet, “the Lord shall be to it an everlasting light, and the days of its mourning shall be ended.”† Daniel, after painting the various fortunes of the great empires, as they rapidly shifted before his prophetic vision, represents the compact and durable extent of Christ’s kingdom, under the image of a stone swelling into the vast size of a mountain, and crushing by its weight all the dynasties of the world.‡

Our Redeemer predicted that this Gospel would be preached to all the nations of the earth:§ and we are told by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, that the prophecy had already received its accomplishment. From the infancy of the Christian religion, the name of Catholic has been exclusively appropriated to those who were considered to profess it in all its purity.

Apostolicity is the last, and, perhaps, one of the most palpable of its characters. It consists in a per-

\* Isaias, lx.  
‡ Dan. ii.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 14, &c.

† Isaias, lx. 20.  
§ Rom. x. 18.

manent order of men, lawfully succeeding to the Christian ministry transmitted from the apostles; and who, by virtue of their apostolical ministry, are the legitimate guardians of the doctrines of the apostles. Purity of apostolical doctrine is included in a full notion of apostolicity, as a property of which the true Church cannot be divested; but not as the sign by which that Church is to be ascertained. The preservation of the apostolical doctrine may be considered the end; the existence of an apostolical ministry the means by which that end is to be secured. The end is often impervious to the view; the means are generally more palpable to the apprehension; and hence, by the aid of a visible and apostolical ministry, we arrive at a sure knowledge of the apostolical doctrines.

The perpetuity of the doctrine of the Church has been thus predicted by Isaias. "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My spirit that is in thee and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."\* Similar is the language which our Redeemer addressed to his apostles, consoling their grief for his departure by the promise of the Paraclete: "When he, the spirit of truth, shall come, he will teach you all truth."† In these two passages we are assured that the spirit of truth is never to depart from the Church; and hence she is destined to inherit the doctrine which Christ and the Holy Ghost delivered to the apostles. Such was clearly the object of Christ's promise, But, to ensure its accomplishment, the reader may once more direct his attention to the last solemn injunctions which the Saviour addressed to his apostles on the eve of his ascension. "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things,

\* Isaias, lix. 21.

† John, xvi. 13.

whatsoever I have commanded you ; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”\* The peculiar force of these expressions has been illustrated by a variety of corresponding passages.† In these words we have a solemn assurance that Christ, by his special care, will watch over the persons of his apostles and their successors : whence we are to draw a clear and important conclusion, that if his doctrine is to be preserved pure, it is because the pastors of his Church are to be protected from error, and that the transmission of the apostolical faith must ever depend on the uninterrupted agency of an apostolical ministry.

How this apostolical ministry is to be perpetuated it is important to ascertain. As it is essentially connected with the preservation of the doctrine of Christ, all who are interested in knowing his genuine doctrines ought to be able to discern the marks of his legitimate ministry. Is every individual, at the suggestion of his own fancy, permitted to intrude himself into this office without any appointment? If so, all the dignity of religion is gone ; all the characteristic marks of a true Church are effaced, and the fanatic who dishonours the Almighty by his errors, may as well pretend to the ministry of a divine calling, as he who has been appointed in regular succession to the apostolical office. No society can long exist without being regulated by settled laws, which it will not be left at the mercy of every individual to disturb. Hence, we cannot suppose that God himself abandoned that society which was to subsist for ever, to the caprice of every individual who should please to alter its laws or assume its direction. Such are not the means by which strength and permanency are generally secured : nor would it be presumption to say that they are not those which Christ would have adopted.

Not to prolong, however, the reader's patience with

\* Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

† See ante, chap. ix.

the presumptive argument which the analogy of society supplies, he may discover in the inspired writings the necessity of a legitimate and constituted ministry. "Neither doth any man," says the apostle, "take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself that he might be made a High Priest: but He that said to him, Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee."\* If Christ did not affect the honours of the priesthood without a solemn appointment from his heavenly Father, neither can mortal presume to claim or exercise that office without a similar appointment from Him. But how are we to ascertain the proofs of this appointment? By deriving it from the apostles through an unbroken series of legitimate successors, to whom, in the language addressed to his apostles, Christ gave his last solemn commission, together with the assurance of his protection. Through the same ordinary channel of legitimate and hereditary succession by which many of the prerogatives of society are transmitted, the authority of the priesthood is likewise conveyed. By virtue of the commission which first imparted this power to the apostles, it still resides in their legitimate successors, each of whom can say to the individual placed next him in the descending line, "Thou art my son:" thus propagating Christ's spiritual priesthood by the transmission of that ineffable fecundity which issued from the bosom of the Eternal Father.

This succession is visible to every eye. It can no more be mistaken than the visible succession of hereditary kings; and the promises of Christ sufficiently secure us against any apprehension of its failure. Hence, any individual who is not found placed in the hereditary line of succession, cannot be deemed a lawful depositary of Christ's priesthood. And hence, those who, in every age, have obtruded themselves into the sanctuary without any authentic evidence of

\* Heb. v. 4, 5.

their delegation, have been treated as usurpers.\* In vain will such arrogant individuals plead the corruption of the Church of Christ, to colour with the plea of necessity their own usurpation. They generally mistake their lust of dominion for zeal for the house of God. Had Christ foreseen the failure of his Church, we are to presume that, in his wisdom, he would have supplied us with instructions to repair it. His silence on so interesting a concern is a proof that the scruples entertained by some on the score of its corruption are vain; and that fears for its stability are imaginary. The priesthood is an office of divine institution, which Christ has jealously entrusted to an order of men deriving their hereditary authority from Himself. We are, therefore, to listen to none who would presume to controvert their power, unless, like the apostles themselves, they had evinced the truth of their commission by the performance of similar wonders. If, therefore, any are deluded by the specious invectives of the sectaries against the corruption of the apostolical ministry, they must be the willing dupes of error; since the divine commission of our Redeemer, which he has never yet recalled, is a standing pledge of its indefectibility. If “the law which brought nothing to perfection”† was not to be annulled but by the presence of the Supreme Legislator; if a “worldly sanctuary” required the aid of a divine artist to refit it; and if the “tabernacle which was sanctified only by the sprinkling of the blood of goats and oxen,”‡ could not be removed by mortal hand, must not they be guilty of sacrilegious audacity who attempt to infringe the precept of not meddling with his priesthood, of which one iota cannot be changed until heaven and earth shall pass away? who like Oza,§ fancying that the ark, “not made with hand nor of this creation”|| is threatening to fall presumptuously run to sustain it; and who pretend that the Church without spot or wrinkle,

\* See Préjugés légitimes contre les Calvinistes, cap. 8.

† Heb. vii. 19.

‡ Heb. ix. 13.

§ 2 Kings, vi. 7.

|| Heb. ix. 11.

against which the "gates of hell should not prevail," had sunk at last in the tide of corruption. If, in short, a temporary tabernacle required the immediate interposition of the Divine Architect, who was to substitute a more perfect one in its place, we cannot imagine that he would be less jealous in forbidding any human creature to refit the noblest work of his own hands. If it, therefore, wanted repairs, we should, even according to some Protestants,\* wait until he himself would repair it; and, in such circumstances, imitate the forlorn children of Israel, by putting up fervent prayers for the restoration of our religion, rather than provoke the divine vengeance by a rash and unauthorised usurpation of its priesthood.

In the few preceding paragraphs the reader may perceive the evidence which shows that unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity are Scriptural characters of the true Church. It may, however, be insinuated that the passages quoted are more applicable to the general profession of the Christian religion, including all sectaries, than to the peculiar designation of the Catholic Church. But, if the sole name of Christian be a sufficient title to their appropriation, why separate from that ancient society which had the strongest claims to all these characters? To justify their secession from the Catholic Church, the first reformers were compelled to confine the privileges of salvation to a narrower compass than the mere nominal profession of the Christian religion.† Yet to shield themselves against the arguments of their adversaries, who inquired within what hidden corner had the Church of Christ been contracted before that period, they were again obliged to widen its boundaries by including within its pale all who professed a belief in the undefinable essentials of Christianity.

If we inquire into the interpretation which the primitive fathers have left us of the characters of the true

\* See *Préjugés légitim*, cap. vii.

† This is conspicuous in all the original professions of faith of the reformed Churches.—See Bossuet, *Hist. des Variat.* lib. xv.

Church, we shall discover that they invariably confined them to one society.\* They were as yet strangers to that chemical combination which would amalgamate into one harmonious faith the most discordant elements of religion. In every period of the Christian Church its peace has been troubled by the revolt of sectaries who occasionally usurped the honours of its priesthood. Of these sectaries there were many who could be charged with no other error than the mere fact of their separation. Yet, in the schism alone, the fathers beheld a crime which, as long as it continued, no virtue could redeem. In the third century, Novatian, a turbulent priest, was forcibly seated on the episcopal chair of Rome.† By the arts of intrigue, of which he was a practised master, he procured the support of numerous adherents. To colour their defection under the specious guise of zeal for morality, they reproached the Church with too much indulgence towards sinners; and proclaimed themselves the reformers of its abuses and the asserters of its ancient discipline. This was the whole sum of their errors. Had they lived in the seventeenth century, far from being ranked by Jurieu among those who were excluded from the pale of the Church, they might probably be considered its best champions. Again, the see of Carthage was contested with the lawful pontiff by Donatus, who made himself the instrument of a vindictive faction. Unfortunately for the peace of the African Church, the cause of Donatus was espoused by a numerous party, and the schism spread to the remotest extremities of that province.‡ To the obstinacy of schism the Donatists added some speculative errors regarding the efficacy of baptism, which the liberality of modern Protestants would deem trivial and unimportant.

Yet the reader who has been taught to respect the distinction between fundamentals and non-funda-

\* Nicole, de l'Unité de l'Eglise, lib. i. cap. 7.

† S. Cypr. epp. 46, 47. Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. lib. vi. cap. 43, 45. The Greek historians confound him with Novatus.

‡ Optat. Milev. de Schism. Donatist. Ed. Du Pin.

mentals, may be surprised at the language in which these schismatics were addressed by their contemporaries. St. Cyprian, the pious and eloquent bishop of Carthage, reproached the Novatians with erecting altar against altar; with separating the people from their priests, and the flocks from their pastors. He reproveth them for having torn the seamless garment of Christ, and rent the unity of his mystical body. In fine, he invites them to return to the Church out of which they strayed; and concludes by threatening them with eternal death as the punishment of their schism and apostasy.\* Instead of a religious body convulsed by opposite factions, and threatened with destruction by intestine contests, St Cyprian represents the Church under the images of unity and peace. When he speaks of the union between the Church and its members, he likens it to the connexion that subsists between the trunk and its branches; or the stream and its spring, or the rays of light and their centre. But the moment one is separated from that Church, he becomes like a withered branch severed from the stem; or a dried-up channel unfed by the waters which it drew from the parent fountain.†

Similar, or perhaps more severe, are the denunciations of St. Augustine against the schism of the Donatists. If we are to credit this illustrious man, who has been revered in every age of the Church as an oracle of wisdom, schism surpasses in guilt the crimes of sacrilege‡ and murder.§ Nay, it is more heinous than idolatry, since the idolater may be roused to a sense of his impiety by the threats of divine vengeance; while the schismatic, instead of being easily reclaimed from his guilt, becomes more inveterate in his obstinacy.|| The sentiments expressed by those fathers on the guilt of heresy and schism were not the incautious effusions of an intemperate zeal. They were rather

\* Epp. 49, 54, 65. ed. Fell.

+ Lib. de Unitate Ecclesiæ.

‡ Contr. Lit. Petil. lib. ii. cap. 96.

§ Contr. Parmen. lib. ii. cap. 20.

|| "Baptizando paganos, illos sanent a vulnere idololatriæ, sed gravius feriant vulnere schismatis."—De Baptism. contr. Donatist. cap. 8.

the deliberate reflections of cool and dispassionate judgment ; and from the general adoption of their sentiments, we may safely conclude that they expressed the doctrine of their times. They were unacquainted with that licentious system which levels all the landmarks between heretics and true believers ; and throws open the enclosures of the Church to the promiscuous influx of truth and error. In their idea of unity, then, they cautiously distinguish between the members of the Catholic Church and those who vaguely profess their belief in Christianity.

Nor did they dread the imputation of uncharitableness which might possibly attach to such a doctrine. Aware that they were only the depositaries of the faith which the apostles first delivered, they did not conceive that they were at liberty to change it, in order to make it more palatable to human prejudices. Were the Christian religion to be rejected as untrue, until it should be found accommodated to every feeling, we should soon get rid of the entire sum of its mysteries and precepts. Human benevolence is too capricious a standard to regulate our belief by its suggestions. The idea of eternal torments is one that would appear revolting to the most intrepid mind ; and hence, if man's feelings were to be the standard of his faith, he would willingly expunge the doctrine of hell fire out of the code of Christianity. Suffer this solitary article to remain in your creed, and it is in vain that you reproach the Catholic religion with intolerance. Erase it, and you overturn the foundation not only of revealed, but of natural religion. By retaining it, then, you admit the principle of exclusive salvation which Catholics hold : the only difference is in the mode or extent of its application.

There are crimes which, according to the faith of all Christians, exclude men from the kingdom of God. It is a doctrine laid down by St. Paul in language too clear to be controverted.\* Of these crimes there are some which would appear trifling to the voluptuary, and

\* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, &c.

doubtless he would charge the apostle with a want of charity the most unfeeling, who threatens with eternal punishment the indulgence of a natural inclination. Yet, in spite of the revolt of flesh and blood, this doctrine is still believed; because the authority of an inspired apostle silences the mutiny of human passion. It is in vain, then, that the suggestions of passion are opposed to the authority of inspiration, if it be equally true that the doctrine of exclusive salvation held by the Catholic Church has been revealed. This ought to form the sole subject of inquiry; and if it be ascertained that the threats of the Almighty are as severe against heretics and schismatics as against the other sinners whom the apostle excludes from the kingdom of heaven, is it not strange that the Catholic Church should be considered uncharitable in warning the one of their danger, while it is deemed charity to denounce the guilt of the other?

This dogma, then, of the Catholic faith is a question of facts and not of feeling. It is to be determined by an impartial reference to the code of revelation, rather than by the fancy of any individual. The language of our Redeemer and his apostles will best impress on our minds an adequate idea of the guilt of heresy and schism. Those who hear not the Church, Christ likens unto heathens and publicans \* If, therefore, it be not uncharitable to exclude heathens from the true Church, our Redeemer absolves us from all reproach, while we place in the same rank with them those heretics who refuse to hear its authority. Again, he compares those who enter not by the door into his fold, to thieves who, instead of feeding his flock, come "to steal and to kill, and to destroy."† If, therefore, we number among the enemies of Christ those who attempt to intrude themselves into his Church by any other than the door of legitimate authority which he has established, we are only repeating the sentence which he has solemnly pronounced. Those who are not engrafted on the vine, our Redeemer com-

\* Matt. xviii. :7.

† John, x. 10

pare to withered branches, whose end is to be cast into the fire.\* If, therefore, the Catholic Church pronounces schismatics to be severed from Christ, the vital trunk, it is only to warn them of the danger that awaits them if they persevere in the obstinacy of schism.

But why waste argument in defending a tenet which is founded on the simplicity of truth and its incompatibility with error? If the doctrine which the Church of Christ teaches be true, must not those who profess a different faith be necessarily involved in error? Yes, it may be observed, but not in such errors as exclude from salvation. This, no doubt, is a flattering qualification. But, if we explore the foundation on which it is supposed to rest, we shall find it to be as vain as that with which the libertine would fain guard his own favourite propensities against the condemnation of St. Paul.† If we once admit the principle, that a separation from the Church does not involve exclusion from eternal happiness, unless where the separation is united with the rejection of essential articles of belief, the landmarks between Christianity and infidelity are destroyed. A sincere believer in the articles of the Church of England may place a Socinian out of the pale of the true Church and of salvation. But may not the latter indignantly retort, that he professes the essential articles of faith; and if separation from the ancient Church be a crime, it is one in which both are equally involved. Thus you might proceed through all the gradations of error, in a series of mutual reproach and retortion, until the Deist is silenced by the powerful reply of the Atheist, who tells him it is more reasonable to deny the existence of the Divinity, than to strip him of his attributes, by supposing him a careless spectator of misery and of crime.

But it is revolting to the feelings of charity to exclude from salvation a large portion of our fellow-creatures! It would be no doubt, an unfeeling thing

\* John, xv. 6.

† See before, p. 355.

to consign a single individual of the human race to eternal torments, were it in man's power to save him from that miserable condition. But the place of torments which Christianity reveals, is not like the Tartarus of the ancients, out of which a Theseus or a Hercules could rescue its victims. Hence, they are more charitable who seasonably warn mortals not to descend into that gloomy abode, than those who flatter them into a delusive security. The unfortunate man who was plunged into hell did not mean any cruelty to his brethren in wishing to have Lazarus sent to them to warn them of their danger.\* Like them, Christians have the law and the prophets denouncing the guilt of heresy and schism; and of this law not one iota shall pass away. Some may labour to relax its rigours, but the decrees of heaven shall not bend to the devices of human casuistry. Were we to soften down the harsh precepts of Christianity until they should be palatable to all, every feature of that divine religion would soon disappear. Advance but a step to meet the claims of prejudice or passion, they will still recede and require farther advances. Give them but an iota of the Christian religion, you are only whetting the appetite for greater sacrifices; according as you gratify their rage for indulgence, they still exclaim, in the language of the prophet, "Speak unto us pleasant things"† and insatiable as the grave, which is still crying out for more, they will not cease their clamorous importunity until the whole is yielded to their craving fury. "Woe to them, saith the Lord God, that sew cushions under every elbow; and make pillows for the heads of persons of every age to catch souls. And they violated me among my people—to kill souls which should not die, and to save souls alive which should not live, telling lies to my people that believe lies. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God. Behold, I declare against your cushions, wherewith you catch flying souls: and

\* Luke, xvi. 19 et seqq.

† Isaias, xxx. 10.

I will tear them off from your arms, and I will tear your pillows and deliver my people out of your hand: neither shall they be any more in your hands to be a prey. Because with lies you have made the heart of the just to mourn, and have strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his evil way and live.”\*

From the testimonies of the ancient fathers, which have been placed before the reader, he has observed that they cautiously distinguished between the profession of the Christian and that of the Catholic religion. Not that the Catholic religion is distinct from genuine Christianity, but in order to dissolve the sophistry of those, who, under a vague and delusive profession of the one would pretend to consider themselves as members of the other. “A Christian is my name,” says St. Pacianus,† “a Catholic my surname: I am called by the one; I am known by the other.” This short sentence proves that while the title of Christian was common to the sectaries, the name of Catholic was a more confined and distinctive appellation. When they introduced the predictions, in which the prophets foretold the reign of the Redeemer, instead of applying them to the Christian religion, embracing all the sectaries within its bosom, they appropriated them to one body of Christians, and then, by a comparison between that body and the heretics, they proved that the former alone could claim the accomplishment of those predictions. “When you come into any city,” says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, “do not simply inquire where is the Church, but where is the Catholic Church? This is a name peculiar to the spouse of Christ, which is called Catholic, because it is diffused from one extremity of the earth to the other.”‡ The word Catholic, then, did not comprehend every Church which passed under the name of Christian, though the Catholic Church realised by its diffusion the images of the ancient prophecies.

\* Ezech. xiii. 18 et seqq.

† Ep. i. ad Sempronian,

‡ Catechesi. xviii.

Of all the ancient fathers, there is none who insists more forcibly on the exclusive appropriation of the name of Catholic to one body of Christians than St. Augustine. Among the links that bound him to the Catholic Church, the name of Catholic, he confesses to have had a peculiar influence. The reader may be gratified by his own eloquent language. "Many considerations hold me in the bosom of the Catholic Church; the consent of all people and nations; an authority founded in miracles, sustained by hope, and perfected by charity; the succession of her priesthood, (particularly in the see of Rome); in fine, the very name of *Catholic*, which she alone so justly and so exclusively obtains, that although heretics wish to arrogate the appellation, yet if a stranger ask them for the Catholic assembly, none of them would be so shameless as to point out his own church or conventicle."\*

That unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity are the peculiar and incommunicable characters of the true Church, the concurrent testimonies of Scripture and the fathers have proved. The next step in this important inquiry, will conduct us to their application. In this application the Roman Catholic Church, and those which have adopted other names, shall be alternately placed before the reader's view; and then, after a comparison of their respective claims to those characters of truth, he will be able to form his own conclusion.

Let the sincere inquirer after truth cast his eye on those churches that are known by the negative appellation of Protestant, and declare whether he discovers in them the unity of one fold, or the uniform influence of one pastor. What strange diversity of opinions, even on points that might be deemed the essentials of Christianity? The spirit of discord that arose with the origin, has spread and strengthened with the progress of the reformation. Though the experience of

\* Contr. Ep. Fundam, cap. iv.

three centuries ought to have thrown discredit on their pretensions, they are all still loud in their appeal to the influence of the Divine Spirit. But the Divine Spirit which they blaspheme is deaf to their invocation, and, like the lying prophets of Baal,\* nothing but a fire from heaven, which no Christian will invoke, can extinguish their fanaticism, or unmask their imposture. But it may be said, they are united under the common appellation of Protestant? Yes, they are united; but the word itself is an evidence of their schism, and schism can never be justified. Besides, it is that hollow and hypocritical union, which is inspired by their common hatred of the Catholic Church. It is that union which may be termed the affinity of repulsion connecting individuals, who are excluded from a common centre. Their union is the covenant of iniquity,† by which individuals are leagued together against truth and justice; such an union as once connected Herod and Pilate, and which breaks out into the most deadly enmity as soon as the object which inspired it is no longer feared. Hence, the discords by which the different sects of Christianity are shaken. In the most compact of the Protestant societies, the different parts are but loosely held together. To preserve an exterior uniformity, some, like the Church of England, have grasped the authority of the Church against which they had revolted, and substituted in the room of a legitimate control all the evils of an ecclesiastical despotism.

What can be more despotic than to insult people with the name of liberty, and still to bind them by oath to profess with their lips what their hearts disbelieve? Of this painful struggle between interest and conscience, I have already cited some examples. Such, however, is the influence of wealth and honours, that notwithstanding this reluctance, the sounds of orthodoxy and concord are faintly pronounced by the ministers of the establishment. Yet they are but

\* 3 Kings, xviii.

† Isaias, xxviii. 15.

sounds, since many of its dignitaries are found to indulge in the wildest latitude of religious opinion.\* Some doubted the eternity of hell's torments, while others thought the doctrine of the Trinity of no importance for salvation. Amidst such discrepancy of belief, in vain will you look for the characteristic unity of Christ's fold, unless it be said that there is a charm in the name of Protestant, which effaces every error, and reconciles all dissension.† There may be sincerity in subscribing to such a system of belief, but it will still be suspected, that it is its wealth that attracts votaries to the temple, and hence they have been often reminded of the words of Cicero, who wondered how two haruspices could meet in the streets without laughing at each other's hypocrisy.

How different the picture presented by the Catholic Church! Through that vast body, the same doctrine is everywhere professed, because all are obedient to the same visible authority. Its fundamental maxim is not to deviate from the doctrine which was taught in the preceding century. For this purpose, it "remembers the days of old, and thinks upon every generation," each of its members applying to himself the words of Moses, "ask thy father and he will declare to thee, thy elders, and they will tell thee."‡ The method of instruction which is uniformly adopted by the Catholic Church may be expressed in the language of the prophet:—"Stand ye on the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk ye in it."§ It warns its children "not to pass beyond the ancient bounds which their fathers have set;"|| and hence, the uniformity of its faith through the innovating vicissitudes of time. Though spread over a

\* See ante, from page 207 to the end of chapter viii.

† Such really seems to be the case. "In the body of our clergy" (of the establishment), says Nightingale, a fair and competent witness, "we have Calvinian, Arminian, Unitarian, Swedenborgian, Pelagian, Arian, Socinian, Sabellian, Trinitarian, and I know not how many other sorts of clergymen, some starving in a curacy, and others fattening in a bishopric," &c.

‡ Deut. xxxii. 7.

§ Jerm. vi. 16.

|| Prov. xxii. 28.

variety of countries which are dissociated by difference of manners and of climate, its creed is everywhere the same. In the present age the words of Irenæus are as applicable as in his own time: "Nor is there a different doctrine taught in Gaul nor in Germany; because the force of tradition is everywhere the same, and because the distant Churches are held together by the silent influence of a common centre of attraction." Now, as in the time of St. Augustine, the Catholics are bound together by the visible chain of succession, in the see of Peter; and the last link of that chain is as visibly connected in the person of Leo or Gregory with the unmovable rock on which Christ erected his Church, as in the person of Innocent or Celestine in the fifth century.

In vain will it be pretended that the Catholics are not agreed on the place in which the supreme authority resides. They are all agreed that it is in the pope and bishops. This is enough for us to know; and in reply to those who presumptuously attempt to separate what God has united, it is sufficient to observe, that the head and members are alike essential to the soundness and beauty of the body. Nor have its doctrines changed, though new definitions have been adopted. The improvement was only the natural growth from infancy to manhood, or the progress of the seed ripening into full maturity.\* Its form might have been improved, while its substance remained unaltered: nor did the doctrine of the real presence undergo any change, though designated, in the twelfth century, by the more expressive name of transubstantiation. The Church is now the same as in the days of the apostles; nor are its materials altered, though to use the words of Vincent of Lerins, a Maleleel should be found to polish the timber of the tabernacle. The seed of divine doctrine, which our Redeemer first cast in the Church, has been not only guarded by her vigilance, but unfolded by her cultivation; and though we may now be astonished at the majesty of the stem and the multitude of its

\* Vid. I Commonit. Vin. Lerins., cap. xxiii.

branches, we ought to recollect that it is still the grain of mustard seed, unfolding in its growth the properties of its nature, and realising the prediction of him who cast it, that the nations of the earth would repose under its shade.

In the comparison of the relative sanctity of the different Churches, the Roman Catholic Church stands peculiarly distinguished. The sanctity of any Church is a word of complex and extensive import, which may embrace as well the holiness of its members as the purity of the doctrine which it professes. In either point of view, the Catholic Church is without a rival; since it teaches the necessity of mortifying the deeds of the flesh; and since it was in its bosom those eminent saints were formed whom Protestants have not scrupled to adopt into their calendar. But, to form a fair and impartial judgment of this subject, we should chiefly turn our attention to the lives of their respective founders. God may permit the existence of immoral pastors in his Church; though he never chooses corrupt agents as its founders. As the one are the immediate heralds of the Almighty, they ought to be the living representatives of the high and holy commission which they bear. The others, too, are bound to sanctity, but like all the public functionaries of an established authority, the validity of their ministry is not affected by the profligacy of their lives.

Let the reader, then, in order to contemplate this important feature—the sanctity of their respective founders, ascend to the sources of the Protestant and Catholic Churches. The sanctity of the founders of the Protestant Churches! Oh, this is a theme on which the lovers of satire or scandal could dwell for ever. It is a point on which no Protestant, tender of the fame of his progenitors, should like to enter into a contest with the advocates of the Catholic Church. For the origin of their religion, Protestants can go no farther back than the period of the Reformation. No dispassionate judge of human nature will venture to assert,

that sanctity was a leading feature in the character of the Reformers. Let him but read the narrative of that religious revolution as told even by those historians who were the apologists, nay, the panegyrists of the reformation, and he will discover that the event was brought about by the workings of a variety of causes, in which religion had no share.

Though the great actors in the drama have been frequently sketched, yet it is impossible to finish their portrait. There is in that event so much of human folly and human wickedness; such irregular vicissitude of tragedy and comedy, and in the lives of the reformers, such a strange mixture of whatever is most ludicrous and depraved in the character of man, that one might hesitate, whether with the laughing philosopher he should ridicule the follies, or with Heraclitus weep over the miseries, of human nature, as exemplified in the "fathers of the reformation."

Amidst the numerous group, the figures of Luther and Calvin principally force themselves on our attention; and the full and sturdy frame of the one stands in striking contrast with the melancholy form of the other. I allude to their exterior figures, since they were singularly expressive of the habits of their minds. Luther, possessed of a constitution which was equal to every labour, and endued with a courage which no danger could appal, indulged in a strain of coarse and virulent invective against personal abuses, of which the lives of some ecclesiastics unfortunately furnished him with a prolific theme.\* It might be expected that this censor of morals would rebuke, by his own virtues, the excesses against which he so vehemently inveighed. But, like Mahomet, who allowed to himself a larger licence of immorality than to his followers, Luther soon claimed a dispensation to violate the vows which he had solemnly pledged to heaven.† From personal

\* Florimond, lib. 1., cap. 8, 11.

† Sleidan ad an. 1525. See the reformer's sermon on matrimony, in the fifth volume of his works, edited at Wirtemberg.

abuse of the clergy, he soon passed to canvass the sources of their power. His first success inflamed his natural intrepidity into enthusiasm; and the enthusiasm which he felt he quickly communicated. The passions which he thus inspired again reacted on himself; until intoxicated by success and disdainful of opposition, he assumed the tone of a prophet, and the authority of an apostle;\* while monks and priests, and princes and pontiffs, and holy fathers, were involved in the torrent of his indiscriminate vituperation.

What Luther effected in some measure by force, Calvin accomplished by the more insidious instruments of fraud and seduction. The one attempted to storm the citadel; the other had recourse to the slow labours of the mine. Actuated by a boundless ambition, which he had more art to conceal, he meditated the same revolution in France which Luther had achieved in Germany. Knowing what magic there is often in a name, he amused the citizens of Geneva with the sound of ecclesiastical liberty; until the flames which he lit for Servetus revealed to the world the hideous features of as great a tyrant as ever abused the name of freedom to establish his own despotism. There was nothing consolatory or merciful in his doctrines. Out of the Christian code, which breathes so much of mercy and love, Calvin could extract only the cruel dogmas of reprobation and despair. His countenance bore the expression of his blasphemous sentiments, and his exhausted and agitated frame attested the unwearied workings of the restless inhabitant within. By the opinion that grace is never forfeited, he sanctioned systematic profligacy; and his doctrines of absolute predestination to punishment precipitated men into despair.†

To the two principal founders of the Reformation, in order to complete the triumvirate, we may add the character of Zuinglius, the minister of Zurich. Ambitious of rivalling the other leaders of the great revolution,

\* See Boss. *Hist. des Variat.*, lib. i. n. 27.

† See Florimond, lib. vii. cap. 10.

he sought to compose their quarrels, on the real presence, by giving the words of institution a new interpretation.\* For five years he confesses that he sought their meaning in vain, until at length it was revealed to him by a nocturnal spirit of ambiguous complexion. The practical commentary of his life and death may best illustrate the nature of the mysterious apparition,† from which he derived his inspiration. From the Gospel which was taught by Zuinglius, the charms of virginity utterly disappeared; and in fighting against the enemies of the faith, he relied more on the arms of the flesh than on those of the spirit. Perhaps he may deserve a place among those who, by dying on the field, have obtained military fame.‡ But, to call such a fanatic by the name of a reformer of the meek religion of Jesus, is an abuse of propriety of thought and language which nothing can justify. From his veneration for the ancient Pagans, one might consider Zuinglius better fitted for ministering at their worship than at the altars of the Christian religion. Nay, his blasphemy extends so far as to confound our Redeemer with some of the Pagan deities, in one indiscriminate apotheosis.§ Such were the principal heroes of the Reformation. Of the subordinate agents, it is sufficient to observe that they emulously endeavoured to imitate the conduct of their leaders.

For every class of mankind they had a peculiar engine of persuasion. The tepid and disorderly ecclesiastics were loosed from the restraints of discipline and obedience; the ambitious were allured by the hope of distinction, and the avaricious by the prospect of ecclesiastical spoliation. The arch-reformer found fit engines for his purpose in the passions of mankind. Our Redeemer's prediction attests the perpetual recur-

\* Luther's opinion of the followers and discoveries of this fanatic is not very flattering. "Sacramentarii hæretici, blasphemæ, infideles, ethnici, larvati diaboli." &c.—Oper. tom. vii. fol. 379.

† The story, in the words of Zuinglius, may be seen at length in Florimond, lib. ii. cap. 8.

‡ "Occubuit patrio bellator Zuinglius ense," &c.

§ See ante, p. 210.

rence of heresies and scandals.\* At the time of the appearance of Luther, the materials were highly inflammable: he had but to fling the torch, and they were instantly in a blaze.

But where can we discover the pacific influence of religion amidst a scene in which avarice, ambition, lust, revenge, and every passion of the human heart struggled for the ascendancy? Nor let it be said, and it is an apology which imposes upon numbers, that the crimes of that period were the natural effects of this struggle. It was, we are told, an era in which society was convulsed; and, hence, it is no wonder if the foulest disorders that lay in the bottom of the human heart were cast up by the violence of the agitation. Yes, it was a disastrous period, during which religious warfare had awakened the strife of contending passions. But where was the mild spirit of religion to be found, striving to appease the tumult? Was it among the reformers, who pretended to restore the ancient purity of the Christian religion? Instead of sending forth its meek and hallowed influence to lay the troubled elements, were they not found tearing up the deep with their ecclesiastical tridents, and heaving on its surface the accumulated crimes of ages?

Not so the Catholic Church. It is holy, not only in its founder, but also in its apostles, in its martyrs, in its confessors and virgins, who have exemplified in their lives the precepts and counsels of the Redeemer. The saints of every age, whose virtues extorted the reluctant admiration of the world, were members of that Church. The excess of their sanctity is the only fault on which her enemies can fasten. A noble reproach, to have illustrated in their conduct the most heroic counsels of the Gospel! The sanctity of the Catholic Church is farther manifested in the number of pious institutions to which it has given birth for the relief of human misery. Occupied in dissipating the ignorance, and healing the disorders, of mankind, there is

\* Matt. xviii. 7.

no species of evil to which man is heir that she has not endeavoured to remedy. Filled with the spirit of charity, which she ever breathes, numbers of either sex have been found in every age, not only to forego all the pleasures of life, but cheerfully to endure its privation, to promote the happiness of their fellow-mortals.

Of the long catalogue of its supreme pontiffs, many have been enrolled in the calendar, and their virtues and learning have earned universal admiration. No country can exhibit so long a series of sovereigns who honoured their station as Rome, in the venerable catalogue of her pontiffs. Even the few who have disgraced the sanctity of their office, have attested in their weakness the strength of the divine promises. Their vices have been much exaggerated; it is creditable to the age in which we live, that a Protestant writer of just celebrity has generously rescued the memory of some of the pontiffs from the calumnies that were heaped on them by the prejudices of other historians.\* I am not the apologist of those popes whose vices brought contempt upon religion. Vice, in any shape, deserves execration; but especially, when associated with characters whose example spreads a wider contagion. However, if we calmly reflect on the dangers that surrounded a court, at one time the most splendid, because the most crowded, in Europe; we will be less astonished at the few who forgot their station than at the many who, amidst such trials, preserved the virtues of the cloister.

Let us compare any other Church with that of Rome in the extent of her dominion. You behold other religious denominations confined to the limits of a kingdom, a province, a village; and gradually shrinking from your sight, until, at length, you discover the few elect who have been saved from the flood of idolatry reduced to one pure and patriarchal family! But the Church in communion with Rome has already obtained

\* See Roscoe's Life and Pontificate of Leo X., *passim*.

the title of Catholic, and realised the predictions of the Old Testament, by stretching her wide and ample dominion to the remotest boundaries of the earth. Being the chaste spouse of Jesus Christ, and filled with his prolific spirit, she shall ever continue to multiply her sacred progeny, while all who are divorced from her communion are struck with barrenness, which maketh their seed to perish from the face of the earth.\* Animated with the spirit of holy enterprise, she is still engaged in enlarging her spiritual conquests; and to admit those who are pouring into her bosom, "she is enlarging the place of her tent, and lengthening the cords, and strengthening the stakes of her tabernacle."† If she has to deplore the loss of nations which were among the earliest attached to her communion, her grief is mitigated by the acquisition of others. If, in punishment of their perfidy, the kingdom of God has been taken from some people, the prediction of the Redeemer has been fulfilled by its extension to others.‡ While the sun of Catholicity was setting upon the vices of the degenerate kingdoms on whom its light first rose; it appeared among the young nations of the West, diffusing joy as it ascended in its career; dispelling the ignorance in which they were involved; and giving to their virtues vigour and animation.

With one solitary exception, all the Churches of the world bear upon their front the traces of their violent avulsion from the parent stock. A few centuries ago their existence was unknown, and in the fantastic combinations of their names, you discover their recent and humiliating origin. The very denominations of Arians, Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, Socinians, Wesleyans, &c., which they have assumed, refute their pretensions to antiquity. Entangle yourself once in the maze of the sectaries, and you have no clue to direct you. Apostolicity of doctrine is too attenuated a line to be grasped by ordinary apprehension; and, as it is said

\* Psalm xxxvi. 28.

† Isaias, liv. 2.

‡ Matt. xxi. 43.

to be found in all the compartments of this vast labyrinth, by following its delusive guidance, you are only lengthening out your labours and thickening your confusion. As the clue of apostolical doctrine is claimed by all the sectaries, it must be evident that it is not calculated to disengage the inquirer after truth from the errors which perplex his way. Should he, however, be misled by the more imposing exterior of some Churches, such as that of England, which wear the appearance of that apostolicity of which the reality is wanting, let him but turn his attention to the history of the past, and he will read in the fate of their predecessors, the sure presage of their extinction. As soon as they were severed from the trunk from which they drew nutriment and life, their decay became rapidly progressive. Nay, their very memories have perished from the earth. "Their seed has not subsisted nor their offspring among the people, nor any remnants in their country. They that come after them shall be astonished at their day."\* Should he, therefore, be imposed on by the specious exterior of any schismatical society, the fate of those which were once no less powerful and imposing will furnish him with the evident assurance of its coming dissolution.†

While thus perplexed between the opposite claims of conflicting sectaries, let him but take hold of the strong and palpable clue of the succession of the Roman pontiffs. Disengaged from his embarrassment, he walks back with straight and steady step through the distance and darkness of time, directed all along by its strong and unerring guidance, until he finds

\* Job, xviii. 19, 20.

† The silent religious revolution, to which I have before alluded, that has commenced at Oxford, and that is spreading with an active rapidity throughout all parts of England, must convince every dispassionate inquirer that the term of the reign of error is now arriving to its close. The stagnant intellect of the nation has been stirred by the descent of a mighty spirit; and without any enthusiastic reliance on prophecy, I should not be surprised that even the present generation would witness the august temple of Westminster Abbey again lit up with the splendours of that pure and ancient worship to which it was raised and consecrated.

himself seated in the sanctuary with Christ himself, and listening to the living oracle of revelation. What a magnificent idea, or rather, what a vast assemblage of unspeakable ideas, does the word Catholic Church convey to the mind? How glorious the contemplation of a society subsisting unchanged for the unexampled duration of eighteen centuries, spread over the fairest portion of the earth, and embracing almost all that is elevated or enlightened in its history; bequeathing to each generation the accumulated treasures of the wisdom of the past; moving on with the silent majesty of a being unconscious of decay, and secure of immortality: gathering from the lapse of time, which is wasting every other monument, fresh proofs of the infallibility of his promise who has watched over her existence; conferring on her children, by the simple name of Catholic, the most envied and exalted title that kings yet ever bore; doomed occasionally to pass through the waters of tribulation, but rising buoyant over the waves, because the Spirit of God is with her; and again, because she is protected by the same Spirit, walking through the ordeal of persecution, unhurt by its heat,\* nay, burnished by its activity.

Contracted, then, must be the understanding that does not perceive that the Catholic Church, by resting on whatever is venerable in antiquity, not only appeals to the reason of the most gifted; but likewise challenges the homage of the loftiest and most generous sympathies of our nature. It is this unbroken connexion with the past that associates us with the wise and the virtuous of every age of the Church, and through them with its founder. There is no void, no separation; all is one and continuous in this vast body; and though its members are subject to the decay and dissolution of time, yet still there is a persevering identity, on account of the identity of spirit by which they are always animated. While the Church may be

\* Isaias, *xliii.* 2.

compared to one of the ancient pyramids, standing in undecayed magnificence amidst the ruins of time, the sectaries are not unlike the wandering Arab who, on pitching his fleeting tent under its shelter, strives to tear a stone from the edifice ; and then disappears, to be seen or heard of no more, amidst the solitudes of the desert.\*

To receive a full impression of the combined evidences of the notes of the Church, the Protestant must divest himself of the hereditary prepossessions of three hundred years, and transport himself back to the period of the Reformation. Let him, then, suppose himself a member of the Catholic Church, and solicited by one of the reformers to desert her communion. Such an ideal translation of himself to a remoter age is necessary, in order to feel the entire force of the arguments that are addressed to his understanding. He would thus remove himself out of the atmosphere of prejudice, which friends and education, and connexion gather round him, and which render it difficult for truth to reach his heart, when refracted through so dense a medium. Placed thus in a situation in which the prejudices that now overspread every object he contemplates would not obstruct his view, let him suppose himself accosted by one of the reformers, who invites him to join the standard of the new creed. Should he inquire into the grounds that could justify so extraordinary a step, he will find none to warrant or excuse it. Before he asks the new apostles for the evident manifestation of the power they assume, he may discover in their own discordance and inconsistency the tolly of their pretensions. In the strong and caustic language of Tertullian he may ask them : “ Who are you ? Why do you invade my possession ? Why do you fell my woods ? Why do you turn aside my fountains ? I am the heir of the apostles, you they cast out of the inheritance.” †

\* This is the just and eloquent expression of La Mennais.

† De Præscript., cap. 27.

Such would be the language of any individual zealous for the protection of his hereditary property against unjust aggression; the argument should have similar force and justness in the mouth of one who felt an equal anxiety to guard the inheritance of his faith. But, should he be imprudent enough to wish to forego it for the creed of the new apostles, he would immediately find himself perplexed by their disagreement. Now he is invited by Luther to follow his standard. Again he is called back by Calvin to an opposite direction. Another, with still louder importunity, solicits him another way; until, fatigued by fruitless inquiries, and torn by the violence of contrary tendencies, he sinks, the victim of his own rashness, under the exhaustion of despair.

The difficulty of disentangling himself from a labyrinth so intricate, should caution him not to cross its threshold. If, however, he turn his eye from those conventicles, into which he is invited to enter, to the Church which he is solicited to desert, what can he discover in their appearance or pretensions to balance the array of evidence which strikes him in the union of her characters? The errors into which she has fallen? They have been the theme of the impostors of every age. The corruption of her ministry? That has been the apology of every schismatic. The usurpation of God's word by one privileged order of society? It was the plea of a similar monopoly that inflamed the jealousy of Core and his turbulent adherents. However, the stem of the lawful ministry has continued to blossom like the rod of Aaron, while that of the sectaries has withered; and not only have the leaders paid the forfeit of their sacrilege, but even their descendants have been excluded from the service of the temple.

If each of these notes, separately considered, be so effectual in asserting for the Church in communion with Rome, the prerogatives of the Church of Christ, how irresistible must be the effect produced by their union? Were a traveller to read a description of the

dome of St. Peter's, which surpasses in elevation all the other buildings of Rome, he would not, on his approach to the city, confound it with any other edifice. If this single mark be sufficient to guide him, what must be his conviction of the identity of that Church, if his mind be previously seized of an ample image of the whole, conveyed by one of those writers whose range of thought could grasp the complexity of all its parts, and express them without confusion? Similar ought to be the conviction and similar the feelings of him who beholds in the Catholic Church the splendid characters that adorn the living temple of Christ. UNITY in the sublime simplicity of the edifice, the solid cohesion of its materials, and the symmetry that pervades them—SANCTITY in the splendour of its doctrine, lighting up its interior; and revealing the long line of saints whose images and statues clothe the walls, or fill up the niches, of the temple—CATHOLICITY in the amplitude of its dimensions, sheltering under its protecting roof multitudes of "every tongue, and tribe, and nation;" and APOSTOLICITY in the strength and majesty of its columns, sustaining the recumbent weight of the vast and stupendous structure.

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## CHAPTER XV.

## ON THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The mysteries of the Catholic Church the foundation of its morality.—The beauty of the latter a strong presumption of the consistency and solidity of the former.—The clumsy edifice of Philosophy a monument of the folly of its artificers.—Incarnation of the Son of God.—Necessity of a correct knowledge of the nature of Redemption.—The infinite satisfaction offered to the Almighty, reconciled with a gratuitous pardon.—The Sacraments of the New Law the channels of the grace of Redemption.—They have become an interesting topic of controversy since the rise of the Protestant religions.—Nature and number of the Sacraments of the New Law.—Seven Sacraments admitted by the unanimous consent of the Western and Oriental Churches.

HAVING hitherto explored revealed religion from its remotest origin, we have been gradually conducted by the light of its evidences to that Church which claims the prerogative of being the true Church of Christ; and before passing the sacred vestibule, we have paused to contemplate the majestic symmetry of its proportions. At length, we are allowed to enter its portals and review the interior; nor do we doubt but the intelligent observer will come to the conclusion, that the Church of Christ is not more striking by its external splendour than it is rich in the profusion of spiritual treasures that are strewed within its sanctuary. Of some of those treasures, the value and genuineness is acknowledged by all Christians. Of others, the worth is depreciated by those who affect to think them the accumulations of latter times substituted for the ancient riches of the temple. The theological antiquarian will readily perceive that they all bear the genuine impression of its founder; and if, during inauspicious intervals, some have been less conspicuous than others, it is because, like the manuscript

of Moses, they lay unnoticed till the zeal of some Helcias\* exhibited them once more to the veneration of the people.

It is the profound remark of Pascal, that, by contemplating the beautiful edifice of Christianity, we may form a judgment of the wisdom of the architect who laid its foundations. That edifice is its morality: mysteries are the foundations on which the structure reposes; and from the beauty and harmony of the one, we may safely infer the firmness and solidity of the other. If the foundation be always sunk in proportion to the strength and majesty of the structure, what wonder if that which was destined to sustain the weighty fabric of the Christian religion should be laid too deep for man to explore? The edifice itself is open to our contemplation: the mysterious groundwork is hidden from our view. To pursue the wise reflection of Pascal, is it not more accordant with reason to conclude, that the wisdom which pervades every part of the building reaches to its base, than to attempt to overturn it, from a foolish rage at not being able to see clearly its foundation? This is a rashness which none would presume to exercise on the admired productions of human skill or wisdom, and which cannot but be, at least, equally reprehensible when there is question of religion. From the specimens of genius that strike the observer in what is visible, he gives credit to the artist for the display of similar excellence through the entire production.

Besides, all the attempts of the ancient philosophers to construct a consistent system of morality proved vain and abortive. They toiled for ages, aided by all the resources which cultivated reason could furnish, without making any sensible progress towards completing the great work. Nay, every new attempt only led them to some more extravagant error: and though they were in active motion, it was but the motion of

individuals, who were continually straying farther from the goal of their destination, Thus they laboured incessantly, without effect. There was no concert in their plan, nor unity of purpose in its execution. The materials that were laboriously collected and piled up by the diligence of one, were thrown down and dispersed by the capricious taste of another; and the half-finished edifice of philosophy, like that of Babel, displayed a melancholy monument of the pride of its artificers, and the unintelligible variety of their dialects.

From this summary view of the frustrate efforts of reason to teach mankind, we ought to be disposed to look favourably on a revelation which had supernatural truths for its basis. The apparent folly of those truths was the most effectual remedy to cure the delirium of reason. The expression may appear strong, but if the understanding were not deeply diseased, man would never have been capable of the extravagance of adoring creatures, nay, of converting his passions into idols. It was necessary, therefore, to restore its operation by other means than those of argument; for an understanding exalted to frenzy is not capable of listening to the calm dictates of reason. Hence, in the language of St. Paul, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."\* It was therefore necessary, at that stage of human error, rather to check the extravagance of the understanding by a wise authority, than, by farther indulgence, to give new force to its licentiousness. Hence the same apostle continues, "my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and power."† A manifestation, therefore, of superior power was necessary to control the wanderings of the human intellect. But to reconcile this restraint with its native rights, the supreme power alone of God required the subjection. By such a salutary control, man's reason was not only checked from wandering,

\* 1 Cor. i. 21.

† Ibid. ii. 4.

but was also bound to the firm anchorage of God's own infallibility. Such is the inference of St. Paul, in the words, "that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."\* But how, it may be asked, was this supreme power of God over the human intellect exercised? By "making foolish the wisdom of this world, and by preaching Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness."† Yes, God then fulfilled the prediction of Isaias: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject;" and inquired "where is the wise? . . . where is the disputer of this world?"‡—to show that all the little cavils of human wisdom should be hushed at the word of his authority. The revelation of mysteries, then, instead of appearing unreasonable, is attested by experience to have been the most effectual remedy for healing the disorders of the human heart. The strong and vigorous faith that accompanied the diffusion of the mysteries of the Christian religion, gave a healthy tone to the diseased system of public morals; and the human mind, whose powers had been almost unravelled by the lightness of its own speculations, was again wound up by the weight of mysteries to the just regulation of its faculties.

The redemption of man through the incarnation of the Son of God, a truth no less merciful than mysterious, was the great source of the change which Christianity effected in the world. "The mystery which was hidden from ages and generations," at length broke out in its full splendour, and revealed "to the Gentiles the riches of its glory."§ Well might the Redeemer have characterised his office by the expressive epithets of "the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me."|| Yes, being the wisdom of his Father, Christ was the supreme truth which was to dissipate the errors of

\* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

† Ibid. i. 20, 23.

‡ Isaias, xxix. 14, and xxiii. 18.

§ Coloss. i. 26, 27.

|| John, xiv. 6.

mankind. Without its light it was vain to attempt to arrive at the knowledge of the Father, from whose bosom it was diffused. The brightness of the supreme *truth* lighted the *way* in which mankind were to walk, and which was at length to conduct them to the enjoyment of eternal *life*. Christ is, therefore, the alpha and omega,\* the beginning and the end of man's destiny. Being "the true *light* which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world,"† as well as the *life*, which is his repose, man finds him at the commencement and at the close of his career, guided through the entire *way* by the splendour of the one, until he arrives at the enjoyment of the other.

It is therefore no wonder if, by the twofold principle of "light" and "life" brought into the world by this sublime mystery, the disorders of mankind should be healed, and their darkness dissipated. Like the action of the orb of day on creation, scattering the clouds by its beams, and quickening vegetation by its warmth, the sun of justice was no less powerful in removing the errors than in animating the virtues of mankind. From its sacred source we derive every truth that has thrown any light upon man's destiny: and from the same fountain are drawn all the spiritual aids that support him in its attainment.‡ In the splendour of this mystery we contemplate what was inaccessible to human reason—the natures of God and man united in the person of Jesus Christ, who expiated by his sufferings the insult that was offered to the majesty of the Godhead. Human nature alone was insufficient to atone for the offence. The justice of the Divinity must, however, be appeased. To reconcile him with fallen man, the Son of God offers his mediation. The mediation is accepted by his Father; in the language of Scripture, "justice and peace have kissed,"§ and mercy the most boundless is united in the same mystery with justice the most inexorable.

\* Apoc. i. 8.

‡ Vide Petav. de Incarnatione, lib. ii. cc. 6, 7.

† John. i. 9.

‡ Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

From the full knowledge of this truth flow all the other doctrines which have an intimate connexion with man's salvation. Hence the necessity of its accurate comprehension, as far as it is developed in the inspired writings, since error in the source would not fail to extend to every subordinate article. The incarnation of the Son of God has, on that account, formed in every age one of the most fruitful topics of theological discussion. It were to be wished that human reason had been more temperate in discussing the nature of a mystery which it would never have discovered; and contented itself with that degree of knowledge which it had pleased the Almighty to reveal. Had these discussions been of a barren nature, unproductive of any consequences to morality, they might have deserved all the ridicule which has been occasionally heaped on them. But their consequences are not confined to mere speculation; they are necessarily connected with the interests of virtue; "Christ is the vine, we are the branches."\* The fruitfulness of the one is identified with the soundness of the other; and hence, those who would endeavour by false notions of redemption to vitiate the stock, must also poison all the fruit of morality and good works which it communicates to the branches.

The errors on the incarnation with which the world has teemed are therefore more deserving of pity than ridicule. But if we reflect on the hostility which has ever been arrayed against the Church, it will not seem surprising that this doctrine should have sustained severer opposition than any other. The dignity of the head inspired more hatred than any other part; and the enemies of the Christian Church justly imagined that any wound inflicted there would be felt through every subordinate member of Christ's mystical body. Introduce but one error regarding the nature or efficacy of redemption, and it draws consequences destructive of virtue in its train. If, with Arius, you

\* John, xv. 5.

should assert that Christ was a creature, you plunge in idolatry the world which has worshipped him with the supreme honour of the Divinity. If, with the Socinian, you confine the functions of the Redeemer to the excellence of the doctrine which he taught, or the example which he set to his followers, you take away the merit of his satisfaction, and “make void the cross of Christ.”\* You reduce the character of the Redeemer to that of a mere teacher of philosophy, and deprive virtue of one of its most powerful supports, by stripping sin of that idea of horror which ever must be excited by the reflection of the infinite sacrifice which was offered for its atonement. But if, again, with some licentious sectaries, you suppose that this sacrifice atones for every sin, without reference to the disposition of the individual, then you are giving a sanction to every species of immorality, nay, converting the most awful example of God’s chastisement of sin into a patent for its commission. Thus, by a deviation from truth in its source, you are conducted through a train of the most lamentable errors. Hence the melancholy picture which is presented by a review of the early Oriental controversies. Hence, too, the fatal doctrines that have been propagated at a more recent period. By reference to either epoch, we find that when truth is tainted in its fountain, the stream of morality is not pure ; and that errors which are deemed only speculative by the superficial, have a practical influence on the interests of virtue.

The doctrine which the Catholic Church teaches on the nature and efficacy of the redemption, is equally remote from the opposite errors by which the Divinity is dishonoured and the bonds of morality relaxed. Knowing that the supreme attributes of the Deity are incommunicable to any creature, and that God will suffer no rival of his own power, she literally understands the words of the Redeemer, “I and the Father are one,”† and therefore considers them entitled to the

\* 1 Cor. i. 17.

† John, x. 30.

same honour. No doubt, it mocks human reason to conceive how two persons are one and the same nature. But a creature invested with all the attributes of Divinity would be an idea still less comprehensible; and those who entertain it can scarcely free themselves from a metaphysical paradox and a practical idolatry. From the perfect equality between the Father and the Son flows the doctrine of an adequate and infinite satisfaction. If the affront offered to the Father was infinite, he received satisfaction from the infinite atonement of the Son. Justice, it may be said, may have been thus appeased, but where is the exercise of mercy? And if the Almighty exacted an infinite expiation, why is he represented by St. Paul as "forgiving us all offences."\* The apparent discordance between full satisfaction and gratuitous pardon is easily reconciled by the consistent view under which the Catholic Church contemplates the redemption.† As it was fully in the power of the Divinity to have consigned man to the doom which his sins had earned, to have accepted satisfaction was an instance of mercy. But having consented to receive a ransom, its value was more than sufficient to repair the injury he had received. If it were, then, an act of mercy to have been content with a propitiatory sacrifice, it must have been infinite mercy to have given for that atonement his only begotten Son. Behold, then, the exercise of justice and of mercy in the mysterious union of an infinite price and an infinite pardon. The price was the blood of the Son of God; that ransom came out of the bosom of the Eternal Father; and in thus furnishing the price that was paid to his insulted majesty, he satisfied at once the claims of justice and of mercy. Such is the idea conveyed in the following language of St. Paul: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his

\* Ephes. iv. 32. Coloss. ii. 13, &c.

† Vide Petav. de Incarnatione, lib. ii. cap. 2.

blood, to the showing of his justice for the remission of former sins through the forbearance of God, for the showing of his justice in this time : that he himself may be just, and the justifier of him who is of the faith of Jesus Christ.”\* Here, while we are told that man is justified freely by the grace of God, we are assured, at the same time, that it is through the redemption of Christ, who was set forth as a propitiation ; and again, that the *forbearance* of God was manifested *in the very showing of his justice.*”

If some have abused the idea of a gratuitous pardon into the denial of an adequate atonement, others, with a more perverse ingenuity, have deduced from the latter doctrine the licentious privilege of sin. In their estimation, that satisfaction would have been insufficient which would not have superseded the necessity of good works ; and to require any other subordinate means of salvation would be derogatory from the infinite merits of Christ. The extension of this principle to the consequences to which it leads has been equally subversive of the practical precepts, as of the ritual observances, of religion. It has nourished a species of proud fanaticism, which disdains any intermediate agency, and aspires to an immediate communication with the Deity. Sacraments it rejects as earthly symbols, unworthy of the majesty of God ; and which, instead of conveying the graces of redemption, are placed as obstacles between man and a direct contact with its source. The full atonement made by the sacrifice once offered on the cross, renders its repetition, if we are to adopt this view, injurious or unnecessary, and absolves every sinner from the necessity of any penitential expiation. The interposition of any celestial being, however exalted, would be intercepting that access to the merits of Christ which he has purchased for every individual by his passion ; and any reliance on other symbols of religion would imply an insult on the infinite price of his blood.

If experience did not attest the existence of such

\* Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

opinions, it would be scarcely credited that they could be deduced, even from the most perverted construction of the mystery of redemption. If there are in the Church sacraments possessed of spiritual efficacy, that efficacy is entirely derived from the infinite merits of the Cross. If the Redeemer has invested certain earthly elements with supernatural virtue, to deny that virtue is to deny the power, or arraign the wisdom, of the Redeemer. If it be true that he has ordained that the merits of his passion should be conveyed through certain sensible channels; to undervalue those channels of grace, is to undervalue that fountain from which they are derived. If he has positively instituted a sacrifice which repeats that of Calvary, under an unbloody form; to assert that such a repetition is inconsistent with the infinite dignity and value of the first, is to set up the presumption of man's judgment in opposition to the declared will of God. And if it appears from God's own words that there are certain subordinate mediators who offer their prayers to the Almighty for his creatures, to insinuate that such mediation is incompatible with the infinite merits of Christ, is to exercise an officious zeal for his honour, which was deemed unnecessary by himself. Were they addressed as chief agents, from whom favours might be expected independently of any other source, then might they be considered to usurp the mediation of the Redeemer. But if the glory with which they are invested, is the price of his passion; if the influence they possess with the Divinity is only the effect and manifestation of the Redeemer's friendship; whatever may be the weight or extent of their intercession, it all reflects back on the infinite source of mercy from which it is derived.

There is a circumstance connected with the particular doctrines of the Catholic Church not unworthy of attention. The arguments, which demonstrate the necessity of a guide to lead us in our religious inquiries, have often proved a stumbling-block in the way of Protestants; and some of their uncandid controvertists have

attempted to elude their force by dexterously retorting them on the champions of Catholic orthodoxy. They have told us, that we recur to this summary argument, from a consciousness that our other articles are untenable, and thus they ingeniously discover or fancy to discover weakness, in the clearest proof of victory. The observation has had the effect of awakening the industry of individuals, who have poured a flood of light and learning on every article of our creed.\* Before the period of what is called the Reformation, the sacraments were rarely a subject of controversy. No wonder, therefore, that much labour was not exerted in defining what was but seldom assailed. The first reformers inveighed with peculiar vehemence against the efficacy and number of the sacraments; but Christians were not as yet prepared to behold with indifference the very foundations of their religion attacked. The reformers therefore prudently confined themselves to the other doctrines of the Church, aware that the faithful would have startled at the discussion of those mysteries, which have since been made the theme of rash and irreverent controversy. The severity with which this portion of the Christian religion was attacked, had the corresponding effect of calling forth increased zeal and energy in its support. Next to the great question of justification, the sacraments engaged the principal attention of the assembled Fathers of the Council of Trent. It was difficult to separate topics that had so natural an affinity, and after exploring, as far as it is given to human reason to explore, the depths of the fountain, it was natural to follow the streams into which it poured its riches. From that time, the doctrines connected with the sacraments possess a peculiar interest; and writers of eminence have illustrated by their researches a theological subject, on which similar attention had not been previously bestowed.

Were I to extend this subject proportionably to the

\* Such as Bellarmine, Drouen, the learned author of the work entitled "De Re Sacramentaria," and Chardon, the historian of the "Sacraments of the Church," &c.

preceding parts of this work, the general reader who had accompanied me so far, might feel more reluctance in getting over the remainder of the way. In the first part, I have been, principally, leagued in a common cause with Christians of every denomination; and have freely availed myself of their joint aid, in defence of our common religion. Hence, the subject opened a wide field of inquiry, and occasionally conducted us into paths diversified with profane learning. The second part assumes a more contracted form, because our object is to ascertain to what class of Christians the genuine features of Christianity belong. At this stage of our progress, there is a partial desertion of our old friends; and many who cheerfully engage in the general defence of Christianity, are provoked at the unsocial character of a Church which assumes an exclusive possession of its doctrines, and are unwilling, on that account, even to discuss her pretensions. Still, however, writers, not professedly theologians, have occasionally cast a glance at this important subject, and hence the austerity of its theological form is softened down by a mixture of historical, I might say of classical complexion. But in developing the nature of the peculiar doctrines of our Church, writers, not entirely polemical, take but little interest. And therefore the discussion of them less mixed with other topics, exhibits more of the genuine ruggedness of the character of the schools. Unwilling to fatigue my readers by a long journey through a new region, yet anxious to lead them on, in the hope that their toil may be rewarded by the repose of a quiet conviction, I can only promise to compensate by the shortness and expedition with which I purpose to conduct them over the remainder of the way, for its obvious want of much pleasing variety.

It has been remarked by St. Augustine, and the remark is founded upon reason, that the members of every religion must be united by peculiar symbols. They are the links that bind them together, and the moment they are broken, the religious society is

dissolved. Such symbols are generally known by the name of sacraments, because they are expressive of a secret and holy tie, which binds men together in the same worship. Of the existence, in every age of the world, of such sacred ceremonies, as symbols of religious worship or as secondary instruments of salvation, we have a strong presumption in what we know of the nature of God and the feelings of man; and that presumption is fortified by the relics of ancient ceremonies, mingled alike in the traditions of every nation. The religious rites, which abounded in the old law, were the strongest links that united the chosen people. They gave a distinct form to the Jewish religion, and as long as they were punctually observed, they separated its followers from any connection with the Pagans. What experience showed to be necessary for the existence and permanence of every religious society, Christ likewise adopted, in order to distinguish and perpetuate, as well as to sanctify, his own. He, too, instituted sacraments or religious ceremonies, which form a visible bond of connexion between his followers. That they serve to distinguish Christians from every other society is a truth too simple for disputation. It is acknowledged by all. But whether the sacraments of the new law be invested with a higher and a holier virtue, is a question on which a great deal of subtle controversy has been expended. That they have been endued by Christ with the efficacy of producing grace, provided they meet with no obstacle in the subject, is a doctrine always believed in the Church, and solemnly defined by the Fathers of Trent.\* Nay, Protestants admit this efficacy in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. For without an inherent efficacy to produce grace, in vain would you administer to infants the rite of Baptism, since they are incapable of forming acts of any virtue.

From the poverty of language and its insufficiency to express the infinite variety of our ideas, or from an attachment to a venerable name, it is found that an

\* Sess. vii. de Sacram. can. 8.

ancient word is often retained, though it may have deviated from its primitive import, to assume a more recent meaning. Such has been the case in the Catholic Church, by the adoption of the word sacrament into her liturgy. It has varied its original, or rather assumed another sense, in addition to that which it originally implied. Though called by the same name, the sacraments of the old and new law differ as much as the shadow from the substance. The former were ceremonies calculated to strike the senses, and awaken that faith of which they were only the symbols. The latter are real vehicles of grace, and actually contain that efficacy which they are believed to convey. In this difference, to use a scholastic phrase, consists that new relation with which the sacraments of the Christian Church have been invested.

After a curious variety of opinions and frequent retouchings of their pliant faith, some of the Protestants have at length settled in the belief of only two sacraments. Much difference may be created by the different meaning that is annexed to language; and hence, if the notion of Protestants regarding a sacrament were essentially different from ours, we should not wonder much that there should be a difference about their number. But, strange to say, the conditions required by us are also involved in their definition.\* All agree that the sign or element called a sacrament must be instituted by Christ; and that a power of communicating grace to our souls, must reside in such a rite in the opinion of Protestants themselves, is clear from their practice of infant baptism, else it were a vain and nugatory ceremony. Yet these conditions of a sensible sign, divine institution, and power of conferring grace, are as applicable to the five sacraments which they reject, as to the two which they embrace, and therefore suspicion is excited in the very onset, that some other reason besides logical argument has led them to their conclusions.

\* Catechism in the Common Prayer Book. See the twenty-fifth of the Thirty-nine Articles.

In the rapid view which I intend to exhibit of each of the sacraments, I shall point the reader's attention to the supernatural virtue with which Christ has informed them. Though the testimonies of the primitive Fathers are copious and conclusive, I shall not now stop to exhibit them, content with an argument as strong as it is simple, and which is the more forcibly to be insisted on as it is adapted to every mind. At the period when the reformers rose to disturb the peace of the Church, the Christian world was agreed in the belief of seven sacraments. Not confined to the Latin Church, this doctrine was found also among the Greeks, a fact which is still attested by evidence the most authentic, and which the artifice of the Reformers became instrumental in establishing. The divines of Augsberg, anxious to give a sanction to their errors, by securing the support of the eastern Church, opened a correspondence with Jeremy, the patriarch of Constantinople, soliciting his signature to the articles of their creed. In the quarter from which they sought aid they found nought but disappointment, and the good old patriarch, indignant at the repetition of their sacrilegious overtures, closed the negotiation with little ceremony.\* Baffled in this attempt, they despaired of tampering with the faith of the Greek Church during the life of this vigilant pastor. They found a more ready instrument for their purpose in Cyril Lucar, who not long after filled the see of Constantinople, a crafty and hypocritical character, whose ductile faith was ever obedient to his temporal interest. Having lent the sanction of his name to the confession of Augsberg, the Protestants triumphed in their alliance with the Oriental Churches.† However their triumph was of short continuance. The Greeks burnt with zeal to efface so foul a calumny, and to disclaim every connexion with the sectaries of the Western Church. Synods were accordingly assembled in the chief cities of the East, in which they asserted the purity of their ancient faith,

\* *Perpétuité de la Foi*, tom. i. lib. iv., cap. 4.

† *Ibid.* cap. 6.

and anathematised the perfidy of the patriarch of Constantinople.\* The faith of the seven sacraments was unanimously acquiesced in by those councils: Cyril was deposed and banished from his see, and in his tragical end (such had been the horror excited by his guilt) the people recognized the punishment of his apostasy.

Now, what could have produced such a conformity of faith between those distant and hostile Churches, in the supposition that the belief of the seven sacraments and of the other peculiar articles of the Catholic Church is not coeval with Christianity itself? Their introduction since the schism, which was opened fresh and widened under Michael Cerularius, is a supposition at war with every known principle of human conduct, Nor is it easier to account for their invention at any preceding period. That Rome adopted the sacraments from the Greeks is a conjecture that can scarcely be hazarded. It would ill accord with the stern and inflexible character, which in religion, as formerly in arms, always distinguished the mistress of the world. The Greeks were no less unwilling to borrow from the Romans. They justly boasted of their superior learning; of the eight first councils which had been celebrated among them; and perpetually reproached the Latin Church with the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist.† From the fourth to the ninth century was a period of hollow friendship and intermittent hostility; and the pontiffs of Rome and the patriarchs of Constantinople, though the source of their jurisdiction was very different, like the Roman leaders mentioned in Lucian, were impatient, the one of a rival, and the other of a superior. During this protracted contest, which time was only embittering, we cannot suppose that the Greeks would adopt from the Romans, whom they despised as barbarians, the accession of five sacraments to their faith, while they were engaged in a perpetual quarrel about less important ceremonies.

\* Amat. de Graveson. *Hist. Ecclesiast.* tom. viii. p. 125 et seqq.

† See Maimbourg, *Hist. du Schisme des Grecs*, passim.

That all the Oriental Churches agreed with that of Rome in the belief of seven sacraments, at the time of the Reformation, is clear from the correspondence with framers of the confession of Augsburg, to which we have already alluded. This accordance was not merely in the name, but also in the sense and meaning, which they attached to those mysteries.\* The Greek liturgies are no less expressive than those of the Latin Church, of the supernatural grace which resides in the sacraments. Far from considering them as mere symbols, instituted only for the purpose of connecting Christians, the Greeks revere them as living vehicles of grace and instruments of virtue.† Nor do the inspired writings warrant us to entertain a different opinion of the sacraments. That they are more than mere exterior signs of the profession of the same faith is clearly evinced, from the line of difference, which the apostle draws between them and the rites of the Jewish law. The sacraments of the Jewish law are represented by him as “weak and needy elements,”‡ and its laws unprofitable; an introduction, it is true, “of a better hope, yet bringing nothing to perfection;”§ and its votaries as servants, or at best but children, placed under the tutelage of guardians and governors.|| Again, the new law is represented as “a better ministry, founded on better promises,”¶ substituted for the former, because the former had not been faultless; and its followers dignified with the appellation of sons, raised to the rank of freemen, and enjoying all the fulness of the divine inheritance. Lest, however, it should be imagined that the rites of the new law do not participate in that excellence which is its general character, they are always exhibited as living instru-

\* See the fifth volume of the immortal work on the “Perpetuity of the Faith.” It sets the conformity between the two Churches, not only on important articles of faith, but even on minute details of discipline, in the clearest light.

† See the Correspondence with the patriarch Jeremy, already quoted, note, page 390.

‡ Galat. iv. 9.

§ Heb. vii. 18, 19.

|| Galat. iv. 1, 2.

¶ Heb. viii. 6 et seqq.

ments of grace. Hence the apostle says of baptism : " Know ye not that all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus, are baptised in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, in like manner we shall be of his resurrection."\* Here the apostle expressly mentions that by baptism we receive all the effects of the death of Christ, and that the newness of life which is brought out of the sacred font corresponds with the glory of the resurrection. A similar effect may be traced to the language which the apostles and evangelists apply to the other sacraments. But since adverse interpreters may deduce from the same words the most opposite conclusions, it may be more safe to refer the reader briefly to the doctrine of the ancient fathers, whose minds were free from the prejudices that may now be supposed to sway controversial writers.

Had these venerable teachers of the Christian religion conceived the sacraments to be nothing more than mere pledges of grace, devoid of the power of producing it, we must be at a loss to understand why they should have wasted their eloquence and ingenuity in celebrating their extraordinary virtue, and looking out for fit objects of illustration. Had they been in the nature of a promissory note, such as the greater part of Protestants represent them, the exhibition of which would ensure the promised payment, surely there would be nothing in such a compact that could perplex the most ordinary understanding. But instead of conveying to the faithful such a cold idea of the sacraments, they search heaven and earth for appropriate comparisons, one time likening the efficacy imparted by the Holy Ghost in the baptismal font to the heat which the fire communicates to a boiling cauldron : †

\* Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5.

† St. Cyril. Alex. lib. ii. in Joan.

at another, illustrating the spiritual regeneration of the child, by the equally mysterious formation of the embryo;\* again likening it to the mystery of the incarnation;† and again comparing the grace of baptism to that prolific spirit‡ which moved over the waters, impregnating the inert element with the principle of life.

However, the native efficacy of the sacraments is not incompatible with certain conditions in him who receives them. There are few agents that do not require the aid of secondary causes, without the cooperation of which the chief one would be often rendered abortive. It is then guilty temerity to attempt to strip the sacraments of their virtue, because that virtue will not vanquish every obstacle that may oppose them. Light and heat are the two objects in nature to which the efficacy of the sacraments is most analogous. Yet fire is not deemed destitute of a burning quality because it cannot act on incombustible materials; nor are the windows of a room supposed to be the causes of light, though necessary to ensure its admission. If the effect of the sacraments must be traced to the dispositions of the subject as the efficient cause, if all their virtue be derivable from the faith of those on whom they are conferred, it is strange that baptism should be administered to infants, who are incapable of any act of that divine virtue. Hence, as baptism could not be an instrument of awakening faith in an infant, some, to give consistency to their tenets and their practice, have concluded that it was not necessary. If baptism be unnecessary, original sin is but a name; and thus, by a logical development of the consequences of their first principle, some Pro-

\* St. Chrysost. Hom. 25 in Joan. St. Gregor. Nyssen. Orat. in Baptism. Christi.

† St. Leon. Serm. 5 in Nativ.

‡ How forcibly does Tertullian, in the earliest times, point out the doctrine of the sacraments as still professed in the Catholic Church: "Aquæ sanctificatæ (baptismatis) vim sanctificandi combibunt."—Lib. ii. de Bapt. cap. iv. See also de Resur. Carn. cap. 8.

testants have got rid of the chief mysteries of the Christian faith.\*

Nor is it matter of wonder, that after the rejection of one mysterious truth, the mind should not calmly acquiesce in the adoption of others. It is beyond the comprehension of the understanding how material water can be invested with the extraordinary power of reaching the soul, and washing away its impurities. The baptismal font is the channel through which the grace of redemption is conveyed to the infant. But if you dispense with the application of water, because you cannot conceive its mysterious operation, the same reason will extend to the source of redemption itself. After your faith in the incarnation is shaken, original sin disappears; punishment is but a phantom: loosen man from the fear of punishment, and the whole system of morality is unravelled; and thus we would be plunged again into the darkness from which we have emerged, and obliged once more to endeavour to collect the scattered relics of truth from the unanimous traditions of mankind.

\* See Milner's Letters to a Prebendary: Let. viii. on Hoadlyism.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

## BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, THE EUCHARIST.

The Tradition of Original Sin vaguely spread through the Nations of the Earth.—Nature and efficacy of Baptism as described in the Inspired Writings.—Its beneficial effects on the happiness of Society.—Confirmation.—Its different administration in the Greek and Latin Churches.—Its Effects.—The Impression of a Character.—The Eucharist.—The Catholic Doctrine of the Eucharist confessed by its enemies to be most favourable to Virtue.—The arguments by which Protestants assail it would strip Christianity of all its Mysteries.—Habitual discussion about a figurative sense renders Protestants insensible to the impression of the Real Presence, which the simple language of Scripture is exclusively calculated to convey.—Reflection on the nature and properties of literal and metaphorical Language.—The Doctrine of the Real Presence clearly laid down in the Scripture.—Obvious difference between the Words of Institution and the Figurative Passages of Scripture, between which an analogy has been sought by the Reformers.—Ludicrous meeting between Luther and a Brother Reformer on the subject of impugning or defending the Doctrine of the Real Presence.

WERE we to explore the doctrines and ceremonies of the different nations of the globe, we should find lasting monuments of the tenet on which baptism is founded. The Jews had the ceremony of circumcision; the Pagans had other expiatory rites; such was the belief of the hereditary depravity of human nature, that all nations may be said to have borne testimony to the language of St. Paul:—"By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.\* The melancholy truth conveyed in the words of the apostle was perceived by all. Even the most virtuous felt an involuntary propensity to guilt, which their conscience condemned; and therefore they concluded that such a struggle must be owing to some original

\* Rom. v. 12.

defect, which it was not in their power to control. Sensible, from their own weakness, that the root of these disorders was transmitted with the birth of the infant, they attempted to heal an evil beyond their power, by having recourse to the Divinity by expiatory rites. The origin of these ceremonies must have been coeval with the period at which their necessity was perceived; but time, which blotted out the distinct memory of original sin, also introduced into those rites a mixture of superstition. Such was the state of mankind, having a strong impression of their misfortune, an indistinct notion of its cause, and a still weaker one of its remedy, when the apostle led them back to the source of their corruption, and pointed to the fountain by which it should be washed away.

“But death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of the transgression of Adam, who is a figure of him who was to come. For if by one man’s offence death reigned through one, much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, unto all men to condemnation; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just.”\* Through this series of antithesis, the apostle contrasts the opposite effects of sin and justification; showing that the influence of the one was coextensive with that of the other. He does not, however, tell us through what channel the justification purchased by Christ is to be applied to our souls. If, however, it be an omission, the omission is supplied by other clear testimonies of the inspired writings. “Unless a man be born again,” says the Redeemer, “of water and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”† “Go ye

\* Rom. v. 14, 17, 18, 19.

† John, iii. 5.

into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”\* That baptism is the channel through which the infinite source of justification is conveyed, is also clear from the writings of the apostles. “But when the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared,” says St. Paul, “not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us *by the laver of regeneration*, and renovation of the Holy Ghost.”† Similar is the language of St. Peter:—“Whereunto baptism being of the like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”‡

The moral influence of the doctrines of the Catholic Church cannot be better illustrated than by the change introduced by the sacrament of baptism into society. Before its institution, the life of an infant was considered but of little value, and therefore but little care was taken of its safety. Its preservation or its destruction became a matter of calculation with political economists, according as it was conjectured that it was likely to become a support or a burden to the commonwealth. The dissolute state of morals, too, was fatal to children. Without sufficient virtue to restrain them from guilt, yet not altogether lost to the shame of its exposure, the inhuman murder of their offspring was a frequent practice among those who indulged in criminal connexion. The fear of infamy was aided by the dread of future indigence, while neither of these powerful incentives to infanticide was checked by the influence of religion. The evil was felt and deplored, but all efforts to arrest it were unavailing. Philosophy *sometimes* reprobated the practice: its lessons were unheeded, while the general current of example ran in the contrary direction. The few words, “unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he

\* Mark, xvi. 15, 16.

† Tit. iii. 4, 5.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

cannot enter into the kingdom of God," have effected what the combined power of laws and philosophy could never achieve. The grand inheritance for which man is born ennobles his very infancy, and throws a shield of protection over the helplessness of the cradle. A child regarded in no other light than as he might serve the interests of the state, was, indeed, necessarily exposed to abandonment. But none could treat with any feeling but that of reverence the young and illustrious heir of a heavenly kingdom. Hence, even shame, one of the strongest feelings of the human heart, yielded to the authority of religion; the most profligate would not make away with her offspring without marking it with the august seal of its inheritance, and thus its destruction was retarded or rather entirely averted. The baptismal font has become, therefore, the most prolific source of blessings to society; and like the waters of Siloe,\* it remains in the bosom of the Christian Church, possessing a permanent virtue of removing those disorders, which all the power of man could not heal.

It is remarked by the learned Chardon, who bestowed much labour on the subject, that, until the time of Luther and his associates, the sacrament of confirmation had never been controverted in the Church.† It may, therefore, excite our surprise that, while Protestants retain others which have been combated, they should reject a sacrament which had the whole weight of antiquity in its favour. Pretending, as they do, to be entirely guided by the written word, our surprise might be less, if it had not such clear and unequivocal Scriptural evidence in its favour. Out of many passages of the New Testament, the following will be sufficient to convince every reader that confirmation is a sacrament entirely distinct from baptism, and that it also confers the Holy Ghost. "Now, when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to

\* John, ix. 7, 11.

† Hist. des Sacremens, tom. i. p. 405.

them Peter and John. Who when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For he was not yet come upon any of them : but they were only baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost."\* So striking was the effect produced by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, that Simon offered to purchase with money the same supernatural power.† But the sacrilegious proposal was indignantly rejected by St. Peter, who told the impious man that money could not purchase the gifts of God.

It would, doubtless, appear a superfluous labour to quote the testimonies of the ancient fathers in favour of a tenet which has not been controverted even by the heretics, who opposed the other doctrines of the Catholic Church. In every age, the rite of confirmation has been scrupulously administered, and its administration generally reserved to the bishops. In the mode of conferring it there has been some variety in different places and periods of the Church. But this variety cannot affect our belief in the efficacy of confirmation, more than in the sacramental rite of baptism, which has undergone similar changes ;‡ but which, whether performed, as of old, by immersion, or in modern times, by infusion, has been uniformly administered with water, and in the name of the Blessed Trinity. Equally unsubstantial are the varieties that are discovered between the ancient and modern practice of administering confirmation, and others of the sacraments. In the primitive Church, it was conferred after baptism by the bishop ; by a subsequent practice, it is reserved for a more adult age. In the Greek and Oriental Churches, the ancient mode of administering confirmation still prevails ;§ and the discrepancy of practice between them and the Western Churches has led some into a belief that their chrism, as the

\* Acts, viii. 14, et seqq.

† Ibid. 18.

‡ See Tournely de Sacram. Baptism. art. iii.

§ Vide Goar. Rituale Græcorum Officium S. Baptismatis.

confirmation is called, is not distinct from the unction which accompanies baptism. However, a fuller knowledge of antiquity has enabled others to correct this mistake by showing that between the ancient and modern practice of the Greeks, there is only this difference, that the imposition of hands is now less observable than in the primitive Church.\*

This apparent omission of what would seem an essential ceremony has opened a wide field of scholastic disputation. While the Greeks have professed the doctrine of seven *mysteries*, as particularly appears from their writings subsequent to the correspondence with the divines of Augsburg; some Catholic theologians have hesitated to discover that of confirmation among the number. Having fixed arbitrary conditions for the essence, as they called it, of a sacrament, they regulated the faith of others by their own standard, and excluded from the rank of sacrament every rite in which these conditions were not found. With a zeal neither enlightened by learning nor controlled by prudence, they censured what the Church never condemned: and thus infused new bitterness into the wounds of that fatal schism by which the Eastern and Western Churches have been long torn asunder. A spirit of conciliation, where the interests of faith are not compromised, ought to direct the pen of every writer on subjects that divide large portions of Christianity. It is such a spirit that has always guided the Catholic Church in her conduct towards her separated children. Unwilling to exasperate, she has rather studied to heal the wounds which the passions of the ancients have inflicted. Inflexible in her doctrine, she has encouraged freedom of opinion; unchangeable in her faith of the sacraments, as well as in every other tenet, she has tolerated a variety in their ceremonies. That the practice of the Greeks is not incompatible with the integrity of the sacraments is clear from the circumstance, that the Catholic Church never required of them to change

\* Chardon, *Hist. des Sacrem.*, tom. i., p. 429.

it in any of those overtures by which an accommodation was attempted.

On the effects which are produced by all the sacraments it is unnecessary to detain the reader's attention or prolong his patience. These effects are implied in the very terms by which the first notion of a sacrament is conveyed. But there is a peculiarity about the preceding sacraments as well as that of orders, which draws a strong line of distinction between them and the other four; and this peculiarity consists in the impression of a character. The reason of the difference may be traced to the analogy of society. By baptism we become citizens of the empire of Jesus Christ, and of course should wear some uniform to distinguish us from infidels. The error of the Calvinists on this point is, that they confine the whole effect of the sacrament to this distinct habit;\* thus confounding the badge of Christian profession with the graces which it has conferred. By confirmation we become soldiers, who are distinguished from ordinary citizens; by orders we become priests, a description of persons who have been discriminated in every age and in every religion by the peculiarity of their habit; and hence there is, in the receiving of each of those sacraments, an enrolment into a distinct class of society, peculiar to it alone. The indelible character which they impress is the reason why they are not repeated like the other sacraments. The dignity which they confer brings with it a pledge of fidelity in fulfilling the duties they impose; and a lively sense of those duties must have a corresponding effect on the morals of mankind. By baptism we profess to observe the laws of our Redeemer. By confirmation a still higher obligation is contracted—that of fighting valiantly in their defence. It may be said that the impression of such obligation is but feeble. That, surely, which entirely proceeds from those who abuse them, cannot be imputed as a defect to those holy rites. On

\* Calvin. Institut. lib. iv. cap. 15.

those who approach them with a feeling sense of the engagements they contract, they produce effects in which their supernatural virtue becomes visible. Much may be said of the force of sentiment and imagination, but it never will account for the reformation of human conduct. The hope of bearing a glorious testimony to the truth, and the fear of being marked with the ignominious seal of apostasy from the faith, has sustained the courage of many a martyr; and there must have been something more than *human* in the spirit that could cheerfully endure torments which all the patience of philosophy never could subdue. The same spirit that animated the martyrs is given to Christians, through the medium of confirmation; and its divine influence may be still traced by a philosopher in the astonishing resignation with which they bear the ills of life.

The dignity of the sacrament of the Eucharist, as well as the controversies to which it has given birth, requires that it should occupy the particular attention of a writer who has undertaken to unfold the evidences of the Catholic Church, as well as the beauty of its doctrines. Like others of our tenets which are assailed by Protestants, the doctrine of the Eucharist is particularly favourable to virtue. I cannot better describe the wholesome influence of the belief of the real presence on the interests of morality, than in the feeling, though reluctant, acknowledgment of a celebrated infidel: "It is impossible to imagine a mystery better calculated to restrain man within the limits of his duty. What reliance should not be placed on men who receive their God amidst ceremonies calculated to awe the imagination and move the heart? An altar sparkling with gold and blazing with the light of a hundred tapers, and a temple resounding with tones of solemn and sacred harmony! The imagination is subdued, the senses are melted, the attention is fixed, while each incorporates with his own flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of his God, amidst a still and breathless silence. Who, after such a scene, would presume to commit a sin, or

even conceive the first thought of a voluntary transgression.”\*

After a reasonable deduction from this writer's usual exaggerated tone, and allowing, perhaps, that in thus exalting the speculative belief of the Catholics, he sought to reproach some of them with the inconsistency of their practice: still his words are a homage, which the purity of the Catholic faith has extorted. In undertaking, therefore, the defence of this tenet, I feel the consolation that I am advocating the cause of morality and virtue. The circumstance is in itself a strong presumption in favour of truth, since truth and virtue are so closely allied. The Eucharist is a subject which associates at once whatever is tender with all that is sublime in religion. The other mysteries of Christianity command a distant reverence. The Eucharist renders the Divinity more accessible, though still shrouded in mystery; and God may be said, as it were, here to lay aside his terrors, in order to treat man with a condescension which must awaken the kindest feelings of the human heart, without diminishing its veneration.

Though much ingenuity has been resorted to in attempting to disguise the points at issue between Protestants and Catholics, yet the line of separation is too strong to be mistaken. However studied the ambiguity in which Protestant writers labour to couch their opinions, and however artful their phraseology, still there is as marked a difference between them and the Catholic Church on this subject, as there is between the shadow and the substance. In the Eucharist, after consecration, Catholics believe that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, who resides there in all the reality of his body and blood, soul and divinity; while Protestants believe only a figurative presence, and that the bread and wine remain totally unaltered. Such is the simple state of the controversy, when stripped of the cumbrous mass of disingenuous opinions.

\* Voltaire, quoted by Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christianisme*. De l'Eucharistie.

It will not be deemed an irrelevant observation to remark, that the appeals to Scripture so frequently made by Protestants are anything but a proof of the strength of their cause. Similar appeals are made in behalf of Socinianism. Nay, they are artifices by which the sectaries of every age have striven to give a plausible colour to their errors. Nor does it require a profound acquaintance with the nature of man to perceive that the most effectual means to ensure a reception for any system with the proud and profligate, is to teach them to consult the Scriptures unawed by any authority.\* The leading argument, then, which is used in the front of every discussion, is at best but a two-edged sword, which may cut either way, and often wounds the hand that wields it. Yes, the Protestants experienced such effects from their boasted appeal to Scriptures. The same theological engine by which they laboured to twist into a metaphorical sense all the words of Scripture regarding the Eucharist, was dexterously handled by the Socinians, in order to torture into a similar meaning, the passages that expressed the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. Little did they imagine that the force which they turned against the Catholics would ever recoil upon themselves. Some of the first reformers foresaw, indeed, the consequences of their own rashness, and their prophetic fears have been sadly realised.† The weapons which they wielded against Catholic mysteries have been since indiscriminately directed against those which the Church of England has retained; and if Protestants are obliged to complain of their force, they ought to recollect that it is they who have given strength to the arm that flung them.

They have found, then, that the arguments from reason which they were in the habit of using against the Eucharist would have the effect, not only of strip-

\* How fully do the unlearned and unstable of every age verify the reproach of St. Peter, by wresting "the Scriptures to their own destruction!"—2 Peter, iii. 16.

† See Discuss. Amic., Lett. iii., pp. 124, 125, &c.

ping Christianity of its mysteries, but of dissolving the very elements of natural religion. On that account, some have confessed that they rejected the real presence, not indeed on account of the repugnance of the doctrine, but because a figurative presence seemed the natural commentary on the words of revelation. Hence they have exhausted their ingenuity, and tried every expedient of verbal criticism, to prove the figurative meaning of the words of institution. The artifice, however, is concealed under a thin and awkward disguise; because, with all their pretensions to the true sense of the words of Christ, they rest their chief argument on the inherent difficulties of the mystery. As, therefore, Protestants are forced to confess the danger of any other line of reasoning, which they must particularly feel, by being exposed to the adverse reproaches of Socinians, who say that they cannot consistently believe any mysteries; or of Catholics, who tell them that the same reasons oblige them to believe all; the subject becomes narrowed into this simple question, whether the real, or a figurative, presence be the easy, the obvious, and the natural construction of the language of Scripture?

One of the most ordinary causes of the erroneous judgment which the Protestants form of the Scriptural language regarding the Eucharist is, that by making it the subject of ingenious criticism, they stifle the first natural impression, which it is calculated to make on every reader. This artificial process diverts the mind from the ordinary to a far-fetched meaning; and habitual discussion familiarizes it to a sense, from which it would have at first revolted. The Scriptures are ransacked for phrases, which are shaped into a forced resemblance; and the mind, accustomed from infancy to such comparisons, feels not that surprise, which was first felt at the invention of the figurative interpretation, and which spontaneous surprise is after all the best evidence of an erroneous application of language. This is a source of illusion common to all

Protestants, but of which they are probably unconscious. Nay, it even so affects their understandings as to disguise that evidence, which the words of Scripture, unclouded by such constructions, would have flashed upon their minds. Now that many are familiarized to the figurative meaning, they attend only to the specious sophistry by which it is upheld, without reflecting on the violence which was offered to the common sense of mankind by its introduction. To free ourselves from the influence of modern opinions, we should, as I have observed on a former occasion, transport ourselves back to the period of the Reformation; and were Protestants to follow the advice, many a dangerous prejudice, which now impedes the discovery of truth, would be removed. They would then perceive what artifices were resorted to by Bucer and Calvin, in order to cheat the people out of their ancient faith, and propagate the system of a figurative presence. They could see how naturally the mind embraces the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, from one important fact which the history of the Reformation supplies. By the craft and chicanery of Bucer, Constance, Strasburg, and other cities of the empire were seduced into a renunciation of the belief of the real presence; but no sooner was the check of his presence removed, than their minds naturally returned to their former ideas.\*

It may be said that the universal belief was erroneous; but still it cannot be denied that it was one which the plain sense of Scripture suggested. This observation is applicable alike to the words of promise and those of institution; and is one which every Protestant ought to weigh seriously when interpreting those important passages of Scripture. "I am the living bread," says the Redeemer, "which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore,

\* Du Pin, *Histoire de l'Eglise et des Aut. Eccles. du 16<sup>me</sup> Siècle*, cap. ii. sect. 22' &c.

debated among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed: He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and died. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever. These things he said teaching in the synagogue, in Capharnaum. Many therefore of his disciples hearing it, said: this saying is hard, and who can hear it?\*"†

It may not excite our wonder, that an individual trained to the disbelief of the real presence, should fancy that this passage exhibits no more than a figurative presence. Perhaps, it may be remarked, that the habitual belief of the Catholic equally affects his faith on the Eucharist. Education, no doubt, has its influence on both; and it is my object to place the reader's mind beyond that influence, in order that he may entirely surrender it to the first and natural meaning of Christ's language. What that meaning is, we learn without reference to Protestant or Catholic, from the impression made on the simple understandings of the disciples of Capharnaum—an impression which, instead of being effaced, was rather confirmed by Christ's solemn interpretation.

Unable to fathom so deep a mystery, some of his disciples retired scandalized at the doctrine of giving them his own flesh to eat:† yet he who "had the words of eternal life,"‡ and who generally revealed himself to the little ones before the wise of the world,§ did not attempt to remove their misconceptions.

\* John, vi. 51 et seqq.

† John, vi. 67.

‡ Ibid. 69.

§ Matt. xi. 25.

Christ's conduct on that occasion confirmed the faith of those who had remained; and when, at the Last Supper, he pronounced the bread to be his body, they were prepared to behold, in the stupendous mystery, the fulfilment of his equally mysterious promise. The words of promise and of institution, separately impress the sense of Christ's real and substantial presence in the Eucharist. The argument derives additional strength from the comparison of both. Thus in one place of Scripture, Christ announces the necessity of penance, and in another we find its institution. In his conversation with Nicodemus, he spoke of the necessity of baptism,\* which he clearly revealed in the mission of the apostles.† And in his discourse to the disciples of Capharnaum, he insisted on the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood—a truth which he clearly confirmed at the Last Supper.

Some of those who deny Christ's real presence in the Eucharist admit his divinity. The admission involves the truth of this article of Catholic doctrine. In tracing backwards the belief of the real presence, from the period of the Reformation, we ascend without a chasm to the time of the apostles; and therefore we naturally conclude that such was the doctrine they announced to the world. The doctrine which they proclaimed, was that which they had received from their Divine Master; and if it was erroneous we must resign the character of Christ to imputations which are at variance with the whole tenor of his life. Those, who believe Christ to have been God, must view the Last Supper as one of the most solemn and interesting scenes that ever was presented to the eye of man. The Redeemer, encircled by the friends of his bosom, and the ministers of his priesthood, entrusts to them this last testament of his love, of which they were constituted the executors. The affection with which he accosted them afforded them a pledge of his confidence, and the solemn duties which he entrusted to their

\* John, iii.

† Matt. xxviii. 18, et seqq.

ministry, entitled them to a clear and unequivocal explanation of his doctrine. Were there anything obscure in his law, they were established its interpreters; if there were anything mysterious in his doctrine, they were appointed its expounders. Yet with the full conviction of the idolatry into which he foresaw the whole world was immediately to fall, he left his chosen apostles in an error, regarding a fundamental doctrine, which even the descent of the Holy Ghost did not remove; reserving a fuller revelation for individuals whose coarse and audacious blasphemy and licentious lives seem to have been but little entitled to any share of divine inspiration.

To this argument, as strong as it is simple, nought is opposed but some Scriptural passages; such as "I am the vine, I am the door," &c., of which the figurative meaning is as obvious, as it would be unnatural in the words of institution. By frequent reference to these passages, an unfavourable impression is made on the mind of every Protestant, who fancies he discovers a resemblance between them and the words "This is my body." To cure himself of this delusion, he ought to divest himself of the accumulated prejudices of three hundred years; in order to examine what might be the force of the other texts generally adduced to prove that the language of Christ, at the institution of the Last Supper, was metaphorical. Were he to reflect with what diligence the figurative meaning was first sought, with what difficulty it was found, and with what artifice it was propagated, he surely would hesitate before he could surrender the hereditary faith of fifteen centuries to such an argument. He then would perceive that the reformers did not abjure the belief of the real presence, because the passages now compared with the words of Christ flashed conviction on their minds. But that they twisted those texts into a forced and unnatural likeness with the words of institution, because they resolved to get rid of the real presence. Luther had long meditated the abolition of

the Mass, and invoked, in vain, the interposition of heaven, before he sought the assistance of his infernal ally.\* It cost Zuinglius the labour of five years before he found the famous solution, that the Paschal Lamb was called the Passover.† For so long a time was his ingenuity employed in searching out the figurative meaning, which, we are told, the words naturally present; and though it was sharpened by the powerful incentives of a hatred of the Catholic religion, and the ambition of leading a new sect, he still would have sought it in vain were it not suggested by an oracle, whose inspiration ought, at least, to be adopted with caution. Like Luther, he, too, had conferences with the spirits of the other world; but he throws some suspicion over the purity of the source from which he derived his revelation, by candidly confessing that the apparition was one of doubtful physiognomy.‡

To show the wide disparity between the words of institution and the examples on which the Calvinists rely, it may be necessary to treat this subject more profoundly than is usually done, and to lead the reader back to the first principles of human language. I shall not wait for the conclusion of this subject without acknowledging the valuable source from which I have derived much information; and I am not ashamed to confess, that in the entire of the following observations on the metaphorical examples of the Calvinists the learned reader can track me every step through the work on *the Perpetuity of the Faith*.§

As language is the organ of communicating our ideas to others, it must be obvious that it would be a useless instrument were men able to ascertain each other's thoughts by a secret intuition. Again, language would assume a much more diffusive form, did we not suppose our hearers possessed of an imperfect knowledge of our thoughts, by which we might regulate our expressions. The least attention to the subject of language shows

\* Ep. ad Argentin. tom. vii., fol. 502.

† See ante, p. 397, note.

‡ "Ater fuerit, an albus nihil memini." Vide Schlüssel, in proem. Theol. Calv.

§ Tom. ii. liv. i. cap. 11, &c.

that the great variety of closeness or diffusion which it may assume depends upon this vague knowledge of our mutual conceptions. Hence, in discourse, our ideas are expanded or compressed, as we perceive the slowness or the quickness of our hearer's apprehension. When we know by a secret intelligence the minds of others, and anticipate how they would understand our language, we cautiously choose the expressions that are calculated to convey the particular ideas which we are most anxious to impart.

Again, there are certain objects which we regard solely as they are presented to our view ; and others, which have a double relation ; the one confined solely to their own nature, the other transferred to the representation of some other object. This secondary or representative character an object may have from nature or convention. We are supposed to know that others regard those objects in the same light. When it is therefore ascertained that two individuals are agreed that any object is a sign or representative of another, then the sign may assume the name of the thing signified, without offering violence to the propriety of language. Thus one may say of the king's picture, that is the king ; or of a map of this country, that is Ireland. And why ? Because you are conscious that a man does not inquire what is the primitive nature of those objects, since he knows it already, but what particular objects they represent. And as you know that the latter question is implied in the proposed interrogatory, you catch his meaning by answering, it is the king, or it is Ireland—leaving the words in sign or in figure to correspond with the analogous question of what are they the sign ? which you already read in the mind of the speaker. If, on the contrary, you were to speak to a person who was not aware of the secondary or conventional meaning of these expressions, you could not give the sign the name of the represented object. Thus, were an Indian who knew nought of the use of writing to be shown a map, and to be told that is America, we would violate the

propriety of language as much as we would, in the former instance, act conformably with its justest principles. And why? Because we could not expect that interior question, of what is this the sign? which would spare the repetition of the same words in the answer.

Now, the application of these few principles will show that the words of Christ at the Last Supper were not figurative. The proposition, *this is my body*, understood in a figurative meaning, is contrary to the principles of language as well as to common sense, its best and most faithful interpreter. For bread neither is nor was at any period one of those natural signs which by common consent represent another object. If the thing be not naturally so, it requires mutual agreement to invest it with that character. The apostles, then, were not prepared to regard the bread in any point of view as a representation of Christ's body. Christ did not, therefore, calculate on any interior inquiry concerning what did the bread signify, nor on any secret intelligence, supplying the supposed omission, *this is my body in sign*, or *this is the sign of my body*. This would be a mode of speech that would outrage common sense, nor has it any analogy in language. I will not detail the argument derived from the singular and solemn circumstance in which Christ uttered these expressions: I will not again advert to the circumstance of this being the last legacy of his love to his disciples: nor shall I dwell on his character as God, who should have foreseen and obviated the supposed universal delusion that obviously sprung from this expression. But regarding him only in the light of a serious man addressing serious people, no wise man could use such expressions, and intend a figurative meaning. One of the first and most natural laws of metaphor is, that it be not strained nor far-fetched; nor would the most practised master of eloquence value himself much on the use of a figure, which would have escaped the understanding of his audience. If the figure be beyond the ordinary road of observation, as that of Christ would have been, then it

becomes conceit—a species of language which wisdom always disowns. The discovery of occult resemblances is the province of the wit or the punster; if the resemblance be natural though unexpected, it excites a pleasing surprise; if forced, it provokes ridicule: but of surprise or ridicule, there is no appearance manifested by the apostles, nor can we abandon Christ to the imputation of sporting on so solemn an occasion with the feelings of his apostles. If the figure is plain and natural, why cost the first discoverer the torture of five years in finding it? Or why, after it has been found, does it not strike everyone as natural? On the contrary, every unprejudiced man, instead of wondering how the figurative sense was so long missed, wonders rather by what perverseness of ingenuity it was ever discovered.

From the examples so frequently quoted by the Calvinists, it would seem they had laid it down as a principle, that because some propositions are figurative, they are justified in wresting others to a similar signification. Nothing but some such idea could have induced them to collect passages between which and the words of Christ at the Last Supper there is not the most distant resemblance. We are told, until the repetition tires, that the figurative sentences, “*I am the vine, I am the door, I am the bread of life,*” &c., should have prepared the apostles to understand the words, “*this is my body,*” in a figurative sense. But, in my apprehension, they should have had the contrary effect of confirming the apostles in the literal meaning of Christ’s language. For they might well have observed, that though Christ had said he was the vine, he was the door, he was the bread, he could not without impropriety reverse these propositions, and say this vine, or this door, or this bread is Christ, without preparing his hearers for so unusual and unnatural a metaphor. Perfectly similar, however, would be the proposition of Christ, “*this is my body;*” and still because they heard Christ making use of easy and natural and obvious metaphors, they

ought to believe that he spoke figuratively at the Last Supper, though the form of words would have outraged every ascertained rule or usage of language!

Even when Christ said he was the vine or the door, he did not stop there, but followed up his allusions in a strain of comparison, which no one could mistake. When he says to his disciples: "The field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; and the cockle are the children of the wicked one;"\* did he not evidently see that they were prepared for a figurative meaning?—did they not say: "Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field?"† Hence there was no obscurity in these parables, nor danger of misleading the hearers; since according to the circumstances of their ignorance or knowledge, or their superior quickness or slowness of apprehension, the language of Christ was compressed into metaphor or expanded into comparison. But there is not a single hint accompanying the words of institution, to warn his disciples of any secondary meaning. All the evangelists retain nearly the same language; St. Matthew‡ and St. Mark§ perfectly coincide; St. Paul again repeats almost the same expressions, with circumstances that give additional force to the literal sense.|| Surely we must be astonished that if the words were understood by the apostles in the figurative meaning, not one of them should have revealed the important secret to the world. If the difference between these vaunted comparisons and the words of institution be so clear, that it must be fatiguing to pursue the subject farther, we cannot but be surprised at the confidence of those who insult their readers' understanding by their daily repetition.

Nothing but the importance into which this controversy has swelled could induce me to pursue the minuter questions into which it has branched. I shall close the Scriptural view of the subject by one or two reflections more on the examples which are quoted

\* Matt. xiii. 38.

† Ibid. 30.

‡ Ibid. xxvi. 26 et seqq.

§ Mark, xiv. 22 et seqq. See also Luke, xxii.

|| 1 Cor. xi. 23 et seqq.

from the Old Testament. Circumcision has been called the covenant, and the Paschal Lamb the Passover, and therefore, we are seriously assured, bread might have been called the body of Christ. It may not be useless to lay before the reader the passage from which the first argument is drawn: "This is my covenant which you shall observe between me and you and thy seed after thee: all the male kind of you shall be circumcised; and you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, that it may be for a *sign* of the covenant between me and you."<sup>\*</sup> From the words just quoted, it appears that God required the circumcision of the male children as a positive condition of the compact which he wished to establish between him and the holy seed. The first part announces the precept of circumcision, the latter the object of that ceremony; but nowhere is the name of covenant given to the ceremony itself. Though if it were, it would be a form of expression quite analogous to the feelings and customs of all the people of the earth.

It has been already remarked that there are certain objects, such as maps and pictures, which the whole world view in a representative character. There are, too, certain abstract ideas which words cannot well express, and which, by the common consent of mankind, have ever been conveyed through the medium of visible symbols. Such are covenants or alliances.<sup>†</sup> Being of a spiritual or abstract nature, and yet bringing with them obligations which survive their formation, it is necessary for the contracting parties to preserve by some palpable symbols the memory of their covenant. Hence, every nation has annexed sensible ceremonies to its contracts, and this custom, founded on reason and on nature, has been particularly noticed in the inspired writings. Thus, the covenant which God entered into with Noah was ratified by the visible sign of the rainbow in the heavens.<sup>‡</sup> The covenant

Gen. xvii. 10, 11.

<sup>†</sup> Perpet. de la Foi, tom. ii. lib. i. cap. 14.

<sup>‡</sup> Gen. ix. 13 et seqq.

between Jacob and Laban is so illustrative of the preceding observations that I am tempted to transcribe a portion of the beautiful language of Genesis, in which it is recorded: "Come, therefore (they are the words of Laban) let us enter into a league: that it may be for a testimony between me and thee. And Jacob took up a stone and set up a title: and he said to his brethren, bring hither stones. And they, gathering stones together, made a heap, and they ate upon it. And Laban called it the witness heap: and Jacob the hillock of testimony; each of them according to the propriety of his language. And Laban said, This heap shall be a witness between me and thee this day, and therefore the name thereof was called Galaad, that is, the witness heap. The Lord behold and judge between us, when we shall be gone one from the other. If thou afflict my daughters, and if thou bring in other wives over them: none is witness of our speech but God, who is present and beholdeth. And he said again to Jacob: Behold this heap and the stone which I have set up between me and thee shall be a witness: this heap, I say, and the stone, be they for a testimony, if either I shall pass beyond it going towards thee, or thou shalt pass beyond it, thinking harm to me. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nachor, the God of their fathers, judge between us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac: and after he had offered sacrifices in the mountain, he called his brethren to eat bread. And when they had eaten they lodged there. But Laban arose in the night, and kissed his sons and daughters, and blessed them, and returned home."\*

The covenant made by the Almighty with Abraham was attested by ceremonies no less solemn.† In short, so generally diffused was the practice through all nations, that the ceremony by which a covenant was ratified, might be deemed, in some measure, synonymous

\* Gen. xxxi. 44, et seqq. Perpet. de la Foi, tom. i. lib. 1., p. 78, &c.

† Ibid. xv. 9, et seqq.

with the covenant itself. Hence, it would not be a departure from the recognised principles of language, to give the name of covenant to the ceremony of circumcision, by which it was perpetuated. But even here, God called circumcision the *sign* of his covenant, as he called the rainbow the sign of reconciliation with man. If, then, in the old law—a law of fear and obscurity—God so clearly instituted its principal sacrament by expressly calling it the sign of his covenant, can it be supposed that Christ would not, under a law of light and love, have clearly unfolded the sacrament which was to be the chief pledge of his affection.

That the Paschal Lamb might have been called the passover, consistently with the purposes of language, will appear obvious by a reference to the history of that ceremony. In the book of Exodus, we learn that it was a sacrifice.\* We also know from different passages of Scripture, that sacrifices often assumed the name of the object for which they were offered. Hence, the various names of peace and sin offerings which so frequently occur in the old law. And for a similar reason, the apostle calls by the name of sin, the victim of our redemption. “Him that knew no sin, he hath made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in him.”† The Paschal Lamb, or sacrifice of the passover, might, therefore, from the known analogy of Scripture, be called the passover itself.

Again, to resume our first observations on the end and propriety of language, the sign may be always substituted for the substance it represents, when we are aware that our hearers will supply the omission. Such was surely the case with the Hebrews, on being told that the Paschal Lamb was the passage. In the commencement of the chapter,‡ God directs Moses to announce to “the whole multitude of the children of Israel,” that they should sacrifice a “lamb without blemish”—a precept which must naturally rouse their curiosity, because so uncommon a sacrifice must have

\* Exod. xii.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

‡ Exod. xii. 5, 6.

had some specific and extraordinary object. Besides, the sacrifice was to be accompanied with a variety of unusual ceremonies which must have had some mysterious meaning. The lamb was to be without blemish; each was obliged to eat it in his own family; the posts of the door were to be sprinkled with its blood; it was to be taken in the evening with unleavened bread and wild lettuces; and with loins girt, shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands, all were to be in a ready attitude for some extraordinary journey.\* What, then, is more natural than that their attention should be excited by circumstances so unusual, and that they should ask, what is the meaning of this extraordinary preparation? To this natural question, surely, the obvious and natural reply was: "It is the passage;" nor was there any danger of deception when they were prepared for some such answer by their previous impatience.

Of all the texts so laboriously collected from Scripture by the Calvinists, there is only one of which the structure can be at all compared to the words of our Redeemer at the last supper. St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of the water which issued from the rock to refresh the Israelites, concludes: "And the rock was Christ."† This is the sentence which, in the form of its construction, resembles most nearly the words, *this is my body*. Not to waste, however, the reader's attention and my own by pointing out the striking marks of discrepancy between both, it will be sufficient to observe that the apostle himself has warned us in the same chapter, "that all these things happened to them in figure, and that they are written for our correction."‡ If, with his own explanation to smooth away the difficulty, the words of the apostle should be a stumbling-block in the way of the Protestant, it is to be feared that, like the disciples of Capharnaum, the source of his incredulity and scandal is in the illusion of his own conceptions.

\* Exod. xii. 11.

† I Cor. x. 4.

‡ Ibid. 11.

Such are the boasted arguments on which Protestants generally resist the universal faith of ages and of nations. It is much to be regretted that they should have the effect of obstructing that evidence which is conveyed by the simple language of our Redeemer. If they seriously direct their attention to the records of their own history, and inquire to what ludicrous circumstances the figurative doctrine of Christ's presence in the Eucharist first owed its birth, their prejudices may be removed, and their illusions dissipated. One anecdote may give the reader some idea of the indecent levity with which this subject was treated by Luther and his associates.

When Luther had issued from the retreat to which the fear of the emperor had obliged him to retire, he found that Carlostadius, following the example of his chief, had undertaken to abolish private Masses, and pushed the Reformation to a length which alarmed Luther's jealousy, and excited in him the most serious fears for the stability of his own power.\* An enthusiastic admirer of liberty beyond the sphere of his own jurisdiction, an impassioned declaimer against despotism, except when exercised by himself, Luther inveighed against the restless and seditious spirit of a disciple who was practically illustrating the lessons of his master. Having met, on a Sunday, at a congregation, which they amused with the mutual picture of each other's vices, they retired to a tavern, where Carlostadius observed that he could not endure the doctrine of Luther regarding the Real Presence, and that he would not fear even to write against it; Luther, assuming a tone of haughty disdain, challenged him to disprove it, and offered him a piece of gold, should he undertake its refutation. The offer was instantly accepted, and they grasped each other's hand to ratify the ignominious bargain. With a full glass, Luther

\* Florimond, l. ii. c. 7. This laborious collector gives the anecdote on the original and unsuspected authority of Lanter and Wolf.

pledged the health of Carlostadius, who redeemed the pledge with an equally copious libation, and the ceremony was concluded by a solemn prayer on the part of the one, that his companion in the drunken debauch might come to an evil end; and on the part of the other, that his enemy might break his neck ere he retired out of the gates of the city. In the most disastrous scenes that have afflicted mankind, there are some comic incidents calculated to provoke ridicule. But, after all, is it not humiliating to human nature to behold any still fondly clinging to opinions introduced by men who were in the habit of treating whatever is sacred in religion with profane and indecent mockery; and whose doctrines were well worthy of the divinities to which they offered their most frequent and fervent devotions.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

THE EUCHARIST (*continued*).

Unanimity of the ancient Fathers in the belief of the Real Presence.—Socinians admit Transubstantiation to be supported by the authority of early tradition.—The analogies by which the Fathers sought to confirm the faithful in the belief of the Real Presence prove their conviction of this awful mystery.—The Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence the only clue to direct us in interpreting the language of the Primitive Fathers.—Contemptuous indifference of the Pagans for the mysteries of the Christian faith.—Consent of the Greek Churches.—Claude's singular description of the contrivances by which the world was converted to the belief of Transubstantiation.—Reflections on his theory.—None of the causes to which he ascribes this revolution sufficient to explain the singular change.—The tenth century.—Interested exaggeration of the vices and ignorance of that period.

IN unfolding the evidence of the real presence, which the Scripture furnishes, I have laid it down as a position, that until the time of Luther and his associates, the doctrine of the real presence was the general, as well as the ancient, belief of the Christian world. Never, I am sure, was position more incontestable. Some, indeed, have affected to doubt it; but those who have been most distinguished for erudition and candour have confessed that the fathers of the Church are favourable to the Catholic doctrine. The different manner in which these venerable witnesses of the faith are used by Protestants,\* is worthy of observation. While they imagine they can derive any support from their testimony, they treat them with becoming deference. But on finding them opposed to their own doctrines, then they contemn and renounce their authority. Of the

\* Warburton, in stating the feelings and opinions of his own time, confesses, with a sarcasm, that *what constitutes a Protestant of fashion, is a contempt of the fathers.*

latter class are the Socinians in particular. Of the former, are Protestants of a more mitigated cast, who are fond of preserving some relics of mystery in their creed, and of authority in their government.\* These latter wish to enlist the fathers in their service; but like many an impressed auxiliary, they are found, when free from restraint, to abandon their service, and join the ranks of their enemies.

A few quotations will suffice to place the doctrine of the fathers in its true light, though the force of the original can be but partially infused into the translated passages.

St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, thus obviates the difficulties, and dispels the doubts, which might perplex the minds of the Neophytes, on the subject of the real presence. “Since Christ himself has said of the bread, *this is my body*, and of the chalice, *this is my blood*, who shall be so impious as to doubt? He once changed water into wine, which has an affinity with blood, and shall we think him unworthy of belief, when he transmutes wine into blood? *Judge not by taste but by faith*. What seems bread, *is not bread*; and what seems wine, *is not wine*, though it seem so to our taste, but the blood of Christ.†

St. Ambrose reasons thus on the mystery of the Eucharist. “Perhaps you will say: Why do you tell me that I receive the body of Christ, when I see quite another thing? We have this point, therefore, to prove . . . How many examples do we produce to show you, that this is not what nature made it, but what the benediction has consecrated it; and that the benediction is of greater force than nature, because by the benediction, nature itself is changed? Moses cast his rod on the ground, and it became a serpent; he caught hold of the serpent’s tail, and it recovered the nature of a rod. Thou hast read of the creation of

\* Such as Cave, Pearson, Bull, Hammond, &c. Vid. Daillé de vero usu Patrum, l. ii. c. 6.

† Catech. Mystag. 4.

the world: if Christ, by his word, was able to make something out of nothing, shall he not be thought able to change one thing into another? . . . But what need of reasoning? let us use the illustrations afforded by Christ himself? let us deduce the truth of the Eucharistic mystery, from the mystery of the incarnation. A virgin brought forth, out of the course of nature, and the body, which we consecrate, is that which sprung from a virgin. Why do you look for the order of nature here, since He was born of a virgin, out of that order? The true flesh of Christ which was crucified and buried, is truly (in the Eucharist). He (Christ) proclaims, *this is my body.*"\*

St. John Chrysostom says, "Let us confide in God, nor refuse to believe, *though what he says seem absurd to our senses and thoughts.* The words of Christ cannot lead us astray, but our senses are most easily deceived. How many say: I would wish to see his form, his clothes, his shoes? Behold thou seest him, touchest him, and feedest on him" (in the Eucharist).†

The testimony of St. Ephrem is not less forcible: "Why dost thou scrutinize things not to be investigated? . . . Participate of the immaculate body and blood of thy Lord, with an entire faith, assured that *thou eatest substantially the Lamb himself:* the mysteries of God are an immortal fire: take heed lest, by rashly scrutinizing them, thou be consumed in their participation," &c.‡

From experience of the annoyance, which may be received from such doubtful auxiliaries, the Socinians have resolved never again to try their fidelity. We, however, derive this advantage from the conduct of the Socinians, that in consequence of having renounced the aid, they declare with more impartiality what has

\* De Initiandis, c. 9.

† Hom. in Matt. xxxii. 10.

‡ Lib. de Natura Dei non curiosius scrutanda, cap. v. To the above quotations might be added the earlier authorities of St. Ignatius Ep. ad Smyrnenses; of St. Irenæus adv. Hær. l. iv. c. 32, of Justin, the Philosopher, Apolog. secunda; of Tertullian and others, did the argument require the aid of their testimony.

been the general belief of the fathers. Under Protestant banners, they are forced into a foreign service, and disposed to be mutinous. The Catholic, too, may be suspected of pushing too far their spontaneous devotion to this cause, but the Socinian, who neither looks for their support nor fears their hostility, may be deemed the most impartial arbiter of their real deserts. The Socinians have candidly acknowledged that the uniform and uninterrupted tradition of these learned and holy men conveys the doctrine of transubstantiation. The acknowledgment was extorted by the plain and evident language of the fathers, which no sophistry could elude. Against the Protestants, then, who still retain any reverence for the faith of primitive times, the Socinians may be arrayed as competent and unsuspected witnesses in favour of the Catholic belief.

Independently, however, of the language of the fathers there are circumstances, which demonstrate their full conviction of the doctrine of the real presence. In the words of institution, as understood by Protestants, there is nothing apparently revolting to reason, nor which it would require the aid of strong and cogent illustrations to confirm. On the contrary, the meaning which they give the words has nothing hard of conception, though the construction which they put upon the expressions be harsh and unnatural. It is not more difficult to conceive that the Eucharist should be the medium of conveying the merits of Christ's passion, than that baptism should be possessed of similar efficacy; or that it should renew the memory of his death, than that the paschal lamb should recall the remembrance of the Hebrews' liberation from Egypt. This view of the sacrament, as a mere figurative commemoration of Christ's death, has nothing mysterious in it, which would require any extraordinary exertion to make it accessible to any intellect. Yet the fathers always approach the subject as one pregnant with mystery. They speak to the faithful as to persons who might entertain doubts suggested by their senses.

and who might be deterred from believing this mystery, by difficulties such as the Protestants now propose. They anticipate those observations which are now so frequently made, and dwell with great solemnity on the necessity of stifling every suggestion of reason or of sense, which might come in competition with the authoritative words of the supreme reason, Jesus Christ.

Had they understood the words in a metaphorical sense, the simple announcement of a figure or metaphor would have spared them a great deal of labour, and fixed the loose and vague opinions of the faithful. They should, then, no longer be perplexed, by the continual struggle between the obedience which was due to Christ, and the mutiny of the senses against a doctrine which eluded all their perceptions. The mere circumstances of a figure would have appeased all the scruples of the faithful, and easily reconciled them to the adoption of this article. But instead of such an easy and obvious process, the fathers tell them to distrust their senses, and to rely solely on the words of Christ, who is infallible. They then adduce the examples of the rod of Aaron, changed into a serpent, of water converted into wine; in short, the most stupendous wonders recorded in holy writ, are accumulated, and for what? To confirm a doctrine, which has nothing above the comprehension of the most ordinary mind. Let not the Deity be introduced on ordinary occasions,\* is a maxim founded on good sense, and the truth of which must have been felt by the holy fathers. To have, therefore, searched heaven and earth, for mysterious illustrations to confirm the Protestant doctrine of the Eucharist, would have been an idle display of puerile and ostentatious rhetoric, quite unworthy of the gravity of those writers; it would be realizing the adage, "to excite the ocean's roar, to waft a feather, or to drown a fly."

When once the Catholic doctrine is accurately laid

\* "Nec Deus interit."

down and clearly understood, there is nothing in the language of the fathers to which it does not afford a satisfactory solution. The Eucharist, consisting of two things quite different in their natures, the body of Christ and the species of bread, may be viewed in a twofold relation; and therefore the language of the fathers may assume all the shades of difference that are to be found between those opposite natures. Hence, whatever may have been predicated of either with accuracy, might have been applied to the Eucharist consistently with faith, and the strictest propriety of language; just as the attributes and properties peculiar only to the divine or human nature, have been indiscriminately predicated of Christ, on account of the union of both. Thus we are taught in Scripture that Jesus Christ is God, and that he is man; that he and the Father are one, and that yet he is a distinct person; that he is equal to, and less than, the Father; and in fine, that he is from all eternity, and born in time of a virgin. A correct view of the doctrine of the incarnation easily reconciles these apparently contradictory expressions. Should our reason take but a partial glance at this mystery, it would appear fraught with numberless contradictions. And it was such a partial view that suggested to the heretics of ancient times the various errors with which they deformed the pure faith of the Christian Church. Hence some, with Sabellius, while they laboured to preserve the unity of the divine nature, subtilized the persons into mere nominal abstractions; and others, with Arius, in their zeal to preserve a real distinction between the persons, would fain destroy the identity of their common nature. The Ebionites thought, that in admitting Christ to be a man, they should reject his divinity; and the Gnostics fancied again, that in believing his divinity, they should also believe that the passion was a mere scenic exhibition, in which the fury of Christ's executioners was wasted on an impassive phantom. From a similar confusion of ideas, Nestorius thought

that the belief of two distinct natures involved the necessity of believing a twofold person in Christ; whilst Eutyches, to fly from the extraordinary personage, which the wayward mind of Nestorius had created, closed his eyes entirely against the sight of the human nature. Thus the monsters of heresy were, like those of the material world, generally the offspring of an imperfect or distempered vision. It is only a comprehensive view of all the parts that reveals the beauty of the whole. By fastening on those expressions that regard the species of bread in the Eucharist, the body of Christ disappears. Such is the view which the Calvinists take of the writings of the fathers. But on referring to those cogent discourses, by which they laboured to subdue the mutiny of the senses to a strict obedience to faith, the mysterious object presents itself to our mind. But how call the same object, the Eucharist, by names which signify such opposite things? On account of the union by which the body of Christ and the species of bread are connected in the one common sacrament of the Eucharist. Just as the same person is called by the opposite names of God and Man, of Mortal and Eternal, on account of the indissoluble connexion by which God and man, the divine and human natures, are united in the one common person of Christ. This simple principle, founded on the most correct notions of reason and theology, will be sufficient to disentangle the most perplexed passages of the fathers on the sacrament of the altar.

To seduce more effectually the people into their own errors, the Calvinists scruple not occasionally to adopt the expressions of antiquity. And as it is well known that they do not believe a real presence, they boldly pretend that the language of antiquity is not necessarily expressive of that doctrine. The artifice, however, of such a pretension is too clumsy to impose on the most unthinking. Had the Calvinists a choice of language to convey their errors, they would doubt-

less have found expressions better suited to their doctrines. But the writers who had gone before them were in possession, and thus they were under the necessity of accommodating themselves to their language. The fathers laboured under no such necessity. They were unshackled in the use of their expressions. With no other restraint but that of expressing Christ's doctrine in the manner best fitted to the capacities of their hearers or their readers, they were free in the choice of their words; and as many of them could vie with the most eminent of the moderns in copiousness and propriety of language, we cannot suppose that they would have made use of forms of expression most opposite to the meaning which they intended to convey.

Such is a summary of the argument which antiquity supplies. If the attestations in favour of the real presence be sufficiently numerous and weighty, it cannot surely be required of us to account for the silence of some who may not have noticed this doctrine. It cannot, for example, be incumbent on the advocate of the real presence to show why the Pagans, in their polemical contests with the Christians, did not reproach them with the belief of a doctrine apparently so revolting to reason. The observation might extend to every other mystery of our creed; and if it were to have any force, we should believe none but such as had sustained unhurt the particular hostility of the Pagans. Should this be considered the only test of their soundness, no doctrine ought to be reckoned proof against the attacks of the moderns, which had not been already tried by a similar ordeal among the ancients.

It is, however, too much for us to bring our prejudices back to those early times, and prescribe to the Pagans a line of argument, perhaps unsuited to the nature of the controversy. To require from the proud and voluptuous votaries of false gods a minute knowledge of the rites and sacraments of Christianity, would be little short of absurdity. The more palpable features of the Christian religion were such as to sus-

pend rather than stimulate their curiosity to enter into the sanctuary and explore its mysteries. Its author, its origin, its preachers, its followers, and its practical precepts, offered but little that could gratify the cherished prejudices of the Pagans; and therefore a system of general proscription against the entire religion was deemed the most effectual method of checking its growth and confounding its pretensions.

Besides this contemptuous indifference on the part of the Pagans, the mysteries of the Christian religion were protected from the curiosity of the profane by the zeal and devotion of the first Christians. Of this we are assured by the positive testimony of St. Cyril, and others of the ancient fathers.\* The catechistical instructions, which were addressed by the Bishop of Jerusalem to his flock, still preserve the evidence of the caution with which the Christian pastors concealed from the infidels the knowledge of the mysteries of their religion. Such jealous vigilance on the one hand, and such indifference on the other, must have rendered the Pagans very ignorant of the peculiar rites and tenets of the Catholic Church, and will not fail to account for the silence of their writers. Yet, notwithstanding these powerful causes of reserve and secrecy, we are informed by Tertullian† and Minutius Felix‡ that some dark and vague suspicions of our mysteries were whispered among the unbelievers. Like every rumour of what is but imperfectly known, the suspicions circulated were loaded with a variety of circumstances calculated to deform the moral character of the Christians. Such was the calumny of their being in the habit of sacrificing an infant at break of day, and feeding on its body. How bright is truth, when it breaks even through the calumnies that are collected

\* Catech. in pefatione, n. 7. Cat. 6a. n. 16, &c. St. Aug. Tract. in Joan. Tertul. l. ii. ad Uxor. c. 5, &c.

† "Dicimur sceleratissimi de sacramento infanticidii." Apolog. c. 7.

‡ "Infans cœcis occultisque vulneribus occiditur; hujus proh nefas! scienter sanguinem lambunt, hujus certatim membra dispertiunt, hac fœderantur hostia— hæc sacra sacrilegiis omnibus tetriora," &c. page 88. Ed. Ouzel.

to obscure it! Even this misrepresentation reveals the dogma of the real presence. Tear off the hideous caricature of a human victim, slain and devoured, and you behold the pure image which it obscured, Jesus Christ, really present and immolated in the unbloody sacrifice of the altar.

I shall close my view of this interesting subject by a reflection on the general agreement, which united the Christian world in the belief of the real presence, in the age of Berengarius.\* This unanimity is attested by the opposition which he provoked, as well as by the nature of the arguments by which he was combated. Wherever his opinions were heard they excited universal horror; and all were loud in the condemnation of the man who dared to oppose the universal belief of mankind.† Now, a doctrine thus widely diffused and deeply rooted must have had its origin from Christ. We are frequently told that the doctrine of transubstantiation is so revolting to human reason that its belief must suppose something like a diseased intellect. If so, and the reader may remark that the more absurd the doctrine the more forcible the argument, we may be permitted to request of our adversaries to point out the epoch and circumstances of its introduction; or, if not, we may express our wonder at the unheard-of revolution that has been insensibly wrought in the opinions of mankind, while history has not preserved any memorial of the impostor who achieved over human reason so extraordinary a victory. Facts of lesser importance have been recorded and preserved; individuals less conspicuous for the success of their errors or their crimes have not escaped notice, and yet there is no trace of the introduction of transubstantiation, nor of the memory of its author. Why then has not the father of this heresy kindled the fierce and angry spirit of controversy that has been excited

\* See Baronius *Annal. Ecclesiast.* eleventh century to the year 1088.

† Lanfranc. *de Corp. et Sanguine Dom.* c. 22.

by every other? Or what is there in the nature of this *error* that could allay those passions which an attack upon received opinions is always sure to awaken? These are questions that have greatly embarrassed Protestants; they have been often proposed; they have never been satisfactorily answered. On the dull and unthinking they may make but little impression; but, on those who are capable of feeling their force, they have quite a different effect. Pressed by their irresistible weight, they know not whither to turn; conscious that they cannot escape, they get quite out of temper: and perhaps the embarrassment which they feel cannot be better estimated than by the following specimen of impassioned declamation from Claude,\* the spirit of which it is difficult to convey through another language:

“Were we engaged in a disputation with the Greeks or with the Egyptians, we should not, perhaps, feel surprised if they inquired how such a change had been wrought. Nor should we, perhaps, feel any reluctance in endeavouring to gratify their curiosity. These distant strangers having had no share in producing our misfortunes, would probably deserve a patient and polite reply. But it is impossible to behold without sorrow, nay, without indignation, those very transubstantiators who have themselves effected the change, who have employed fraud and force in introducing it; who have recurred to a thousand stratagems to effect it with secrecy, and to conceal from posterity the engines by which it was accomplished—is it to be endured that they should now come and inquire of us the cause of this innovation? Inquire, if you choose, of such of your own party as were its first authors. Inquire of those who laboured to seal the lips of the pious assertors of truth, who were willing to reveal the imposture. Ransack for the dark and mysterious secret the archives of Rome, and you may trace it to

\* See Perpet. de la Foi, tom. i. page 669.

her crusades and inquisitions. In short, consult those who have endeavoured to involve those facts in a maze of secret and tortuous policy. But for us, leave us in the enjoyment of repose. After having robbed us of our titles, inquire not how we were stripped of them. After the consolation of complaint was denied us by the infliction of the cruellest torture, why tauntingly demand the cause of our silence? You may, if you choose, continue to insult our misery: but convert not into arguments against the justness of our cause the evils and misfortunes which you yourselves have inflicted. Be content with your success, glory in your victory, but attempt not to disprove the truth of our religion from the triumph of your own. It is exhausting whatever is most galling in cruelty to impute to us as crimes the wrongs of which we have been made the victims."

From this specimen of rhetoric, as vehement as it is devoid of reasoning, the reader may form some idea of the manner of Claude, and perceive what effect was produced on his mind, by the argument furnished by the union of the Churches. Were the issue of theological controversy one of those events that depend upon the sudden impulse of excited feeling, Claude would have been assuredly one of the ablest champions of any cause. And hence, perhaps, his great influence and reputation among the Calvinists of his time, who were more gratified by invectives against the faith of their enemies than anxious to find a reason for their own. Of that species of eloquence, which agitates the senses by a rapid succession of high-toned and harmonious sounds, and inflames the imagination by the variety of its fantastic images, Claude was a powerful and skilful master. But that solemn, deliberative, and argumentative eloquence, which instructs while it moves, persuades while it warms, and subdues the understanding while it wins our affections;—that eloquence, which without disdaining the loftier attributes of imagination and of feeling, commands them

as the auxiliaries of truth, disposing them, not in the ambitious attitude of principal figures, but as humble ministers following in her train, and swelling the splendour of her triumphs—that eloquence, where, amidst passion the most agitated and fancy the most inspired, you still behold reason calmly asserting her majestic dominion, and guiding the movements of the storm; that eloquence the mind of Claude could never reach; it was the eloquence of Bossuet, his more gifted and triumphant rival.

The Protestant may imagine that in these observations I am prejudiced against his favourite champion: the passage just quoted will illustrate the justness of the opinion. On the first reading of the paragraph from Claude, I must confess I felt my indignation warmed; but, on perusing the whole volume, it insensibly evaporated, for I sought in vain for some real object against which I might direct it. Claude never appears more copious nor more confident than where history seems most reluctant to supply him with materials. His success in fiction reminds me of an anecdote told of Cowley, who lived under the rule of Cromwell, and of the second Charles. Like the idolaters who worship the rising sun, and desert him as he goes down, the poet thought it wise to pay his court to the reigning powers; and he, who before had hailed the glories of the Commonwealth, attempted now to put forth his congratulatory tribute on the blessings of the Restoration. But his muse, either exhausted by her former services, or indignant at the venal pliancy of her votary, could not be propitiated by his most earnest invocations. The failure did not escape the penetration of the monarch, who observed that his verses on the Commonwealth were superior to those which celebrated the praises of the monarchy. Cowley replied, “Fiction, sire, is more favourable than truth to poetic inspiration.” The ready felicity of the reply gratified the monarch; and the poet atoned for the badness of his verses by the delicacy of his compliment.

The theology of Claude seems to be founded on a similar principle. Regardless of the faith of history, he forms a system of his own; and should any facts come in the way too stubborn for the agency of ordinary causes to remove them, he draws upon his imagination for the supernatural machinery of monks, popes, councils, crusades, and inquisitions. With these agents, he can wield at will the belief of the entire world, or at least of the Western Church; and effect whatever revolution he pleases in the opinions of mankind; and as these agents are the creatures of his fancy, it is not permitted us to inquire into the visible means by which they conduct their operations. However, as the Greeks and Egyptians may be too remote, why may not the Catholics of Europe be permitted to propose a question in the right solution of which the important interests of salvation must be involved? It is still a question of vital interest, by what arts or at what epoch has transubstantiation been introduced? It is in vain that we shall be reminded of the cruelty of past times, to show that we are not deserving of a circumstantial reply. Whatever might have been the cruelty of our ancestors towards the sectaries, we, at this remote distance, are guiltless of their misdeeds. We may inherit the misfortune of their errors, but surely we are not accountable for their crimes. We, at least, have never lighted faggots to burn heretics, nor sworn to extirpate their race. And, therefore, Protestants might indulge our curiosity, unless, like the lamb in the fable, we are to be accused of polluting the higher part of the stream, though standing at a remote distance from the source; or told, perchance, that it was done by our grandfathers.

If Claude and his followers had thus indulged in vague invective, without offering anything more tangible to grapple with, they might still elude refutation. And, indeed, the reluctance with which they consented to fix the epoch of this extraordinary change, sufficiently betrayed their secret misbodings. At length, the

darkness of the tenth century was considered the most convenient time for the setting and working of the invisible machinery. In the disastrous interval between the death of Paschasius\* and the appearance of Berengarius, the popes and councils, together with the crusades and inquisition, set all their spells to work and dissolved the ancient fabric of religion. With the return of light, the workers cautiously disappeared; and when mankind awoke from their slumbers, they found no more vestige of the ancient faith or of its destroyers, than the astonished emperor who sought in the morning the vanished palace of Aladdin!

Claude, however, was peculiarly unfortunate in selecting the subject of his inquiries; as the causes for the extraordinary change in the belief of the Christian world are all subsequent to the tenth century.

In the tenth century, the *personal* influence of the popes was feeble beyond any former example; and Innocent the Third, to whom any share might be ascribed in this innovation, did not live till near two hundred years later. The Council of Lateran, in which transubstantiation was defined, was held under the same pontiff. The inquisition, with its accompaniments of fire and torture, is ascribed by adverse writers to the inhumanity or zeal of St. Dominic, who flourished about the same time; and the first crusade was subsequent to the death of Berengarius, at which period the empire of transubstantiation was already finally established.

With the evidence of these authentic facts staring him in the face, Claude hesitates not to ascribe transubstantiation to the influence of the causes which I have stated; and strives to rouse his reader's passions by fervid declamation. Facts are but feeble barriers before the impetuosity of his imagination. He projects a favourite system, and the entire range of history must be laid under contribution for its materials. Unconnected events must be forcibly linked together; the

\* An. 865. See his life at the head of his works edited by Sirmond.

actors of different times must be synchronized; at the stamp of his foot armies of monks must start into existence and to action, and as instantly disappear. In short, "space and time must toil after him in vain;" and, after all, when the fourfold engine of popes, councils, crusades, and inquisition, with which he shakes the theological world, comes in contact with argument, and is subjected to trial, it is quickly resolved into the sonorous but shadowy materials of which the poet once forged the fabled thunders of Jupiter.\*

Much has been said of the darkness and immorality of the tenth century. It has been represented as a period during which ignorance overspread the entire Church. It may be worth while to inquire into the justice of this imputation. In forming a judgment of the character of any age, we should receive with distrust those indiscriminate pictures of vice and ignorance which bear evident marks of impassioned exaggeration. In the best and most enlightened ages there is always much to censure: in the worst and most degenerate, there is something to commend. Without the help of this obvious and rational principle we should find ourselves involved in endless perplexity amidst the accounts of contemporary writers, apparently discordant. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul commends them as "being made rich in him (Jesus Christ), in every word, and in all knowledge;"† and soon after, he reproaches them with being carnal, and having among them much "envying and contention."‡ The time in which St. Augustine flourished is now praised as one of the golden ages of the Church. And yet, such is the lamentable description which he gives us of the degeneracy of the

\* "Tres imbris torti radios, tres nubis aquosæ  
Addiderant; rutili tres ignis et alitis austri;  
Fulgores nunc terrificos, sonitumque, metumque  
Miscebant operi, flammisque sequacibus iras."

Æneid viii.

† I Cor. i. 5.

‡ Ibid. iii. 3.

Christians, that, according to his expressions, one could scarcely discern the good grain amidst the cockle. St. John Chrysostom's account of the lives of the priests of his time is truly terrific; and if we credit St. Gregory Nazianzen, the bishops were then a proud and turbulent body, who, by the luxury of their lives and the sumptuousness of their equipages, rivalled the splendour of eastern satraps rather than the simplicity of the apostles.

Yet all these accounts must be received with some qualification. To the piety of the Apostle and of St. Augustine, even holy Christians must have appeared imperfect; and in their estimation, that virtue might have been deemed languid which was outstripped by the ardour of their own zeal. The weight of the office to which he feared he might prove unfaithful, and the duties of which he was anxious to decline, might have justified St. Chrysostom in painting the dangers, and, I trust, in exaggerating the disorders, of the priesthood. Those disgraceful scenes of episcopal intrigue and turbulence, of which he was at once the witness and the victim, left on the mind of St. Gregory a deep sense of the wrongs which he had sustained. We are therefore to make allowance for the warm feelings of this eloquent and holy man, while in his last address to the people of Constantinople he pathetically deplored the evils which afflicted the Church of God. That virtuous indignation exaggerated the picture which he drew of the episcopal body we may learn by a reference to his contemporaries, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Hilary, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, and Athanasius, assuredly some of the most illustrious names in the Church, besides seventeen other bishops of the same time, who are enrolled in the calendar.

The general picture of the vices and darkness of the tenth century, which has been often copied without examination, has originated in a similar cause. But whatever might have been its ignorance and its indifference, they are still insufficient to account for the

novelty of transubstantiation. Protestants speak as seriously of the slumbers of the tenth century as if it had been an unquestionable fact. However, the sleep of an entire century is a phenomenon, for which no discovery, in the history of the animal creation, as yet sufficiently prepared us. A few waking sentinels are always found, to circulate the alarm among all who are interested in preserving the palladium of their faith. Besides, during this age, one of the most equal controversies was carried on, that ever yet excited the attention of mankind; and one of the most signal victories achieved; and yet not a word has transpired to record the triumph of one party, or the humiliation of the other. Yes, an equal contest, since in the gradual defection of the abettors of the ancient faith, to the increasing ranks of the Paschasians, as they were called, there must have been a time when these contending forces were equally balanced. And yet, amidst this doubtful struggle between truth and error; between ancient doctrines and modern opinions, all is perfect tranquillity and calmness. Not a whisper of invective or recrimination is heard amidst the dead and universal stillness; and a controversy, which, in any other age, would have shaken the world with discord, had only the effect of gently rocking the inhabitants of the tenth century into a deeper and more tranquil repose!

Besides, towards the agents in this extraordinary revolution, Protestants feel nought but unmingled contempt. Such a feeling surely cannot be well reconciled with the extraordinary powers which they ascribe to them. In a state of inaction almost approaching to insensibility, they astonish us by what they have performed. Without piety or the power of working miracles, for they are incompatible with imposture; without shedding their blood like the martyrs; without the learning or the eloquence of philosophers, and unfurnished with the arms of Mahomet, they subdued the belief of the universe, and gained a victory,

which neither the zeal of the apostles, nor the fortitude of the martyrs, nor the eloquence of the philosophers, nor the ambition of Mahomet, could ever achieve,

Again, the influence of the popes and the inquisition was limited to the Western Church. It will not, therefore, explain the sudden and silent propagation of this doctrine among the churches of the east. However, its existence there, as early as the eleventh century, is matter of historical notoriety. Among the mutual reproaches to which a difference of religion and of country gave rise, between the Greeks and Latins in their intercourse during the holy wars, there was none interchanged on the subject of transubstantiation. Now the most deplorable ignorance of the Latin Church will not explain how this article was spread among the Greeks. Among them an acquaintance with profane and ecclesiastical antiquity was always cultivated; and during the lowest ebb of literature and civilization, it never retreated from the suburbs of Constantinople. In the darkest times, this city was the mart of commerce and of literature; and while it protected the West from the arms of the Saracens, it also protected the Eastern Church from the barbarism of Europe. If, therefore, an attempt had been made to introduce a novel doctrine during the tenth century, the Greeks had sufficient light to notice its origin, and sufficient national and religious prejudices to resist its introduction.\*

\* The numerous attestations of the Orientals in favour of the doctrine of the real presence, occupy nearly two hundred pages of the learned work on the "Perpetuity of the Faith." At their head we find seven archbishops of Asia, who, on hearing that the Calvinists boasted that the Eastern Church did not hold the real presence, repelled the calumny with disdain. The document was dated at Pera, 18th July, 1671, and subscribed by

BARTHOLOMEW, of Heraclea.  
JEREMIAH, of Chalcedon.  
METHODIUS, of Pisides.  
METROPHANES, of Lysium.

ANTHONY, of Athens.  
JOACHIM, of Rhodes.  
NEOPHYTUS, of Nicomedia.

After these, came forward as witnesses of the real presence the patriarchs of

Having shown the insufficiency of any supposition, to explain the gradual introduction of transubstantiation, we shall close this chapter by one or two reflections on the proverbial darkness of the tenth century. In science, and in the number of its writers, it must unquestionably yield to previous or subsequent times. But the superior praise of heroic zeal for religion, it

Constantinople and Alexandria, thirty-five metropolitans with their names affixed, together with the concurring declarations of the bishops of Mingrelia, Colchis, and Georgia. But as it would be tedious to transcribe all those testimonies, I shall content myself with extracts from two letters addressed upon the subject of the real presence—the one to Claude, by Mark Donus of Crete; and the other to J. Lilienthal at Moscow, from the metropolitan of Gaza. The reader may wish to be introduced to those foreigners, and to hear in their own words their sentiments on transubstantiation.

“Illustrissimo ac Præstantissimo viro Domino Joanni Claudio Reformatæ Parisiensis ecclesiæ pastori, Marcus Donus Cretensis salutem et delectionis affectum.

“Cum ad me delati fuissent articuli quidam descripti ut fertur ex latere dominationis tuæ illustrissimæ, in quibus quæritur quid sancta mater nostra orientalis ecclesia sentiat de transubstantiatione panis et vini in sacramento Eucharistiæ, operæ pretium duxi, ejus sententiam patefacere et quibus nititur fundamentis describere, ut qui eadem profitentur credere quæ ipsa sancta ecclesia, ad illius unitatem advolent et concordiam. Notum sit itaque tibi præstantissime vir, quod totus oriens consentientem habens et occidentem credidit semper et credit a primis ecclesiæ incunabilis panem et vinum verè et physicè transubstantiari in corpus et sanguinem Christi, deposita primâ substantiâ. Et hanc transubstantiationem tenet inter articulos fidei necessarios, adeo ut nemini liceat eam ignorare aut in dubium revocare aut penitus revocare aut penitus rejicere. Hanc autem fidem habuit a Christo, et post successionem ab apostolis et a patribus primitivæ ecclesiæ, qui columnæ fuerunt et firmamentum orthodoxiæ Græcanicæ. Et quod hoc fateatur, patet et factum. Quemcumque enim de hoc sacramento interrogaveris, statim tibi affirmabit hanc *μετουσίωσιν* in quo edoceri potes a cardinibus et sacerdotibus sanctæ nostræ ecclesiæ, qui neminem permittunt participem fieri sanctissimi corporis et pretiosissimi sanguinis, nisi prius hanc edat confessionem, quæ prolata primo pro simplicibus a sacerdote, fertur quoque de verbo ad verbum ab iis qui ad mysticam cenam accedunt, ut unusquisque noscat non solum, sed fateatur aperte mysterium. *πιστεῦω ο κέρριε και ὁμολογῶ* (verba sunt Chrysostomi) *ὅτι σὺ εἰ ἀληθῶς*; id est, tu qui es in calice, et observet tua quam maxima virtus, illud (*ἀληθῶς*) quod non jam typum sed veritatem significat, *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος ὁ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι ὡν πρῶτος εἰμι ἐγὼ εἶμι πιστεῦω ὅτι τοῦτο αὐτὸ ἐστὶ τὸ ἀχραντὸν σῶμα, και τοῦτο* (id est quod est in calice) *αὐτὸ ἐστὶ τὸ τίμιον ἅμα σου*, et qui credit ipsum corpus esse et ipsum sanguinem non credit certe panem esse et vinum. Ex quibus clare constat sanctam nostram ecclesiam hanc transubstantiationem firmiter credere,” &c.—Tom. iii., liv. viii. c. 12.

“Humillimus Metropoli Gazæ, Paysius, Ligaridius Illustrissimo atque generosissimo Domino Residenti Joanni de Lilienthal salutem plurimam dicit.

“Isocratis Atticæ, Aicpulæ, melleum extat pronunciatum *ἐὰν ἦς φιλομαθής εσῆ και πολυμαθής*, si eris discendi studiosus multa quoque perdisces. Enimvero intueor tuam generosissimam dominationem, non modo esse admodum eruditam, verùm etiam addiscendi cupidissimam. Quamobrem tibi quærenti legitime atque poscenti medullitus quid Græca Ruthenica nostra ecclesia sentiat de sacra-

may justly contest. The age of military achievements is not that, which generally affords literary leisure to record them; and the most signal conquests of the Church are left to be celebrated by the writers of a succeeding age. The tenth century was an age of reformation and evangelical labours, in which great vices called forth great virtues; and in which the ignorance that overspread the north of Europe only

tissima Eucharistia, avide respondeo, juxta meum tamen minimum posse, et sine ullis verborum ambagibus et periodorum seu syrtium anfractibus satisfacere conabor. Etenim in amicis, inquit Divus Hieronymus, non res requiritur sed voluntas, quam promptam voluntatem Deus ipse quoque præmiat et acceptat, uti liquet in Abraham, qui filium suum unigenitum Isaac licet non jugulasset, intimi tamen animi destinatio parendi studiosissima reputata fuit pro eadem facti operatione. Atque hinc dictum ipsi Gen. xxii., ‘ quia fecisti hanc rem et non pepercisti filio tuo unigenito propter me, benedicam tibi et multiplicabo semen tuum.’ Æquo itaque benevoloque animo suscipe, mi studiosissime atque illustrissime residens gratiosissime Joannes, quid dicturus sim, non tam ex mente mea, quam ex sanctorum patrum sententia, quos semper colui atque veneror uti magistros ac saluberrimos præceptores.

“Fatemur itaque, atque credimus in altari panem et vinum per arcanam quamdam, atque omni sermone facultatem præstantiorem in corpus Christi et sanguinem verissime commutari μεταβαλλεσθαι, converti μεταρροθμιεσθαι, transferri μεταποιεσθαι. Quemadmodum S.P. (Sancti Patres) orientalis ecclesiæ loqui assolent, quippe qui per istiusmodi mutationem intelligunt realem transmutationem panis et vini in corpus et sanguinem dominicum. Ita sentit aurea mens Divi Chrysostomi, sermone de proditione Judæ. Hoc est corpus meum dicit sacerdos: hoc sane dictum proposita munera convertit atque transmutat μετορροθμιζει. Proclus etiam sanctissimus Patriarcha vestigia sui sequitur Magistri. Afferit enim in oratione de tractatione missæ, quod sancti apostoli ejusmodi precibus spiritus sancti adventum præstolabantur, ut divina ejus præsentia propositum in sacrificium panem et vinum aqua permixtum, ipsum illud corpus ipsumque sanguinem salvatoris nostri J. C. αν αφήνη, palam faceret consecratumque demonstraret αναδείξη. Eadem fermè recitat, et magnus Basilius in sua missa dum ita precatur. Panem quidem hunc fac pretiosum corpus et vinum pretiosum sanguinem Domini et Dei salvatoris nostri J. C., qui pro mundi vita effusus est. Alia plura et similia loca brevitatis ergo silentio prætereo. Vox enim μετουσιώσις, transubstantiatio, tametsi nova quodammodo videatur, et a pluribus non lubenter ut recens suscipiatur, licet nihilominus tamen aliquando juxta philosophorum principem dilucidandæ rei causa, nova condere nonnunquam vocabula αναμαρτεσειν iisdemque liberè uti. Sic trecenti et decem octo patres in Nicæno concilio vocem ομοιον introducing adversus Arium ejusque asseclas, abnegantes filium Deo patri consubstantialiorem existere, oppositumque mordicus tenentes esse tantum ομοιονσιον.

“Hinc manifeste constat nullatenus nos admittere impanationem auditam et prædicatam in hoc ferreo nostro sæculo tantummodo, neque similiter amplectimur figuram symbolicam et typicam representationem sed realem transubstantiationem unanimiter tam Græci quam Latini fatemur. Nemo igitur gravetur tenere ac credere quod credunt firmiter tenentque communiter, Hispania, Gallia, Pannonia, Sarmathæ, Sauromathæ, Germani, Æthiopes, quia universalis iste consensus multum præponderat cæteris paribus, vox enim populi vox Dei, φωνή λαο φωνή Θεο, ut fertur adagio.”—Tom. i. Pieces justifi, p. 59, &c.

exerted the energies of apostolical missionaries. The disorders of the cloister were reformed, and the monastic observances were restored to the primitive rules of their founders. These virtues may excite the ridicule of Protestants: in ridiculing them they ridicule the counsels of the Gospel. But from the spirit of the times it is manifest that there could not be an age less propitious to that indolent languor, bordering on sleep, than an age in which the passions were agitated by the severity of reformation; and in which, instead of the gentle and peaceful level produced in a refined age, by the general influx of immorality, we behold human nature sunk on the one hand to an almost brutal degeneracy, and elevated on the other to the loftiest perfection.\*

The monastic discipline was relaxed by the licentiousness of some monks; it was restored to its primitive strictness by St. Odo, the celebrated abbot of Cluni.† If many of the clergy dishonoured their profession and violated their vows by their incontinence, ecclesiastical discipline found the firmest support in the intrepid zeal of St. Dunstan.‡ During the tenth century, the Gospel was preached in Sweden by St. Sigfrid;§ and a great portion of Germany was converted to the faith by the labours of St. Boniface.|| Besides other prelates eminent for their purity, this age was illustrated by the virtues of St. Hunni, apostle of Denmark; St. Ulric, bishop of Augsburg; and St. Adalbert, bishop of Prague, who is also styled Apostle of Prussia. The see of Rome, it is true, was sometimes dishonoured by the vices of its bishops. But, let it be recollected that it was a period during which the city was convulsed by dis-

\* Voy. Perpet. de la Foi, tom. i. troisième partie, p. 112, &c.

† Mabillon, V. Sæc. Benedict.

‡ Lingard's "Antiq. of the Anglo-Saxon Church," cap. 12.

§ Butler's "Lives of the Saints," Feb. 15.

|| Lingard's Antiq., c. 13.

cord, and the freedom of election alternately violated by the popular or imperial factions.\* While the centre of the Church suffered from the vices of some popes who were forcibly seated in the chair of St. Peter, the princes of the earth were enlightening its extremities by the splendour of their virtues. Not to descend to the less illustrious saints who adorned the times in question, and whose virtues are eclipsed by the lustre of royal sanctity, we can count, during the eventful period of the supposed *introduction* of the real presence, St. Matilda, the empress,† and St. Bruno, bishop of Cologne, brother of the first Otho; St. Harold, king of Denmark; St. Olave, king of Norway, and St. Stephen, king of Hungary; St. Editha, daughter to king Edgar; St. Henry, emperor of Germany, and St. Cunigund, his consort; to whom, if we add the names of St. Edward the Confessor, and St. Margaret, queen of Scotland, his illustrious relative, together with St. Cormac, bishop of Cashel, who wore the double honours of the crown and mitre, and who all flourished nearly within the interval of error assigned by Claude, I doubt not but it will be found, in the collected splendour of its virtues, one of the brightest epochs of the Church. If there was an abyss of vice and darkness, the word of the Almighty drew light out of the abyss. Let all that history has told and that fiction has invented of some of the popes be true, we can afford to resign a few such characters out of the multitude of witnesses whom God has raised up to attest the truth of his religion. While the vices of some pontiffs tarnished its lustre at Rome, let it be recollected that religion then arose on the regions of the North, and that, in the language of the prophet, queens became its nurses and “kings were walking in the brightness

\* Maimbourg, *Decadence de l'Empire*, tom. i.

† The lives of these illustrious servants of God may be found in any history of the saints.

of its rising.”\* And if anyone should still be scandalized at the disorders of Rome, let him remember that while the unholy one was seated in the sanctuary of Judea, the banners of the Machabees were floating on its mountains; and that the period, the most disastrous to the fame of her pontiffs, is that which has borne the most splendid attestations to the triumphs of her religion.

\* Isaias, lx. 3.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

## SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

Sacrifices, a portion of religious worship in every age.—General resemblance between the sacrifices of the true believers and those of the Pagans.—The latter imitations of the former.—The sacrifices of the Old Law shadows of the sacrifice of the Cross.—Prophecy of Malachy relative to the sacrifice of the Mass.—Anomaly of a religion pretending to possess a priesthood without a sacrifice.—The sacrifice of Melchisedech a striking figure of that of the Mass.—The Mass reconcilable with the reasoning of St. Paul on the efficacy of the sacrifice of the Cross.—Communion of Saints, and Relics.—Purgatory.

FROM the fall of man to his redemption there is no interval in which the true believer did not worship the Divinity by sacrifices. The practice ascends to the remotest period to which history can lead us. In every age of the world sacrifices constituted the chief exterior acts of religion, and were the visible links by which rational creatures manifested their dependence on the Almighty. Whether the light of reason would have suggested such a mode of recognizing the supreme power of the Divinity over his creatures may be deemed a superfluous inquiry, since it is certain that the first origin of sacrifices is traced to a supernatural communication. The practice gradually spread to the different nations of the earth; and, like other religious rites equally pure in their origin, was mixed up with an impure mass of exotic superstition. However, between the Jewish and Pagan sacrifices there are features of affinity which mark their descent from one common source. It might be curious to trace them and exhibit them to the reader's view, if such a contrast were not too minute for the compressed design of

the present work. But notwithstanding this striking resemblance, there are other marks which distinguish the genuine worship of the Almighty from its counterfeit imitation.

If the other feelings of the human heart have been expressed by attitudes and gestures which bear a close resemblance to each other, notwithstanding differences of country and education, it is no wonder that a similar uniformity should have marked those feelings of homage which the heart entertains towards the great Author of our being. Hence, the general likeness in the great outlines of religion, which is not entirely lost even in its corrupt and degenerate form. The practice of sacrificing animals may be traced to the very origin of mankind. It is a recognition of God's dominion over his creatures ; but, whether it be a mode that would have been generally adopted to express such a recognition, without an express revelation, it must be difficult to ascertain. With the dispersion of mankind after the flood, this practice was diffused ; and the act by which Noah commemorated his gratitude for his deliverance,\* was perpetuated by sacrifices among the remotest of his descendants. This solemn act of worship soon degenerated into idolatry ; and the homage which it meant to convey to the Supreme Being was soon transferred to the vilest of his creatures. How much the practice had fallen from its original object, we may learn from the superstitions of Egypt, which sacrificed one animal to the honour of another, and thus created gods that were inferior to their victims.

Yet, strange to say, it is from this nursery of superstition that Moses is said to have *borrowed* the principal rites of his religion. The meaning of the word is, in this instance, at variance with nature. It expresses a reflected operation, which does not usually belong to the original source. Moses was the lineal descendant

\* Gen. viii. 20, 21.

of the ancient patriarchs, and the hereditary guardian of the ancient religion. Being, therefore, in possession of the original, he required not *to borrow*. The rites of every other people were an imitation. From the long and familiar intercourse between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, there must have been a strong resemblance between the ceremonies and sacrifices of both. Yet, to guard it from any impure admixture of heathenish worship, there were some ceremonies peculiar to the true religion, which drew a marked line of distinction between it and the surrounding errors.

The strong and sullen fences which were thus drawn around it, protected the Jewish worship during fifteen centuries from the inundation of idolatry. During that period, the Almighty was honoured by the oblation of a variety of sacrifices, of which the objects and ceremonies are fully detailed in the Pentateuch. Yet these sacrifices were but feeble shadows, which were to disappear as soon as the great sacrifice which they represented should be once consummated. The faint representations were all realised by Christ's death upon the cross; and the heralds were naturally dispensed with in the awful presence of Him whom they had announced. It is, however, a strong presumption in favour of the Eucharistic sacrifice, that in no age of the world has religion appeared without such a representation. Before the coming "of the Lamb that was slain from the commencement of the world,"\* there was a train of bloody sacrifices to announce and shadow that event. And since he rose to die no more, and was to suffer but once, we have similar representations of his death to commemorate its consummation.

"From the rising of the sun," says Malachy, "even to the going down, my name is great among the nations, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."† Many of

\* Apoc. xiii. 8.

† Malach. i. 11.

the other prophets were content with foretelling the abolition of the ancient sacrifices, whose feeble advantages would merge in the immense value of the sacrifice of the cross. The prophetic view of Malachy has taken a wider range, contemplating not only the vast ocean of Christ's redemption, but even the numberless channels through which till the end of time his blood was to be conveyed to all the regions of the earth. Such is the plain and obvious meaning of his language. He speaks of a sacrifice to be offered in *every place*, words which are not, surely, applicable to the sacrifice of the cross, which was confined to Calvary. Nor could the prophet mean the sacrifices of the old law, which were partial in their extent and limited in their duration. From the consummation of Christ's death, any new and distinct sacrifice would have been derogatory from his dignity and merits. And yet, as the prophet confidently speaks of a pure sacrifice which shall be offered in every place, in vain can we look for any consistent meaning of his words, other wise than by referring them to the pure and unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, which, instead of derogating from that of the cross, rather illustrates its infinite treasures by perpetually conveying them to us without exhausting its source.

Protestants labour much to prove the perpetuity of the priesthood and the validity of its orders.\* A

\* As the object of the present work is rather to exhibit a connected series of the evidences of the Catholic Church, than minutely to canvass the claims of any other, the writer has purposely refrained from entering into the controversy regarding the validity of the ordinations of the Church of England. However, his opinion on that important subject is already on record. A profound knowledge of the controversy must ever prevent an impartial reader from coming to the conclusion that the ordination of the ministers of the Church of England is valid.

Little is now left to the defenders of the English ordinations but to repeat the arguments, if arguments they may be called, by which Courayer, an Augustinian monk, ingeniously laboured to establish their validity. The reception he met in England, after abandoning his own country, and, I might add, his religion, shows how proud the English clergy were to receive aid on that delicate point, even from the darkness of a Catholic cloister. Yet neither Courayer nor his copiers have been able to efface the impression left upon the public by the writings of Harding, and Sanders, and Stapleton, which attest that neither Parker nor those he consecrated, or pretended to consecrate, were recognised by

priesthood without a sacrifice is an anomaly in language which cannot be explained. They are correlative words, which express correlative duties, and of which the one can never be dissociated from the other. Such is the doctrine of St. Paul. Every high priest,

the Catholics, or the well informed of that time, as invested with the character valid ordination. This is a point which Harding, in his controversy with Jewel, the celebrated Bishop of Salisbury, pressed with repeated force, and to which the champion of the Protestant prelacy gave no satisfactory reply. Dr. Elrington has expended much subtlety in giving a more plausible colour to arguments which are justly deemed of little force. I will not say that his labours were utterly lost, since they probably earned for him the temporalities of a bishopric, which in the estimation of many orthodox churchmen is not less valuable than a valid ordination. But, after all that has been written, from Courayer to Elrington, there still remains in the mind of an impartial reader some secret scepticism that cannot be entirely removed.

The writer will not now dwell on the frequent challenge of the Catholic controvertists to their opponents to produce the Lambeth Registry, on which Protestants rested the valid consecration of Matthew Parker—a registry which, if seasonably produced, would have settled the question. He even dismisses the story of the Nag's-head-inn consecration, nor shall he dwell upon the more important circumstance of the want of evidence that Barlow, first a prior of one of the suppressed monasteries, and the consecrator of Parker, had ever received not the appointment, but the character of episcopacy.

These and other circumstances he leaves to that class of writers who rest their doubts upon dates, and upon circumstances of place which it is difficult to clear up at this distance of time.

But he cannot pass over the imperfect ritual adopted at that early stage of the pretended Reformation, coupled with the theological opinions of those by whom it was composed. Those who have acquired a knowledge of the elements of theology must be aware that the words or form by which a sacrament is administered must always be expressive of the virtue it imparts. Without such determinate words the matter of a sacrament would be an inert element, flexible to any, even a profane purpose; and hence these words are, by scholastics, properly called the *form* which fits the matter to that end for which it is destined. The words or form of the Eucharist are expressive of the real presence; and those of penance of the remission of sin. Of orders, at least of the priesthood, the peculiar and appropriate office, if we are to believe the apostle, is to offer sacrifice. The form, therefore, by which it is to be conferred, ought to be expressive of this peculiar duty. But the idea of a sacrifice was banished from the English ritual. And as to the form of episcopal consecration, it is confessed, almost on all hands, to have been imperfect and insufficient. The ceremony of anointing, too, used in the Catholic Church, was treated by the reformers with levity and derision. (Ordinal of Edward VI. anno 1550.) But why waste the reader's patience in showing what little reverence the reformers attached to the episcopal character, when Cranmer, and his supposed consecrator, Barlow, acknowledged that bishops, like the chancellors, mayors, and sheriffs, depended on his majesty; and that Cranmer did not mean in the exercise of their functions alone, but in every other particular, is evident from his saying that the usual ceremonies on such occasions, meaning those of consecration, are not necessary. (Bossuet, *Histoire des Variations*, tom. I, l. 7, page 345, Burnet, Heylin, &c.) Persons who hold such opinions must have been careless about the form of ordination; and so sensible did the Protestants become of its imperfection, that, in the reign of the second Charles, it was improved to its present state, about one hundred and twelve years after its introduction. But, even supposing it now perfect, let not the ministers of the Church of England imagine that it is the source from which their

according to him, is appointed *to offer gifts and sacrifices*;\* whence it is necessary that he should have something to offer. If every priest is appointed *to offer up gifts and sacrifices*, where no sacrifice exists, a priesthood must be unnecessary. Such a priesthood would be as anomalous a character as a king without any regal authority, or as a judge without any judicial functions. If then, there be no sacrifice in the new law, why insist on the validity of its priesthood? Or, if they must be so jealous of the priestly character, why labour to extinguish the office of offering sacrifice, which, according to the apostle, gives the priesthood its distinctive character and name? There is a strange inconsistency in thus separating doctrines which must be entirely received or entirely rejected. Eager for the honours of the Catholic Church, yet impatient of its control, Protestants would fain assume its priesthood, and reject the essential office with which that priesthood is intertwined. What they raise with the one hand they cast down with the other. But, to be consistent, it is necessary to believe in the sacrifice of the Mass, or to annihilate altogether the existence of a Christian priesthood.

“We have an altar,” says St. Paul, “whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle.”† In the language of the apostles the reader may discover the existence of a sacrifice. The peculiar and exclusive object of an altar is for the immolation of some victim. Wherever the inspired writers introduce the mention of an altar, it is always associated with the offering of sacrifice. The same uniform alliance between the ideas of an altar and a victim is found in the

ordination flows. Parker and Barlow were more than fourscore years dead before this improvement, and must have therefore been deprived of all the virtue which that form could impart. If, therefore, the form of ordination was defective in its beginning, it must have continued so in the descending series, unless we suppose some latent charm in the form adopted in the reign of Charles, which would reach back to the time of Elizabeth, to purify the source of the English episcopacy.

See Fletcher's “Comparative View of the Grounds of the Catholic and Protestant Churches,” chap. xii.

\* Heb. v. 1.

† Ibid. xiii. 10.

language of the pagan nations.\* Nay, so completely did the Greeks identify the words priest, and altar, and sacrifice, that they are all expressed by one simple primitive root, modified only by different inflexions. The more we trace the analogies of language, or the religious ceremonies of the ancients, the more indissoluble shall we find the connexion between the kindred expressions of altar and sacrifice. Now, the apostle assures us that we have an altar in the Church, in which they who serve the tabernacle do not participate. If so, we must have a sacrifice in which they do not share. What the nature is of that new sacrifice, to which the apostle alludes, we shall learn by a reference to the character of the new priesthood. That the priesthood of Christ was to be distinct from that of Aaron has been clearly revealed by the royal Prophet. "Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."† That our Redeemer realised this prophetic character is no less distinctly announced by St. Paul.‡ In what the order of Melchisedech consisted is the next subject of inquiry, in order to ascertain the particular feature in the person of our Redeemer that expressed the prophetic image which shadowed his future priesthood. That one function of Melchisedech, which characterised the order of his priesthood—the destined model of that of Christ, must have been peculiar and exclusive. It must have been a function distinct from the other duties of the priesthood, else it would want a discriminating quality to point out to the eyes of mankind him in whom the picture of the Royal Prophet was completed.

In that chapter of the Old Testament which introduces to our acquaintance the venerable pontiff who formed the type of our Redeemer's priesthood, there is only one circumstance which strikes the reader as

\* "Victima labe carens, et præstantissima forma,  
 ———— Vitis præsignis et auro,  
 Sistitur ante aras."—Ovid. Met. xv. 130.

† Psalm, cix. 4.

‡ Heb. vi., vii., xi.

peculiar and characteristic. "But Melchisedech, the King of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, *for* he was the priest of the most high God, blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram by the most high God, who created heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, by whose protection the enemies are in thy hands. And he gave him the tithes of all."\*

Of all the circumstances that may be noticed in this passage, there is none that impresses us so strongly as the oblation of bread and wine. The pontiff appears encircled with other badges, it is true, of royal or sacerdotal dignity: they are badges that were worn by other pontiffs and kings. He blessed Abraham; but the office of benediction was common to every priest of the race of Aaron. He had no immediate predecessor nor successor; neither had Abel. He was just: that, however, is a prerogative which Noah might claim, who was saved on account of his virtue from the waters of the deluge. His genealogy was not written; neither was that of Job, who discharged

\* Gen. xiv. 18, et seqq.

Perhaps in the whole range of Scriptural commentary there is not such another instance of disingenuous and laborious trifling with the ordinary and natural meaning of language as the forced verbal criticisms by which it is sought to embarrass the sense of this celebrated passage of Genesis. There is scarcely a language, however copious, in which there are not words flexible to a variety of meanings, and of which the sense must not be determined by the easy and obvious current of the context. If this be the case with modern languages, which have been so developed that the most delicate shades of thought have their appropriate expressions, how much more so with those primitive idioms, such as the Hebrew, where one word is often transferred to the conveyance of a diversity of meanings. This Hebrew particle, which, in conformity with the Vulgate, I have rendered into the English *for*, is known and acknowledged to have been similarly translated in other parts of the Bible. And there is none possessing any acquaintance with the language that must not subscribe to the correctness of those translations. Why, then, attempt to limit the application of the particle to a *conjunctive* sense, whereas the context not only justifies but requires the *causal* meaning attached to it in other parts of Scripture? Without dwelling on the vast variety of senses in which Hebrew grammarians and lexicographers interpret this particle, I have only to remark, that even from the Protestant translation the true orthodox meaning of the Vulgate breaks forth, since the emphatic *and* is well known to be often equivalent to the causal preposition *for*, even in the English language. No doubt it is to the influence of the same nocturnal apparitions that aided Luther and Zuinglius in getting rid of the real presence and the Mass, we are indebted for all the critical apparatus that has been so long employed to force out of the fourteenth chapter of Genesis the evidence which it furnishes of the sacrifice of the Mass, in so clearly recording what constituted the priestly character of Melchisedech.

the priestly functions, in rising every morning to offer sacrifice for his family. But the oblation of bread and wine renders Melchisedech solitary, striking, and characteristic ; and in the long line of pontiffs that pass in review before us, from Abel to the last descendant of the line of Aaron, we discover, by this prominent and appropriate feature, him who was destined to represent the order of the Messiah.

If, then, the oblation of bread and wine be that act of sacrifice which formed the character of Melchisedech's priesthood, Christ must have fulfilled this character in that action of his life which has the closest correspondence with the sacrifice of the royal pontiff. It will not be difficult to discover what that action is. Though nothing connected with the Redeemer's life is unimportant, yet he reserved the accomplishment of this figure for its last stage, as if to draw to it more particularly the attention of mankind. At his Last Supper, on the eve of his Passion, encircled by his apostles, the ministers of his power, and the depositaries of his last will, he blesses bread and wine, changing them by the efficacy of his word into his own body and blood, and makes them all partakers of the mysterious sacrifice. This is the only action of the Redeemer's life that fully corresponds with the oblation of bread and wine that formed the character of Melchisedech's priesthood ; and since he was appointed by the eternal Father a priest according to the same order, every unbiassed reader will discover in the Last Supper the accomplishment of the prophetic prediction. The apostles, mindful of the Redeemer's last injunction, perpetuated the rite which he desired them to observe in remembrance of him ; and, accordingly, we find *altar* and *the Lord's Body*, and other words expressive of the Eucharistic sacrifice, occurring in the earliest instructions that were addressed to the Christian Church. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that heathens are excluded from the participation of *their altar*, and reminds them that those who do not distinguish *the body of the*

*Lord*, are guilty of profanation.\* In the Last Supper, at which Christ realised the order of his priesthood, predicted by one prophet, we discover the first of those pure oblations that were announced by another; and in the epistles of St. Paul, we find their gradual diffusion, until, with the progress of the Christian religion, they were spread from the "rising of the sun to the going down thereof."

Those, who pretend that the sacrifice of the Mass is irreconcilable with the tenor of the epistle which St. Paul addressed to the Hebrews, take but a contracted view of his reasoning on the priesthood. If he insists on the eternity of Christ, the high priest, it is to contrast it with the mortality of Aaron: and if he insists on the sufficient atonement of the sacrifice of the cross, once consummated, it is in reference to the imperfect oblations of the old law, frequently repeated. But the eternity of Christ, the great high priest, is not incompatible with a subordinate priesthood, subject to death; nor does the sufficiency of his sacrifice disprove the necessity of its commemorative application. The high-priests, the successors of Aaron, required the aid of vicarious ministers to perform the sacerdotal functions. Since, then, it is with the high priesthood of Aaron that of Christ is contrasted, it is no more inconsistent with the one than with the other, to be represented by a subordinate ministry. The priests of the new law, far from succeeding or superceding Christ, the high priest, perform their functions under him, as did the priests of the old law under Aaron; and hence the natural development of the Apostle's reasoning is favourable to the priesthood of the new covenant. In offering the sacrifice of the Eucharist, priests are only Christ's ministers, by presenting daily to his eternal Father, the sacrifice which was once consummated on Calvary. If the apostle does not consider it incompatible with the unity of Christ's

\* 1 Cor. x. Heb. xiii. 10.'

sacrifice, that he should present himself to his Father in heaven, why should it be incompatible with the same unity, that his priests on earth should present him to the same heavenly Father? The sacrifice of the Eucharist, then, cannot be included in the apostle's argument, on the imperfection of the sacrifices of the old law. Because their efficacy extended not beyond the sins for which they were offered, they were, on that account, renewed, to keep pace with the repeated transgressions of the people. Not so the sacrifice of the Eucharist, which is commemorative of the sacrifice once offered on the cross, and remains always the same. It is, however, a real as well as commemorative sacrifice; commemorative, as it recalls the memory, and real, as it conveys the merits of the death of our Redeemer. By the sacrifice of the cross our ransom was paid; by that of the Mass the same ransom is applied. If this distinction be not founded in truth and reason, then baptism itself is vain, and all the duties prescribed by religion, works of supererogation. But if the ransom was only paid on the cross, to be afterwards applied through other channels, why may not its fruits be as well conveyed through a sacrifice as through the sacraments? It is not the Catholic Church, then, that degrades the dignity, or abridges the efficacy, of the sacrifice of the cross. The sacrifice of the cross may be considered in the relation of a cause; that of the Eucharist of an effect: our idea of the cause rises with the grandeur of the effect which it produces: and the mighty currents that are continually flowing from the ocean of redemption, instead of diminishing it in our estimation, only illustrate more fully its exhaustless immensity.

If the Incarnation was a work worthy of the wisdom of God to conceive, and of his power to accomplish, the sacrifice of the Mass gives the merciful plan its full development and perfection. Before that period, there was between God and man a distance immeasurable and impassible. To reconcile heaven with

earth, "it behoved him in all things to be made like to his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest with God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people."\* But, "if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,"† who assumed human nature, when it was yet stricken with a divine malediction, how consonant is it with the same merciful plan, that the same victim should continue to offer himself for our sins, being both able and willing to procure our pardon!—able, from his omnipotent power, and willing, from the consciousness of his past infirmities. "For in that wherein he himself had suffered, and been tempted, he is able to succour them also who are tempted."‡

In assisting at this holy sacrifice, the well-instructed Christian is led through a train of the most solemn and religious ideas. From a pure oblation of bread and wine, by which we acknowledge the bounty of heaven, we ascend to the period of its institution, and contemplate our Redeemer abolishing the bloody sacrifices of the old law, and inviting Jew and Gentile to share in the divine banquet—the emblem of universal reconciliation. It recalls the memory of the passover, and the covenant of Abraham; the history of man's fall, and the promise and accomplishment of his redemption; thus conducting the contemplative mind through all that is elevated and interesting in the history of religion, until at length it reposes in the presence of its God.§ Not that awful presence clad in thunder, which the Hebrew people were fearful to approach, but the presence of a God clothed with our own nature, inviting us, with astonishing condescension, to familiar intimacy—nay, literally realising, but purifying an affection by which ardent friends desire to be incorporated with each other. Here we find the consummation of all that we admire in the divine mysteries—Jesus Christ, true God and true man; united to the one by his divinity, to the

\* Heb. ii. 17.

+ Rom. v. 10.

‡ Heb. ii. 18.

§ See Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christian. Eucharistie.*

other by his humanity; connecting the opposite extremes by his twofold nature—thus “reconciling all things, and making peace through the blood of his cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven.”\*

Nor is the mediation of Christ, which is daily interposed in the sacrifice of the altar, incompatible with the subordinate intercession of the saints. Nay, as Christ is the head that connects the distant members of his Church, whether suffering, or militant, or triumphant, it is through him that they feel and exercise the natural sympathies of fellow-members towards each other. Instead, then, of excluding the solicitude and intercession of the saints, the mediation of Christ is the source from which they naturally flow, and to which their efficacy must be entirely referred. The friends of Job found favour with the Almighty, through his interposition.† Nay, they were required to solicit it as a condition of their pardon. And is it to be supposed that the prayers of this man were more efficacious with the Almighty while he was yet going through the progress of his purification on earth, than when his soul, purified from every earthly stain, was united to its Maker? The seasonable interposition of Moses averted from the Israelites the threatened vengeance of heaven.‡ St. Paul solicited the prayers of the faithful on earth.§ Unless, therefore, we suppose that their charity has cooled on approaching the source of charity itself, or that their favour has diminished when their friendship has been eternally confirmed, we cannot refuse to the friends of God in heaven the same prerogative which we know they possessed on earth.||

Hence the primitive fathers strongly recommended to the faithful the intercession of the saints, and practised the doctrine which they inculcated. The tombs of the martyrs were often the altars on which the holy sacrifice of the Mass was offered, and their remains

\* Coloss. i. 20. † Job, xlii. ‡ Exod. xxxii. § Rom. xv. 30.

|| The Catholic practice of invoking the intercession of the saints is strongly recommended in Luther's “Preparation for Death!”

were honoured by the veneration of the people.\* The respect which they offered to the relics of the victorious champions of the faith was always referred to Christ, who was glorified in their martyrdom; and the prayers with which they invoked their intercession ultimately reposed in Christ, who had consummated their glory. These few observations might be confirmed by such a number of references to the most ancient writers, as would almost bury the text under a load of commentary.† “Let us mutually remember each other,” says the holy Cyprian to Cornelius, “and pray for each without ceasing, in the spirit of concord and union. Let us strive to soothe each other’s afflictions by the exercise of mutual charity; and let him who, through the fear of God, shall first depart from this life, preserve before the Lord his charity for his brethren, in order to intercede continually in their favour before the throne of mercy.” In another epistle, he says that paradise is our country; that a number of our friends, our brothers, and our children, have already reached the harbour, and that they feel the tenderest solicitude for the faith of those who are yet exposed to all the perils of the storm. Nor was this doctrine confined to Africa and to the West; it extended likewise to the Eastern Church. To spare the reader a number of ample quotations, I shall be content with directing his attention to the writings of Gregory Nazianzen. In the eloquent panegyric which he pronounced on the life and labours of Athanasius, the patriarch of Alexandria, he tells his hearers that: “Now from the highest heaven the saint is contemplating the shifting scenes of the world; stretching forth his hands to those who are still struggling in the cause of virtue; and that his aid is the more efficacious as he is already freed from the incumbrances of the body.”‡ I am well aware that the impassioned effusions of preachers are not always a

\* St. Chrysost. Hom. xxvi. in 2 Cor.

† See the “Discussion Amicale,” lett. xiii.

‡ Paneg. St. Athan. Orat. 21. Similar sentiments occur in his panegyrics of St. Basil and St. Cyprian.

correct standard of Catholic theology. But the eloquence of the celebrated bishop of Constantinople was always directed by the influence of an enlightened judgment. From the accuracy of his doctrines, he obtained the name of the theologian among the ancient fathers. At the conclusion of the sermon he repeats the same doctrine, and hesitates not to implore in elegant and pathetic language the intercession of Athanasius: "Look down on us with a favourable eye, and cease not to conduct the flock who adore a perfect Trinity, which they know and revere in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. If we are sufficiently happy to enjoy peace, let me live, and assist me to direct this flock. But if the Church be still doomed to war and suffering, bring me out of this world, and place me near thee and thy associates." He repeats a similar invocation at his funeral sermon for St. Basil. The same doctrine is often found in the writings of St. Chrysostom, one of his eloquent successors in the see of Constantinople; nor shall I dwell on particular names in support of a doctrine on which all are unanimous.

If the faithful solicited with earnestness the intercession of the saints, who were able to afford them succour, they forgot not to extend the favour to those who might need their assistance. To confine "the communion of saints" to the favour and protection of the blessed in heaven, would be but a partial and imperfect view of that article of our creed. In that communion all its members are comprehended; it must therefore embrace the interests of those who are suffering in another world, as well as those who are suffering on earth. Placed in the alternate relation of receiving or affording assistance, the Christians on earth offer for the souls in purgatory the same intercession which they implore from those in heaven; and they are stimulated in their charity towards the former by the hope of sharing more abundantly in the charity of the latter in return. The two tenets of the intercession of the saints and of prayers for the dead are therefore mutual and inseparable.

The necessity of the one is an obvious deduction from the natural development of the other; and hence they are usually connected together in all the liturgies of the Church. The summary method which I have adopted in the preceding article, by referring the reader to the general belief, rather than to numerous attestations of the ancient fathers, is equally applicable to this. History is the faithful transcript through which we view the moral and religious character of any people; and one public transaction, accurately recorded, conveys as strong an impression of their opinions as a number of detached testimonies.

Eusebius, after describing the pomp that attended the funeral of Constantine, mentions that numbers of the people who accompanied the clergy, not content with manifesting their affection for the emperor by sighs and tears, offered the most precious gifts of their prayers for his repose.\* He further assures us that this prince, from a feeling of piety, wished that his remains should be deposited in the church of the apostles, which he had erected in Constantinople, in the hope of participating in the prayers which were there offered in honour of the saints; and sharing in the fruits of the mystic sacrifice after death.† Notwithstanding the sufficiency of the picture which the historian has drawn of the belief of ancient times, I cannot refrain from alluding to the affecting request of St. Monica to her son St. Augustine, that he would remember her at the altar, which, though familiar to every reader, yet can never be omitted on the subject of purgatory, since it is consecrated by the religious sympathy of the whole Christian world. “And now my heart being healed of that wound (the death of his mother), I pour out to thee, our God, in behalf of that servant of thine, a far different sort of tears, flowing from a spirit affrighted by the consideration of the perils of every soul that dies in Adam. For although she (St. Monica) being revived in Christ, even before being set loose from the flesh, and having lived in such

\* Hist. Constan., lib. iv., cap. 71.

† Ibid., cap. 60.

a manner as that thy name is much praised in her faith and morals : yet I dare not say that, from the time that thou didst regenerate her by baptism, no word came out of her mouth against thy command. . . . I, therefore, setting aside for awhile her good deeds, for which with joy I give thee thanks, *entreat thee at present for the sins of my mother.* . . . Forgive them, O Lord, forgive them, I beseech thee enter not into judgment with her. . . . For she, when the day of her dissolution was at hand, had no thought for the sumptuous covering of her body, or the embalming of it, nor had she any desire for a fine monument: none of those things did she recommend to us, but only desired that we should make a remembrance of her *at thy altar*, at which she had constantly attended.”\* Lest, however, it should be imagined that the request of Monica was only a wish that she might not be forgotten by the gratitude of her son ; St. Augustine, in other parts of his writings, insists on the utility of offering prayers and sacrifices for the dead ; maintaining that “ through the prayers and sacrifices of the Church, and alms-deeds, God deals more mercifully with the departed than their sins deserve.”†

To these, as well as to the united testimonies of the fathers, nought is opposed but the feeble and unmeaning remark that they were all infected with the common distemper of the age. It is not denied that the belief of purgatory overspread the Church in those times. Some, however, affect to controvert its universal diffusion at an earlier period. St. Augustine remarks, that the practice of praying for the dead is one which passed like an hereditary property from father to son, and descended to his own time. But we want not the testimony of St. Augustine to support what all antiquity proclaims. If farther evidence should still be required, not only in favour of this but of every other tenet of the Catholic Church, it will be supplied by Conyers Middleton. He has made the important discovery that not

\* Confess., lib. ix., cap. 13.

† Serm. 172. See also the same Father, HAR. 57, 75, &c.

only the rites and doctrines of the Catholic Church were coeval with the apostles, but that they have actually descended from the remoter source of Paganism!\*

The work of this ingenious writer was hailed as an important accession to Protestant controversy. Little did the members of the established Church imagine that under the disguised features of a friend their lurked an enemy who aimed the deadliest blow at the foundation of Christianity.† To trace an affinity between the Catholic and Pagan worship was undoubtedly a grateful topic; and he who undertook the task was deemed a meritorious champion of the Reformation. But while he deduced the lineal and unbroken descent of the Catholic tenets from Paganism to the present times, the interval of the Church's idolatry and error entirely disappeared. It was until then the boast of the Protestants that the Roman Catholic Church had apostatised from the pure and primitive faith of the apostles. But in the system of Middleton, which connects the doctrines and practices of every age with the doctrines and practices of the preceding century, you look in vain for this period of apostasy. Protestants at length became alarmed at the sight of the labyrinth into which they had been at first unwarily led; and the "free inquiry" did not fail to open the eyes of the most credulous. Wherever they turned they were met by unexpected apparitions. In following him in his ascent to the time of the apostles, they found that the Catholics of the eighteenth were the same in belief and practice as those of the first century. By following him farther they could not acquiesce in the imputation of a Pagan descent, without sharing in all the disgrace of the connexion. By the dilemma which forces them to acknowledge that the present Catholics do not differ from the first Christians, or that the first Christians borrowed their religion and its rites from the Pagans, Protestants have been sadly perplexed; and

\* In the famous Letter from Rome. See the Preface to Dr. Challoner's "Catholic Christian Instructed."

+ In the attack on Dr. Waterland's Vindication of the Scripture, as well as in the Free Inquiry.

rather than have no pretext of error in the Church of Rome, to give a colour to their schism, they would gladly dispense with the dangerous alliance of Conyers Middleton.

The doctrine of purgatory will not be deemed the less entitled to our belief, because it so fully accords with the finest feelings of the human heart. There is, whatever may be its name, a certain something in the mind which loves to commune with a departed friend, and takes a warm interest in his destiny. This feeling follows him beyond the confines of life, prompting us to implore his aid, if he be in a condition to afford it; or, if he be in a condition to receive it, to proffer consolation. I care not for the imputation of a Pagan origin; for what were the universal doctrines of paganism but the fragments of truth originally revealed to man, dislocated and deformed by those by whom they were continually broken? The doctrine of purgatory, then, is the doctrine of every age, and of every country, and of every religion; nay, a doctrine of the human heart, of which it can never be divested; and the deep root which it has taken there shows that it sprung from the seed which was cast in it by its divine author. It is, then, a consolation to the Catholic, to reflect that he is united by mutual interchanges of charity with the remotest members of the Church of Christ; and that the link which binds them together, too strong to be sundered by distance or by death, stretches to another world, embracing heaven, and earth, and purgatory, in the amplitude of its connexion. In the relative estimation of two religions, which adopt or reject the communion of saints, one may be compared to the condition of savage life, where all live in a state of sullen independence, neither assisted by the aid, nor ministering to the wants, of each other; while the other resembles society in the fullest tide of civilisation, bringing together regions the most remote, and people the most dissociated; spreading the benefits of its commerce through every tribe and nation, and pouring over the barrenness of one country the superfluous riches of another.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## PENANCE AND EXTREME UNCTION.

No atonement for sin one of the principal defects of Paganism.—Ignorance of any effectual means of reconciliation with the Divinity an obvious incentive to immorality.—Wisdom of the doctrine of Penance inculcated by the Catholic Church.—Hope of pardon founded on the Redemption of Christ becomes presumption unless joined with the fulfilment of his precepts.—Difference between the penance of the Old and that of the New Law.—Sacramental Confession obviously deducible from the power of binding and loosing with which Christ invested the pastors of his Church.—Its practice coeval with the origin of Christianity.—Its repugnance to human feeling an evidence that man could never impose such a precept.—The manifold advantages of this practice to individuals and to society.—Sacrament of Extreme Unction.—Its promulgation by St. James.—Why the mention of it does not occur more frequently in the early ages of the Church.—Ancient mode of administering it.—Practice of the Greek Church.—Abuses.—Scholastic opinion as to its repetition.—Present practice of the Catholic Church.—Great utility of this sacrament to the dying Christian.—Indulgences preached by St. Paul.—Primitive discipline of the Church regarding public penance and its relaxation.—Indulgences of the Middle Ages.—Jubilees.—Their nature and origin.

OF all the evils which were felt by the pagan nations, there was none more disastrous in its consequences, than their utter inability to make atonement to the offended Deity. In the worst and darkest period, they were not ignorant of the boundaries of right and wrong, but, having once transgressed them, they found it difficult to retrace their footsteps. Borne along by the pressure of the crowd and the impetuosity of their own passions, there were few who did not find themselves transported far beyond the limits of virtue. But, having been once placed on the other side, they might be compared to the unhappy people, whose descent to the regions of darkness their own poet describes to have been easy and rapid; but whose return to light was

a work of hopeless toil and difficulty. This difficulty or rather impossibility of regaining the steep from which they had descended, aggravated considerably the horrors of their fall. Perhaps there is no circumstance that more accelerates the progress of crime, than a consciousness of the incapability of being restored to innocence once forfeited. Instead of any generous effort to repair one offence by an opposite line of conduct, man plunges, after committing it, more deeply into others, persuading himself that virtue is vain, and penance fruitless, since he has once lost all hope of reconciliation.

Such was the unfortunate condition of mankind before the appearance of our Redeemer and the propagation of his religion. Many of them were aware of the abyss into which vice had plunged them; but, not knowing how to escape, they made no efforts to rise: hence, an appalling corruption, which swept away almost every trace of virtue in its progress. They had, it is true, their sacrifices and their lustrations; but they became symbols of licentiousness, rather than of virtue; and amidst the fantastic exhibitions of religion, the heart, the true seat of devotion, was unreclaimed. In no one instance do the beneficial effects of the Christian doctrine on the happiness of society appear more striking than in that merciful spirit which arrests the criminal career of the sinner, by bidding him hope for reconciliation. It was this merciful spirit of penance and of pardon, which our Redeemer sent forth, that first agitated the corrupt mass of human nature, and awakened all the nations from the grave of corruption to the newness of life and virtue. It pointed to the depths of misery into which they were plunged, and then to the happiness which they might attain; and, unlike philosophy, which furnished its votaries with no means to escape the dangers it revealed, the Christian religion endued its followers with strength to overcome them. It is the same merciful spirit that still sustains the life and vigour of society. At war with all the passions of the human heart, it is continually labouring to heal

the evils inflicted by their influence. It requires, however, to be administered with skill and caution. Were sinners under the persuasion that they could be easily reconciled to their offended God, without making any satisfaction, they might abuse such facility of pardon into a perseverance in their crimes. Again, were the conditions of reconciliation of an extreme and painful rigour, many might be deterred by its difficulties from availing themselves of its advantages. It is in the judicious mixture of severity and mildness, with which the Catholic Church administers penance, that she labours to perpetuate the merciful spirit to which the world is so deeply indebted; and, like the good Samaritan, she pours wine and oil into the wounds which the passions have inflicted, that the sound part may be healed by the mild influence of the one, while the corrupt may be cut away by the wholesome acrimony of the other.

It is to this twofold operation of severity and mildness, judiciously tempered, that we may trace all the practices of the Catholic Church which are connected with the virtue or the sacrament of penance: and he who has studied well the mysterious union of justice and mercy that characterize the conduct of the Almighty to his Church, may understand the corresponding history of her penances and indulgences. Under every dispensation of his will, with which the Almighty has favoured mankind, he has uniformly given assurances of pardon to the repentant sinner. However, it is necessary that repentance be generally accompanied with some exterior marks of its sincerity, not that the Almighty could be imposed on by a counterfeit repentance, but because the inward affections of the soul are generally embodied in corresponding expressions of joy or sorrow. The feelings that are not expressed in some shape may be deemed superficial; nor is it easy to conceive sincere sorrow without its exterior manifestation. By this exterior manifestation is not necessarily meant a noisy or ostentatious grief. Job, seated on the ground, without anyone daring to interrupt his solitude,

teaches a most impressive lesson of sorrow.\* But then this solitude and silence revealed the depths of the anguish of his soul, more forcibly than could be expressed by human language.

In those covenants of mercy which God has condescended occasionally to make, we find that the assurances of pardon were uniformly connected with conditions of some penitential expiation. When the Almighty revealed to our first parents, that from the woman's seed should spring one who, by crushing the head of the serpent, would achieve the deliverance of their posterity, he doomed them and their descendants to a life of sorrow and of toil.† The destruction with which the city of Niniveh was threatened was mercifully suspended, and at length averted by the Almighty. Yet it was not until all the inhabitants had done penance in sackcloth and ashes that the anger of the Almighty was appeased.‡ The sin of adultery into which David had fallen,§ he strove to expiate by tears and fasting.|| And, as he was one of those privileged individuals to whom God revealed his will, we cannot suppose that he would have recourse to works of supererogation. Among the expostulations which were addressed by the prophets to the sinful nation of Judea, there are none more frequent or more forcible than their exhortations to repentance. Nor did this repentance consist solely in an interior conversion of the heart. Lest they should be deceived by the fancy of a conversion that was not real, it was always required that it should be manifested by tears and fasting, and those other signs by which nature usually gives vent to the sorrowful feelings of the soul.

It ought not to be matter of surprise that the infraction of the divine law should, like that of every other, be visited with certain punishment. If society requires that some atonement should be made by the individual who violates its enactments, we are surely not to expect that they should be totally unpunished who violate the more solemn compact by which man is bound to his Creator.

\* Job, ii. 13. † Gen. iii. ‡ Jonas, iii. 10. § 2 Kings, xi. || Ibid, xii.

Nor are we to suppose that the infinite atonement, made by our Redeemer for the sins of the world, has released his creatures from the necessity of all expiation. In discharging the heavy debt which mankind had incurred, it was surely in his power to annex whatever conditions he pleased to the ransom. And if it were his will that man should still mortify the deeds of the flesh by fasting and penance, he who would dispense with those conditions, would be presumptuously extending the benefits of Christ's redemption beyond the measure of the divine will. Had Jesus Christ acquitted his followers of the obligation of penance, which had been till then entailed upon mankind, we should discover in the records of his law some evidence of such relaxation. Yet, instead of any such indulgence, we find the New Testament, no less than the Old, crowded with passages recommending penitential works; and these recommendations fortified by the example of Christ and his apostles.

Instead of strewing the way that conducts to life with flowers, Jesus Christ acknowledges that it is painful, and that there were but few who find it.\* He recommends to his disciples the carrying of his cross, as the condition of participating in its merits;† and St. Paul assures us, that if we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live; but that death will be the reward of their indulgence.‡ The doctrine of mortification, which the apostles preached, he enforced by his practice; and chastised his flesh, lest while he preached to others, he himself should become a reprobate.§ If the passion of Jesus Christ has released us from the necessity of penance, such recommendations of mortification must be nugatory. But, since we cannot suppose that Christ or his apostles would have repeatedly enforced a superfluous practice, we are to conclude that penitential rigours still form a condition of reconciliation with the Almighty.

It may, however, be said, that we have derived but

\* Matt. vii. 14.

† Rom. viii. 13.

† Ibid. x. 38. Mark, viii. 34. Luke, xiv. 27.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

little benefit from the Christian covenant, if it requires the same rigorous conditions of penance that were exacted in the old law: and the contrast that is frequently drawn between the severity of the old, and the mildness of the new dispensation, may not appear sufficiently striking, unless it entirely free the Christian from the yoke of penance. There is, however, a peculiar feature about this virtue in the new law, entirely borrowed from its vivifying influence, which mitigates the austerity it wore under the ancient covenant. Then the terms of reconciliation were difficult; and the hope of pardon was dark and doubtful, unless when the penitent was inflamed with an intensity of divine love sufficient to efface the stains of his transgressions. Without this strong and vigorous principle, the austere penances were inert and ineffectual; and as there was no intermediate instrument to exalt the affections into a purer and more fervent action, many a generous feeling of sorrow might have vanished without effecting a reconciliation. This defect the mercy of our Redeemer has supplied, by exalting penance into a sacrament, and investing the holy rite with a grace and efficacy, of which until then it was destitute.

The hope of pardon, which before was feeble, from the uncertainty of a sufficient sorrow, has been strengthened by the power of forgiving sins, which Christ bequeathed to the pastors of his Church. Perhaps there is no feeling in the human heart more calculated to excite sorrow for an offence, than a consciousness of the generous and forgiving nature of him who is offended; and therefore the positive terms in which Christ has left his Church the power of loosing the sins of the penitent, must increase his confidence of reconciliation, and aid the progress of those feelings by which it must be effected. The Divinity is, then, as if stripped of the terrors in which he was shrouded; and many are attracted by the assurance of forgiveness who, had they been ignorant of such tenderness, would never have ventured to approach. In rendering recon-

ciliation more easy, the sacrament of penance has not superseded the necessity of sorrow. It has rather contributed to stir those affections which otherwise would never have been awakened. By the promise of mercy with which its austerities are mingled, it has smoothed a path that was once beset with difficulties; and hope, whose absence rendered it darksome before, has since flung its splendours over the way, making the pilgrim forget its toils, in the glory to which it conducts him.

On the eve of our Lord's ascension into heaven, having assembled his apostles, he breathed on them, accosting them in the following language: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained."\* From these words, which are too clear for commentary, it appears that Christ bequeathed to the ministers of his Church the power not only of forgiving sins but of retaining them; and from the same power, the practice of auricular confession seems to flow by an easy deduction. By the commission of our Redeemer, his priests are constituted judges of the sins of the faithful, and invested with authority to leave them exposed to all the penalty of their guilt, or to release them from their transgressions. To exercise this discretionary power with wisdom and with caution, they must first ascertain the penitent's guilt, and then pronounce what part of their disjunctive authority they are to exercise. Without such knowledge, they might retain the sins of him who was worthy of acquittal; or perhaps pronounce absolution on him to whom forgiveness should be refused. To obviate such mistakes, they must have a clear knowledge of the sinner's conscience. But since the secrets of the heart are accessible to God alone, they can be obtained by the priest only through the channel of confession. As the power, then, of forgiving or retaining sins must involve the knowledge of their lightness or enormity, and as that knowledge must depend upon the sinner's revelation

\* John, xx. 23.

of his own guilt, it requires no long nor laborious train of argument to connect the power of forgiving sins, so clearly laid down in Scripture, with the correlative duty of sacramental confession.

Accordingly, the practice of auricular confession has prevailed in the Church since the earliest period; founded as well on the precepts of Christ as on the example of the first believers, "Who came confessing and declaring their deeds."\* It is expressly mentioned by St. Cyprian† and Origen;‡ and among the succeeding fathers of the Church the practice is so frequently adverted to that it is quite unnecessary to transcribe testimonies, the existence and purport of which no candid scholar controverts.§ Nay, the very nature of the doctrine of sacramental confession bears the attestation of its apostolical origin. If the mysterious character of the Eucharist forbids us to suppose that the understanding could have ever been subdued by human authority to the belief of the real presence, our experience of the human heart warrants us no less in rejecting the supposition that it could ever have been swayed by the power of man to submit to the painful obligation of confession. From the mysteriousness of the one and the severity of the other, these tenets are most generally combated. Yet this very mysteriousness and severity furnish the most effectual means of their vindication. If the understanding be impatient of doctrines which oppress its faculties, the heart is no less mutinous under checks by which its inclinations are restrained. By what strange revolution, then, in all the feelings by which men are actuated, could they have surrendered their independence, and consented to reveal to a fellow-mortal

\* Acts, xix. 18.

† De Lapsis.

‡ Homil. ii. in Psalm xxxvii. Homil. ii. in Levit.

§ See on this subject the article— "Confessione Auricolare in Muzzarelli," tom. iv., who has collected with learned industry the most important testimonies from the twelfth to the second century, commencing with the venerable Peter of Blois, who died in the year 1200, and going back to the time of Tertullian, and from him to that of the apostles. It is a valuable vindication of the important tenet of auricular confession.

all the dark mysteries of the heart, which none but the Almighty could reach? A crafty impostor may, it is true, mingle some austere practices with the mock religion which he propagates. But the austerity is more than neutralised by licentiousness on other points; and he is generally sure, like the prophet of Mecca, to exempt himself, by a special privilege from every inconvenient obligation. But here the practice of confession extends to all, not excepting the priest who receives more than the layman who deposits the inmost secrets of the human breast; nay, it binds the highest authorities, pontiffs as well as kings; nor is it reconcilable with any principle of human conduct, that all would have conspired in propagating a delusion of which all are equally the dupes, and imposing a despotism of which all are equally the victims.

It might naturally be asked, if the practice be a human invention, at what period it was introduced, who was its author, and by what arts was it propagated? But such interrogatories are unnecessary. Its nature reveals its origin, since it is he alone who has assured us, that his "yoke is sweet and his burden light," that could ease a burden which man could not bear, and sweeten the yoke of auricular confession, to which no other power could reconcile him. Its salutary effects upon society are worthy of him to whom we trace its source. Employed in healing the wounds which the passions have inflicted, confession has been frequently instrumental in repairing the evils of injustice, and drawing the sinner from the abyss of despair.\* To those who have never felt its consolations, the practice must appear intolerable. And hence, it is true that nothing but the conviction of a divine command could subdue the repugnance of the will to so painful an experiment. But when the trial is once submitted to, the penitent finds the assurance of his Redeemer

\* "Que d'œuvres de miséricorde sont l'ouvrage de l'Évangile! Que de restitutions, que de réparations, la confession ne fait-elle pas faire chez les Catholiques! Chez tous, combien les approches des tems de communion n'opèrent-elles point de reconciliations et d'aumônes!"—Rousseau, *Emile*, tom. iii.

realized in the sweetness of his yoke; and his obedience in having recourse to the tribunal of penance, is amply rewarded by the peace of which it is productive. No one is ignorant of the ease that is felt by him who pours his sorrows into the breast of some friend, who, by the exercise of a generous sympathy, shares half his afflictions. It is but insignificant in comparison of the joy of him who contritely unburdens the secrets of his soul to a tender and intelligent minister of religion. What, then, becomes of the repugnance to this practice which would have been an obstacle to its introduction? Whatever may be its consoling effects it would be difficult to persuade mankind that a practice which humbles all the pride of the human heart is not severe and repulsive. But the confusion which it creates is overbalanced by the tranquil confidence that follows a sincere and sorrowful exposure of our transgressions. It is doubtless a consolation to reveal an oppressive secret to one who will sympathise in our grief. But how few are there whom the confidence which natural affection alone inspires would prompt us to make the depositaries of our weakness, much less of our crimes! Let, then, the comfort arising from the interchanges of friendship be what it may, there must be some mysterious and superior quality which converts the minister of religion into that friend to whom we can impart every secret that afflicts us. Yes, consult but human qualifications, and your sins would lie almost for ever buried in your own breast. But let the man who has no other title to your confidence once appear dispensing the power of binding and loosing, with which Christ has invested his ministers, all the bashfulness of nature instantly gives way, and those secret springs of the human heart are freely unlocked which would ever have remained hidden to any other scrutiny.

The advantages of this practice may best be appreciated by a contrast with the disorders that followed its abolition in Protestant countries. These disorders

were felt and deplored by the advocates of the Reformation. Sensible how much the morality of the people had suffered from its suppression, the Protestants of Nuremberg sent a respectful embassy to Charles V., requesting he would interpose his authority, and have it restored.\* Vain and abortive expedient, no less demonstrative of the benefits of confession than of its divine institution! What folly, to think that an effect could continue without the influence of the cause from which it rose?—to imagine that penitents would reveal their crimes, while the divine seal, under which they had been hitherto disclosed, was broken; or that they would enter the tribunal of penance no longer covered with the sacred veil which hung between them and the eyes of mankind, while they were unbosoming their sins in the sanctuary of the Almighty?

The affinity between penance and extreme unction suggests the propriety of treating in the same chapter two sacraments, of which one is the consummation of the other.† Extreme unction is another channel for conveying the grace of penance; and that it is productive of the effect of remitting sins is obviously deduced from the language of the apostle, who first promulgated its institution. “Is any man sick among you, let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.”‡ It will doubtless appear strange that those who pretend to derive their faith from the Scripture should close their eyes to this attestation in favour of extreme unction. That one, who with Luther would discard the whole epistle, because it is so strongly recommendatory of good works, should also reject every idea of the power

\* Scheffmacher.

† “Non modo pœnitentiæ, sed et totius Christianæ vitæ, quæ perpetua pœnitentia esse debet, consummativum sacramentum.”—Conc. Trid. Sess. 14.

‡ James, v. 14, 15.

of extreme unction to remit sins, is indeed natural. That those who blaspheme the inspired writings should point their ridicule against the practice of anointing at the hour of death, cannot excite our surprise; but that those who affect a veneration for the inspired Word of God, and admit the epistle of St. James to form a portion of it, should yet treat with profane derision the sacrament of the holy unction, betrays to the world that hereditary prejudice, and not the Bible, is the real source of their belief: else surely they would not indulge in any indecent mockery of a rite to which the apostle, in language too clear for controversy, annexes the "forgiveness of sins;" and which has been held in veneration in every age of the Church.

In the ages immediately after that of the apostles, we do not find such frequent mention of this as of the other sacraments. The reason of the omission may be traced as well to the peculiar nature of the sacrament as to the circumstances of the times. It is now the general discipline of the Church that only one priest administer this sacrament. Not so in the primitive ages, when, according to the suggestion of St. James, this rite was administered by the assistance of several presbyters. The lives of the saints furnish many examples of this practice. In the life of Queen Clotilda, we are told that she was anointed by *priests* with the holy oil on the thirtieth day of her last sickness;\* and St. Cunigund, too, is said to have turned to *the priests*, who attended in her dying hour; from whom she sought the communion and the oil of unction.†

In the Greek Church, up to the present day, seven priests have generally assisted at the performance of this rite; nor is it ever known, says the learned and laborious Renaudot,‡ that the sacrament is conferred

\* "Inuncta a sacerdotibus oleo sancto"

† "Conversa ad eos qui assidebant Presbyteros unctionis oleum et communionem expetit."—See Chardon, *Histoire des Sacremens*, tom. iv. page 386.

‡ *Ibid.*, page 391.

only by one individual. All the other sacraments were generally administered in the church; and the instructions of St. Cyril, to which we have before alluded, still attest how cautiously those mysteries, as they are called by the Greek fathers, were guarded from the knowledge and irreverence of the profane. If we are to judge from the modern rituals of the Oriental Churches, which are transcribed by the author of the history of the sacraments, few ceremonies are more long and solemn than those which accompany the administration of extreme unction. Whilst, however, the other sacraments were securely celebrated in the churches, the nature of extreme unction required that it should be administered in the private houses of the dying. The same feeling which prompted the fathers to treat the other sacraments with reserve must have extended in some degree to this, and made them jealous of protecting from the derision of pagans, who were then blended with Christian families, a sacramental rite which is not among those that are absolutely necessary for salvation.\*

Besides, the spirit of persecution which uniformly raged against the first Christians, frequently prevented the administration of the holy unction. A number of priests, habited in their sacerdotal robes and bearing lighted tapers in their hands, would not only have provoked persecution against themselves, but would have directed the pursuit of their enemies to the bed of the sick and infirm, who would have been unable to escape the vengeance of the pursuers. The infirmities of sickness, during which alone the sacrament of the holy unction is to be applied, were often anticipated by the axe of the executioner, and its benefits superseded by the crown of martyrdom.

In the earlier ages, the sacrament of extreme unction was generally sought and received before the patient advanced to the last stage of sickness. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, through an abuse that gene-

\* Histoire des Sacremens, tom. iv. p. 401.

rally prevailed, it was deferred to the last agony—an abuse of which some relics are still lingering in the Church.

In the life of Oswald, Bishop of York, we are informed that, having gone into his oratory, he called his brethren, and exhorted them to administer to him the sacrament of extreme unction.\* The salutary practice of receiving this sacrament, whilst yet in the enjoyment of sufficient strength of mind and body, fell into disuse in subsequent times. A pernicious opinion spread abroad, that those who recovered were not permitted to walk barefooted, and that they were also forbidden the use of flesh meat as well as all matrimonial intercourse.† Lest they should be subjected to such privations, the faithful generally deferred the unction to the last agony; and were unhappily confirmed in the same practice by the avarice of some of the clergy, who, by their exorbitant charges, rendered this sacrament almost inaccessible to the poor.‡

It required all the zeal of the bishops to reform such an abuse; and accordingly we find that in their synods they adopted some salutary regulations to repress the exactions of the clergy, as well as to eradicate the erroneous prejudices of the people.§ The causes which first influenced the delay of this holy rite have been removed; yet, such is the dominion of custom, that the dangerous practice of deferring this salutary remedy until its effect is almost lost on him to whom it is administered, has not been as yet entirely corrected.

Most of the ancient rituals prescribe, that while the extreme unction is administered, the dying penitent be laid in sackcloth and ashes. The ashes were sprinkled on the sackcloth in the form of a cross, and then the patient was stretched on it to receive the holy unction. Chardon|| cites a number of those rituals, and refers to the example of many illustrious saints, who devoutly conformed to this penitential

\* Histoire des Sacremens, tom. iv. p. 415.

† Ibid.

§ Ibid.

† Ibid. p. 417.

|| Ibid. pp. 446, 447.

practice. The historian who has illustrated the important subject of the sacraments tells us that this practice generally prevailed over the Church, and laments, with a becoming indignation at their degeneracy, that it first fell into disuse among the Cistercians, one of the austere of the religious orders.

An opinion prevailed among some of the scholastics of the twelfth century that the sacrament of extreme unction could not be repeated. Like other opinions which they fancied, this was not authorised by the doctrine or practice of the Church. On the contrary, according to ancient rituals, this sacrament was repeated during seven successive days.\* St. Rembert, Archbishop of Hamburg, as is mentioned in his life, was anointed on the seventh day before his death; and received the same remedy, together with the body and blood of Christ, on each day till he expired. But, according to the modern practice of the Church, sanctioned by the Council of Trent, it is to be only once administered during the same sickness. It may, however, be as often repeated as the individual relapses into danger of death after recovery.†

To confer but once during life this salutary sacrament would be to deprive many an individual of the advantages intended by its institution. At every period of his existence the "life of man is a warfare;" and perhaps at no stage of his career does the contest prove more perilous than when approaching its termination. Then the enemy of man's salvation collects all his might, and gathers together all those engines of attack which were hitherto scattered through the different avenues of life. Under any circumstances, the courage of the most intrepid would be put to severe trial by such vigorous assaults: they become doubly formidable when man's strength is shattered by disease. If not sustained by some powerful armour, the heart of the Christian might sink under the pressure of despair. And hence the Almighty has, through

\* Chardon, tom. iv. p. 412.

† Catechismus Con. Trid. p. 208.

his apostle, ordained that the priest should be called in at the awful moment, to offer up "the prayer of faith for his salvation," and to anoint the patient with oil, imparting to it supernatural power to strengthen and to soothe, effects of which the element used on the occasion is naturally an emblem. The redemption is the rich and exhaustless source from which the grace of extreme unction, as well as that of every other sacrament, is derived. But if, on our entrance into the world, the Almighty has opened the living fountain of baptism, from which the grace of redemption might as if palpably flow, it is in accordance with the same scheme of love that he should scatter similar wells of living water through the desert of our pilgrimage, and reserve a fresh spring of hope and mercy to gush forth at the hour of our departure.\*

The merciful spirit of the redemption, though it has not superseded the works of penance, has still mitigated their austerity. The depositary of the power of forgiving or retaining sins, with which Christ has invested her, the Church has blended in its exercise a judicious mixture of severity and indulgence. The penitential canons of the first ages still attest the rigorous punishments which were inflicted on sinners. The indulgences by which these rigours were occasionally relaxed, show that her object in inflicting them was not cruelty, but correction. In imposing upon sinners a penitential satisfaction, the Church has been swayed by the belief, illustrated by many examples of Scripture, that after the guilt and eternal punishment of mortal sin are remitted, there still remains due to the divine justice some temporal expiation. Though God consoled Adam with the merciful assurance of redemption, yet he entailed temporal pain, nay, death itself, on him and his posterity. The example shows how the forgiveness of the forfeit, which is incurred by mortal

\* "Sed immortales Deo gratias agant, qui ut baptismi sacramento aditum nobis ad veram vitam patefecit; ita etiam, ut ex hac mortali vita decedentes expeditiorem ad cœlum viam haberemus, extremæ unctionis sacramentum instituit."—Catechism. Conc. Trid. p. 263.

sin, may be associated with the enforcement of a severe temporal penalty. Nathan threatened David with the infliction of a long train of calamities, for the double crime of adultery and murder. Struck with remorse, the royal culprit exclaimed, "I have sinned against the Lord;"\* and with a corresponding promptness, the prophet mercifully assured him, that "the Lord also hath taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die." Here is an explicit declaration, that the sin of David was pardoned; nay, the stronger expression, that it was taken away. But although his sin was taken away, there remained a debt of temporal punishment behind;—a clear illustration that the pardon of the one may be connected with the infliction of the other. "Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, *for this thing*, the child that is born of thee shall surely die."† But the Passion of Christ may have dispensed with these penal satisfactions, which God's justice exacted under a less perfect covenant. If so, the indulgence should be specially claimed by the apostles, who were his chosen friends. Far, however, from imagining that he was exempt from the necessity of suffering, St. Paul rejoiced because he filled up "in his flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ."‡ Not, surely, that the apostle imagined there was any deficiency in the infinite merits of the Redeemer, which the penance of any creature could supply, but because, and it is his own sublime idea,§ by this sympathy of suffering a mutual affinity is formed between the head and members, which renders the poverty of the one capable of being enriched by the superabundant treasures of the other.

Taught by the precepts of Christ and his apostles, the Church has, from her earliest establishment, insisted on the necessity of penitential satisfaction. Her discipline on this head has undergone some variation, but

\* 2 Kings, xii, 13.

† Colos. i. 24.

‡ Ibid. 14.

§ Rom. viii. 29.

the spirit of penance has uniformly accompanied every change. In the first ages, a course of rigorous mortifications was prescribed to every sinner before he was admitted to the sacrament of the Eucharist—the last pledge of reconciliation. As early as the second century we discover that sinners were excluded from the assemblies of the faithful until they should have done penance.\* Not only public transgressions were the objects of the public penances of the Church, but sins of a grievous nature, which were revealed only in auricular confession, were sometimes submitted to a similar process of expiation.† Nor was there any apprehension of public scandal, since in these times of fervour many voluntarily imposed on themselves, for venial offences, the same punishment which the confessors exacted for more enormous sins. The penitential labours which sinners underwent varied with the nature of the transgressions for which they were imposed. Nor was the discipline precisely the same in every age and country. Like every other practice, over which human passion has any influence, it gradually relaxed from its primitive rigour; but in every stage until its decline, the severest penances were uniformly annexed to the most enormous transgressions.

The sins which required the longest time and the most laborious process for their expiation, were those of idolatry, adultery, and murder; opposed as they are to the great obligations which we owe to God, our neighbour, and ourselves: against them the vengeance of the Church was principally directed. Nor were these capital vices the only ones which were visited with the severest penances. She exercised a similar rigour towards apostasy and fornication, and the other kindred vices that follow in their train.

In the scanty records of the first and second centuries which have reached us, we do not find any

\* See Tertul. l. de Pœnit. c. 11. St. Cypr. de Laps.

† “Que l'on considère attentivement les anciens canons pénitentioux, ils imposent des peines publiques pour un certain ordre de péchés, sans distinguer s'ils sont publics ou secrets.”—Chardon, Hist. des Sacrem. tom. iii. page 168.

account of the penitential stations, into which the course of penance was divided in the following ages. From the silence of the early fathers on the subject, some writers have inferred that the clamours of the Novatians and Montanists against the facility with which the Church extended pardon to sinners, suggested the enforcement of those stated labours. But the learned Chardon, who has bestowed much time and labour on this interesting subject, has corrected the mistakes into which Morinus and his copyists had fallen, by showing that public penances were enjoined before the rise of either heresy; though, like other points of discipline, there was not yet time for the legislative authority of the Church to give them a regular and settled form.

The penitential canons of the third and fourth centuries divide the course of public penance into four stations, which not unfrequently comprehend, for the greater crimes, the term of twenty years. Perhaps the reader cannot have a more correct idea of this ancient practice than by perusing the following passage of St. Basil, the Bishop of Cæsarea, the first that has clearly defined those different stages: "He who has been guilty of wilful murder, and is anxious to do penance for his crime, shall be excluded for twenty years from the communion of the faithful; and these twenty years shall be thus divided: for four years he must weep without the porch of the oratory, accusing himself of his sins, while he implores the prayers of those who enter. After the lapse of these four years, he shall be received among the auditors, and shall retire with them during the space of five years. Then he shall spend seven years among the prostrate, and go out after the prayers that precede the divine mystery. During four years more he shall stand among the faithful, but shall not participate in the oblation. After the expiration of that period he shall be admitted to the sacraments.\*

\* Ep. iii. Can. ad Amphyl.

Such is the course of canonical penance to which murder was subjected. For other grievous sins, the stations were similar, though the time of performing them varied with the nature of the offences. During the first stage of this rigorous course, the penitents were utterly excluded from the assembly of the faithful, and doomed to weep for their sins in the outer porch or court of the temple. In the second, they were permitted to cross the vestibule which connected the basilic with the court; and to hear the scriptural instructions which were read by the lectors as well as the sermons which were preached by the bishop. In the more advanced stage of prostration, the penitents were permitted further into the nave, and occupied the space that lay between the pulpit, which was generally fixed in the middle of the church, and the auditors who were standing within the vestibule. After having shared in the previous prayers or collects of the Mass, they were obliged to retire before the Offertory; while those in the fourth, or last stage, were suffered to join the assembly of the faithful, without however partaking of the Eucharist.\*

Exclusion from certain offices, as well as other inconveniences with which they were attended, gave to many a disrelish for these penitential austerities. Accordingly, they were gradually mitigated during the fifth and sixth centuries; and towards the seventh, the discipline, such as it had been regulated by the penitential canons, had almost entirely disappeared. But although these stated austerities were dispensed with, the penitential spirit to which they owed their origin survived their abolition. Other good works took place of those canonical rigours, and the fervour which had sustained the practice of them insensibly diminished. Sometimes it happened that ingenuity was employed to obtain release from the severer exercises of penance, But at no period was its necessity dispensed with; and lest the faithful should ever neglect its wholesome

\* Chardon, tom. iii. p. 286.

exercise, the fathers of Trent endeavoured to restore its ancient spirit by recommending confessors to impose penances on sinners proportioned to the nature of their transgressions.\*

In the brief sketch which I have exhibited of the penitential discipline of the Church, the reader may view the evidence of the belief that the sinner was not generally freed from all the effects of sin, without temporal satisfaction. Without the merits of Jesus Christ, any other satisfaction would have been vain: a participation, however, in the sufferings of his cross is the most natural disposition for sharing in his redemption.† It may happen that the fervour of divine love often effaces the most heinous transgressions. The penitent thief obtained in an instant a full remission of the guilt and punishment of all his sins.‡ The intensity of Magdalene's charity consumed all the corruption of her heart, and wrought its entire renovation.§ Examples of such conversion are not confined to any period; nor have the prodigies of God's grace been exclusively limited to the saints of the Gospel. Entrusted with the power of forgiving and retaining sins, the Church is no less the minister of God's corrective severity than of his mercy. Following the path which the exercise of his justice prescribed in punishing sins, the guilt of which had been already pardoned, she adopted a similar mode of exacting penitential satisfaction. But finding in the same inspired pages examples of other sinners, the intensity of whose sorrow instantly reconciled them to God, she only followed the same divine model, in occasionally treating such sinners with indulgence, and releasing them from every penal obligation. Had Magdalene or the penitent thief lived in the times of the penitential canons, none would have been more willing to submit to all their rigour. And as we are taught by the inspired writings that their love superseded the necessity of works of penance, what

\* Sess. xiv. cap. 8.

† Rom. viii. 17.  
§ Luke, vii. 47 et seqq.

‡ Luke, xxiii. 43.

wonder if the Church, the organ of God's authority, should have released from the penitential canons others who gave signs of similar conversion.

Such is the nature of the doctrine of indulgences ; and such is the source to which the practice may be traced. In imposing satisfaction for sin, the Church is the representative of God's justice : in relaxing its rigour, her conduct is analogous to his mercy. If the necessity of mortification be clearly deducible from Scripture, the doctrine of indulgences as plainly flows from the same source ; and the apostle, who illustrated in the chastisement of his own body the advantages of the one, has exemplified in his indulgent conduct to the incestuous Corinthian the truth of the other. This indulgence will be better understood by contrasting it with the penance which the apostle had inflicted : " It is heard, for certain, that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as the like is not among the heathens, that one should have his father's wife. And you are puffed up : and have not rather mourned that he might be taken away from among you, who hath done this deed. I, indeed, absent in body, but present in the spirit, have already judged as though I were present, him that hath so done, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus ; to deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."\*

Never was excommunication pronounced with more terrific solemnity. Struck with the fear of the divine judgment with which he had been menaced, the incestuous man retired from society, and strove to expiate his sin by fervent and sincere contrition. The ardour of his grief outstripped the probable period which the apostle had assigned for his punishment. Only one year elapsed between the first and second epistle which

\* 1 Cor. v. 1 et seqq.

St. Paul addressed to the Church of Corinth. In the second he thus alludes to the preceding transaction : “ Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears : not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the charity I have more abundantly towards you. And if anyone have caused grief, he hath not grieved me : but in part, that I may not burden you all. To him who is such a one, this rebuke is sufficient, which is given by many. So that contrariwise, you should rather pardon and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you, that you would confirm your charity towards him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the experiment of you, whether you be obedient in all things. And to whom you have forgiven anything, I also : for what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I done it, in the person of Christ.”\*

The double quotation from the apostle sufficiently sanctions the twofold power which the Church has exercised, of inflicting penitential chastisement on sinners, and of mitigating its rigour. In the exaction of the punishment, the zeal of the apostle is kindled into a holy indignation. He seems to breathe something of the vengeance of the Divinity, and appeals to the terrors of the last day, to awe the wicked man into sorrow for his guilt. On hearing, however, of the Corinthian's sorrow, his tone is altered ; not a word of reproach escapes him ; and, as if unwilling to revive the memory of the crime, he only glances at the subject, by a delicate but significant allusion. That the apostle abridged the intended period of his penance we may collect from the motive that inspired his indulgence, “ lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” Lest, however, it should be imagined that this indulgence was the effect of mere feelings of compassion, he concludes by assuring us that it was authorised by the

\* 2 Cor. ii. 4 et seqq.

same power by which the penance had been imposed : “If I have forgiven anything I have done it in the person of Christ.”

The indulgence of which the apostle has given so clear an example has been exercised by the Church in every age. Protestants pretend that indulgences are a more recent invention. There is no interval of time, from St. Paul to the present day, which does not furnish monuments of their existence. And at no period have they been more frequent than when penance was practised with most fervour. When the penitential canons were adopted in the Church, the bishops were always intrusted with a power to soften their severity, or abridge the term of their duration.\* In exercising such indulgences they were influenced by a variety of causes peculiar to those times ; such as the fervour of the penitents, the dread of persecution, and the interposition of the martyrs.

1. If, at the first stage of the canonical penance, sinners manifested extraordinary fervour, they were sometimes permitted to rank with the more advanced classes, without passing through the intermediate stations. It might have been hoped in some instances that, like Magdalene, the fervour of their love had already worked their justification ; or feared in others that, like the incestuous Corinthian, they might fall victims to the intensity of their sorrow. The likeness of the symptoms warranted the Church in treating sinners after the manner of which Christ and his apostles had given the example.

2. The dread of persecution was another motive which suggested the necessity of shortening the time allotted for penance. When a fresh persecution broke out, before the wounds inflicted in a former one had been completely healed, it was thought wiser to arm penitents with the grace of the sacraments, than to expose those who had already fallen, to the danger of a second and more deplorable apostasy.

\* Conc. Ancy. Can. 2. Nicæn. Can. 12, &c.

3. A third, and perhaps a more general, source of indulgences, was the recommendation of the martyrs.\* It was thought due to the merits of those champions of the faith that they should sometimes procure for the public penitents a respite of their toils. They were therefore indulged with the privilege of obtaining from the pastors of the Church an intermission of the severities to which those sinners had been doomed. When the confessors, shut up in prison, were unable to interpose their personal influence, their wishes were conveyed through the medium of tickets to the bishops. And if they were inaccessible to the penitents, or unable to write, the deacons who ministered to them in their confinement were the organs of their intercession.

This was a source of indulgence which gave rise to great abuses. The craft of some tepid sinners easily imposed upon the confidence of those holy men, and obtained on false pretences those recommendations to the indulgence of the Church which they would not have given with more knowledge of their characters. Many who had made but little reparation for the scandal of their apostasy thus surreptitiously obtained reconciliation; and dared, in the strong language of St. Cyprian, though reeking from the blood of the victims, to approach the table of the Lord. In the zeal of this holy bishop, the Church found an intrepid assertor of its violated discipline. He inveighed with peculiar warmth against the frauds practised by the ticket-bearers, as he called them; and neither awed by power nor influenced by the force of example, he thundered against an abuse which threatened to deform the sanctity of the Church.

Yet it is remarkable that St. Cyprian never controverted the value of those indulgences which had been fairly obtained through the intercession of the martyrs. Nay, he expressed a strong reliance on their efficacy, on account of the influence of these holy men with the

\* St. Cypr. Ep. 10, ad Martyr. et alibi, passim. Tertullian also alludes to this common practice, lib. ad Martyr. cap. i.; though being a Montanist he does approve of it (cap. xxi.).

Almighty. He only deplored the ignorance, or denounced the perverseness by which truth, pregnant with mercy and consolation, was converted into an occasion of tepidity or licentiousness. Then, as well as now, it was believed, that on account of the mutual communion which bound them, all the members of Christ's body were partakers of each other's merits. It was believed that the spiritual poverty of some might be supplied by the abundance of others; and that through the grace of their common head, which had been communicated to all, they might participate in those treasures which flowed from a common source. Of this belief we find traces before the age of St. Cyprian; the same persuasion pervades the letter which the Christians of Lyons addressed to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia on the death of the martyrs, who had suffered under the early persecution of Marcus Aurelius.\*

The doctrines of the Catholic Church are so intimately connected, that one naturally leads us to another. The ancient penitential canons were instituted to expiate the punishment that is due to sin after its guilt is remitted. They were established from the salutary persuasion, that if God's justice were not appeased in this world, it must be satisfied in the next. Without such a belief, we can assign no reason why austerities should be practised subsequently to the remission of sin. They are unnecessary if the forgiveness of sin and the remission of every chastisement be at once the necessary effect of absolution. But those penal rigours were undergone, and the voluntary endurance of them reveals the belief of those severer punishments which sinners were anxious to escape. If, then, the infliction of temporal penances was deemed, as far as it might extend, a substitution for the penalties of another life, the relaxation of the former ought to be accompanied with a corresponding remission of the latter. It is thus by obvious deduction that we are led to believe that

\* Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast., lib. v. cap. 1.

an indulgence was not only a remission of canonical punishment, but that it likewise extended to the pains of purgatory. If not, what sort of indulgence would that be (it is the interrogatory of Bossuet), which would relieve the sinner from a slighter penalty, only to consign him to severer punishment? Such a respite from canonical penance would not be an indulgence, it would be cruelty. It would be only lulling the sinner into a treacherous confidence, that he might wake again to a more painful and protracted endurance of the sorrows from which he imagined that he had been released.

In vindicating the doctrines of the Catholic Church, I am not the apologist of those who may have stretched them beyond the bounds of their legitimate application. I know that the wholesome severity of penance was greatly relaxed between the tenth and fifteenth centuries; and the history of those times warrants the conclusion that indulgences were obtained, or hoped to be obtained, on too easy conditions. An indulgence, which in the first ages was a release from canonical penance, and its corresponding satisfaction in another life, was then attached to the performance of good works. Prayers and alms were deemed legitimate reasons for an indulgence, pilgrimages were entitled to the same privilege, nay, it was sometimes imparted to those who had built a church, an hospital, a bridge, or some such work of public utility.\* In a period in which their application was so profuse, there may have been abuses concerning the nature and practice of indulgences. But though I am not the indiscriminate apologist of those times, indiscriminate censure is not less unjustifiable. Some Catholic writers have complained of them with too little moderation.

With the extinction of the persecutions that afflicted the Church, its martyrs passed away. But it is not to be supposed that the indulgences which were granted

\* These indulgences were granted by several bishops. They were censured in the fourth council of Lateran.—See Fleury, *Discours quatrième*, No. xvi.

through the medium of their prayers were utterly incommunicable to the faithful in subsequent ages. The channel of their application in latter times may have been different, it is true; not so the spirit of the indulgence, which is the same, whether conveyed through the penances of the fourth, or the pilgrimages of the twelfth century. In the former, it was a relaxation; in the latter, it was rather a change of penitential labours.

Indulgences have not weakened the force of penance, because they have ever been accompanied with some species of satisfaction. Even penal satisfaction is rather to be estimated by the dispositions of men, than by any absolute qualities; since there are many who would rather pray long than give charity; or who would prefer rigid fasting to the performance of a distant pilgrimage. In the most degenerate ages of indulgences they were attended with conditions, which had for object the relief of the distressed, the mortification of the passions, the erection of religious edifices, or the destruction of the enemies of the Christian faith. The theologian whose eye is constantly fixed on the standard of ancient times, without reference to an authority more weighty than his own shallow and presumptuous speculations, might possibly controvert the legitimate application of indulgences to such objects. But that they should ever have been censured by the friends of humanity and freedom must indeed excite our surprise. Whatever opinion may be formed of practices of self-denial, which no believer in revelation can censure, at least the active and social virtues unite in their favour the suffrages of all. To cherish those virtues was one of the effects of the indulgences of the Middle Ages. In the hope of partaking in their benefits men often expended their treasures in relieving distress, or in erecting asylums of virtue; so that, although we sincerely deplore the evils with which they were mixed up by the ignorant or interested, we cannot but applaud the wisdom of a religion which, in its indulgences as well as its peni-

tential rigours, has always promoted the interests of mankind.

The application of indulgences in the form of a jubilee is of comparatively recent origin. We owe its first institution to Boniface VIII., in the year 1300; and Protestants, mistaking the novelty of the form for a change in the ancient doctrine of the Church, have pretended to date her indulgences from that period. That the concession of a plenary indulgence, through the solemn medium of a jubilee, originated with Boniface, is a fact of historical notoriety; and those historians who have enlivened the dull realities of life by something of a poetical combination, have ransacked profane and sacred history to find some fanciful prototype for the interesting institution.

Some have ventured to trace it to the secular games of ancient Rome, while others imagined that they discovered in the jubilee a close affinity to a Hebrew origin. The original term of a hundred years assigned to it by Boniface suggested the allusion to the secular games. Clement VI., who proclaimed it after a period of fifty years is supposed by those profound writers to have been swayed by the example of the Jewish legislator. What profane or sacred allusion may have regulated the taste of Urban VI., in fixing it at the term of thirty-three years, the reader may be at a loss to conjecture; and, doubtless, the present period of twenty-five years, to which it has been contracted by Paul II., since the time of Urban, will find in the fertile ingenuity of some future historian another poetical or profane association.

The same spirit of disingenuity which has been employed in tracing the origin of a jubilee, is discoverable in the pictures that are usually drawn of its effects. Instead of being informed of the works of charity to which it gives rise, the conversions of which it is productive, and the spirit of penance which it awakens, we are amused by a detailed account of any ludicrous or licentious incident that may have occurred during

its celebration. The follies and misdeeds of individuals, who abuse a season so pregnant with benefit to mankind, are all put down to the account of an institution with which they have no other connexion than the coincidence of time. Even practices of devotion are caricatured, and ceremonies, of which the object should awaken feelings of reverence or sorrow, are presented in a ludicrous light to excite the ridicule of the reader. But if the picture be reversed, and the hideous distortion with which it has been disfigured torn off, the feeling of levity instantly subsides into admiration; the faults and follies of individuals are forgotten in the magnitude of the benefits which flow from this salutary source; and the weakness of one pilgrim, or the violence offered to another, merge in the heroic virtues of charity, of patience, of penance, and of zeal, which form the general character of Christians during the holy season. Historians may amuse their readers with a view of the secret motives of avarice or ambition, which have swayed the Roman pontiffs in inviting pilgrims to their city.\* They may still lay out their ingenuity in discovering the hidden springs by which the periodical return of the great year, as it is called, was regulated. If avarice, however, guided the councils of its first authors, we must applaud the disinterestedness of their successors, who, without requiring the toil or expense of a distant journey, have extended its benefits to the nations of the earth. Whatever may have been the coincidence with profane or sacred history, by which the epochs at which a jubilee was to return have been determined, we are indebted to those pontiffs who were content to strip it of all the charms which such allusions could have given it, in order to render its advantages accessible to the greater portion of mankind, by bringing it within the ordinary measure of human life. If the

\* The tomb of the chiefs of the apostles, with which Rome had been honoured, is surely sufficient to account for the preference given to it over every other city.

power of remitting the temporal punishment due to sin, which was exercised by St. Paul, and practised in the early ages of the Church, has been enjoyed by the chief pastors in succeeding times, it is difficult for us to assign the measure to which such power should be restricted. If works of benevolence and almsdeeds are recommended by the Scripture as possessing the efficacy of redeeming from sin, it is hard to censure their exercise during a period particularly set apart for this redemption. If confession and communion are found to be salutary aids of virtue at every other period, it is only giving to an indulgence all the assistance of religion, by requiring these holy acts during its application. If where two or three are collected together in his name, Christ promises to be among them, he cannot be indifferent to the united prayers of the whole Church. If penance be always salutary, it must be still more advantageous in proportion to the numbers by whom it is practised. If vice becomes contagious by the force of example, and by the charm of all the splendid accompaniments that sometimes attend it, why not strive to give virtue the same imposing advantages? And if the resentment of the Almighty was disarmed by the solemn spectacle of the inhabitants of a single city, squalid with ashes and covered with sackcloth, I can imagine no object more moving in the sight of heaven, than the sudden transformation of the whole world from the habit of sin to that of penance; putting off the vesture of joy, and clothed with the emblems of sorrow; propagating virtue by all the force and contagion of example; assailing heaven by the collected violence and importunity of their prayers; and bearing away by the sincerity and humbleness of their penance the precious trophies of mercy and salvation.\*

\* Of the blessings that may result from a jubilee, the author can speak from his own experience. Nay, the entire country can attest the advantages of which the late jubilee was productive. The reparation of injuries, the restitution of property, the cessation of ancient resentments, the reclaiming of profligate sinners,

and the return of many a strayed sheep to the true fold, were its ordinary fruits. Of the ardour with which the faithful of Ireland pressed forward to obtain its blessings, it is impossible to convey an idea to those who did not witness it. Human motives or human strength could not sustain the spirit and perseverance with which its exercises were performed. The example had its influence on many Protestants. They reflected on the holiness of a religion which prompted such numbers to deeds of mortification of the flesh, and of justice towards every neighbour; and besides those who offered themselves on other occasions, the writer had the consolation of receiving in one day, during the jubilee, thirteen Protestants into the bosom of the Catholic Church.

Sixteen years have now elapsed since the writer, then in the diocese of Killala, took a share in the gratifying labours above alluded to. This year a similar grace has been imparted by his holiness the present Pope, in order to interest the pious sympathy of the faithful in the sufferings of the Spanish nation—that once conspicuous portion of the Catholic Church.

And though, on the occasions of those intermediate plenary indulgences, one cannot expect the same exciting solemnity as on the recurrences of the great jubilee each twenty-fifth year; still the fruits of penance and holiness of which this recent one was productive, furnish abundant evidences of the riches of its heavenly source.

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## CHAPTER XX.

## MATRIMONY.—HOLY ORDERS.

Chastity little practised among the Pagans.—Comparative purity of the Jewish people.—This virtue established by the Christian religion alone.—Contrast between the licentiousness of the East and the morality of European nations.—Indissolubility of Marriage the ancient and uniform doctrine of the Church.—Protestant doctrine of divorce fatal to the interests of morality.—Domestic and public advantages of the Catholic doctrine.—Wisdom of the impediments established by the Catholic Church.—They are well calculated to extend the influence of the social affections.—Sacrament of Orders.—Peculiar holiness of the Catholic Church illustrated in the celibacy of its priesthood and of its monastic establishments.—The blessings which this institution has conferred on society in every age.—Singular and inconsistent complaints of modern politicians and moralists on the subject of an overgrown population.—The advantages of celibacy conspicuous in the zeal of Catholic missionaries.—A reference to the priesthood of Ireland.—Ceremonies of the Catholic Church.—The wisdom and advantages of her festivals.—The language of her liturgies.—Conclusion.

OF all the religious rites of the Roman Catholic Church there are none more closely intertwined with the interests of society than those of ordination and of matrimony. By the influence of the one, the human species is propagated and preserved; and its members protected against the indulgence of a licentiousness, no less repugnant to reason, than subversive of society. By the other the priesthood is perpetuated and a distinct body of men set apart for the purpose of moral instruction, and of controlling the violence of these passions by which the Christian Republic is often shaken and endangered. While statesmen may view marriage only as a beneficial instrument of policy, we are taught that it was instituted for a higher and holier purpose. Though reason might point out the utility of an order of men destined for the instruction of mankind; yet religion exhibits to us in the character of the Christian priesthood, some superior qualities beyond the reach

of nature to attain, which must spring from the divine energy of the Sacrament, and which are propagated by its transmission. Marriage gives citizens to the state, the priesthood trains them to become worthy citizens of heaven; and while the one furnishes members for society, the plastic hand of the other moulds them to the form of religion, until they are fashioned to their last and perfect destination.

Were the Catholic Church to confer no other benefits, the revolution which it has accomplished in the laws and practice of marriage, has laid mankind under lasting obligations. In the worst and most degenerate period of the world, the virtue of chastity was respected and conjugal fidelity held up to admiration. But this respect and admiration were heightened by the rareness of these virtues, in comparison of the general profligacy that overspread the earth. Reason, as well as experience, pointed out the dangers of an indiscriminate intercourse of the sexes; and hence, in the most depraved nations, some restraints were imposed upon the violence of the passions. But these restraints were feeble; and notwithstanding the laudable efforts of some legislators, polygamy, divorce, and adultery, almost universally prevailed. Nay, the evils of licentiousness were propagated in many countries by the sanction of legislature. The descriptions which profane writers and Christian apologists have left us, of the morals of the most enlightened people, still attest their universal corruption.\* A minute reference to them may be spared, by the following lively picture of the inspired writer: "And it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but whereas they lived in a great war of ignorance, they call so many and so great evils, peace. For either they sacrifice their own children, or use hidden sacrifices. . . . So that now they

\* "Quid enim de castitate curarent, quam mariti tam facile donaverant? O sapientiæ Atticæ, O Romanæ gravitatis exemplum. Leno est philosophus et censor."—Tertull. Apolog.

Besides the grave Cato alluded to in this text, Tertullian accuses even the wise Socrates of the same profligate condescension.

neither keep life, nor marriage undefiled, but one killeth another through envy, or grieveth him by adultery: and all things are mingled together, blood, murder, theft and dissimulation, corruption and unfaithfulness, tumults and perjury, disquieting of the good, forgetfulness of God, defiling of souls, changing of nature, disorder in marriage, and the irregularity of adultery and uncleanness. For the worship of abominable idols is the cause and beginning and end of all evil.”\*

Amidst the general licentiousness, the knowledge of the primitive institution of marriage was entirely forgotten. Yet it was respected as a sacred rite even by the Pagans, who deemed that the gods presided at its celebration. The Christian apologists have furnished us with the knowledge of the sacrifices that were offered, and the deities that were invoked on this occasion. But how little the ceremonies of religion could have aided the interests of virtue, we may learn from the parentage of Hymen, the tutelary god of marriage. Even among the Jews there was a wide departure from the primitive model given by God himself. That model may be traced in the creation and union of one individual only of either sex; and in the divine assurance, that both should form only one flesh.† Polygamy was practised by some of the patriarchs; divorce was tolerated by the law of Moses; but with these exceptions to its original institution the marriage rite was universally respected. Adultery, uncleanness, and all the crimes which either violate the marriage bed, or prevent its fecundity, were punished with extreme rigour.‡ The rights of the weaker sex were protected against the violence of their partners by the wisdom of the legislator, who disdained not to enter into the minutest details of domestic life. Little was left to the jealousy or caprices of husbands; and hence, the evils which in other countries flowed from the arbitrary despots of the domestic circle were almost unknown in Judea.

Though the ancient nations had forgotten the first

\* Wisd. xiv. 22 et seqq.

† Gen. ii. 24.

‡ Levit. xviii. xix.

institution of marriage, yet some faint vestiges of its religious origin survived in the ceremonies with which it was celebrated. Among the Hebrew people, the recollection of this origin was fresh and lively; and the matrimonial alliances of the patriarchs were believed to be conducted by the special interposition of heaven. When Abraham sent his servant on an embassy to Mesopotamia, to contract an alliance between Rebecca and his son, he confidently assured him of the protection of the Almighty. "The Lord God of heaven, who took me out of my father's house, and out of my native country, who spoke to me, and swore to me, saying: To thy seed will I give this land: he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take from thence a wife for my son."\* That the servant was impressed with similar feelings, appears from the prayer he poured forth to the Lord on the brink of the well, where he met Rebecca. The manner in which his message was received by her relatives shows that they were no less confident of the divine interference. "And Laban and Bathuel answered: The word hath proceeded from the Lord: we cannot speak any other thing to thee but his pleasure."† Nor did the ceremony of marriage ever degenerate into a mere civil contract, in which religion had no share. When Raguel gave his daughter to wife to the young Tobias, we find the marriage ceremony accompanied by the following solemn benediction. "And taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying: The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may he join you and fulfil his blessing in you."‡

Though theologians and civilians have distinguished marriage into the triple relation of a natural, social, and religious contract, still it appears, that in no stage of the world was it entirely withdrawn from the presiding influence of religion. The religious rites which the Pagans associated with it, might be deemed rather

\* Gen. xxiv. 7.

† Ibid. 50.

‡ Tob. vii. 15.

a licentious superstition. But even through these, as through many other ceremonies, the intelligent reader may discern a dim image of religion, which the passions of mankind had not entirely effaced. What wonder, then, if Christ had elevated to the dignity of a sacrament of the New Law, a ceremony of which religion had consecrated the very infancy. In investing it with a religious character, he was only giving the marriage contract a dignity which it originally possessed; and in confining it to an individual of either sex, and rendering it indissoluble, he only restored it to its primitive institution. The burden which marriage imposes, is deemed by the licentious severe beyond endurance. The obligations that are connected with this state are unquestionably of great importance and difficulty. Were we to estimate the force of nature alone it might, perhaps, be inferred from the history of mankind, that nature would not be equal to the weight of such a burden. It was therefore analogous to God's mercy, who furnished man with an instrument of grace in every other stage of his existence, to provide him with one at this important period. Accordingly our Redeemer raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament of the new law; enduing it with all the vigour of divine grace, to enable those who submit to its yoke, to sustain the weight which it imposes.

Of the grace, which the sacrament of marriage confers in the new law, we cannot perhaps have better evidence, than the fruits of which it is productive. Experience is deemed by the soundest philosophers a safe criterion of induction. I will not then fatigue the reader's patience by any elaborate dissertation, to show that in every age of the Church, marriage was deemed a sacrament by which grace was imparted. But inviting him to contemplate the contrast between the effects of matrimony in the Catholic Church, and the influence of the same rite as practised out of its pale, I may be permitted to inquire to what cause ought he to ascribe such opposite results? In every

period of the world, and under every other form of religion, he will find polygamy, or divorce, or adultery, the usual appendage of the marriage contract. Nay, among those who profess to be followers of the Redeemer, there are some who imagine that the liberty of divorce is necessary to sustain the weight of matrimony. If, then, nature has been uniformly found so feeble, when left to itself, we may safely infer that some supernatural grace must have lightened for Catholics a load, which to all others appears intolerable. Though in England divorce be sanctioned by the legislature; though in the east, if we are to credit Montesquieu, the climate be favourable to a plurality of wives; though the Roman emperors long struggled against the adoption of the severe morality of the Gospel; yet the Catholic Church triumphed over all these obstacles; and her children, neither subdued by the tendency of laws, nor relaxed by the softness of climate, nor seduced by the more overwhelming influence of custom, have cheerfully submitted, in every age and in every country, to the indissolubility of the marriage tie.

If the yoke of an indissoluble contract be so weighty as to require the liberty of divorce to sustain it, we cannot suppose that anything but a divine precept would have induced men to submit to it, without such a mitigation. The contract, however favourable to public good, is adverse to individual feeling; and hence, the general adoption of the indissolubility of marriage affords a strong presumption that it formed an original appendage of that sacrament. I shall not now dwell on the strong coincidence between two evangelists,\* in favour of the indissolubility of marriage, confirmed by the inspired commentary of an apostle.† I shall not insist on the marked opposition which Christ wished to exhibit between the old and new law—an opposition that entirely disappears should divorce be permitted on account of adultery. I shall not insist on an obvious

\* Mark, x. 2 et seqq.; Luke, xvi. 18.

† Rom. vii. 2, 3; 1 Cor. vii. 12, 39, &c.

canon of criticism, that an ambiguous passage is to be explained by a reference to the spirit of the legislator, clearly recorded in other places ; but without dwelling on a verbal controversy in which a moral question of vast importance might dwindle into grammatical disputation, let the reader inquire, with St. Vincent of Lerins, what has been the ancient, the uniform, and the universal faith of the Church ? and he will find that it has taught the indissolubility of marriage.

The reader, who has learned that the Greeks sanction the dissolubility of marriage, may tremble for the writer, who stakes his character regarding this point on the uniform faith of the Church. But the opinions of the Greeks since their separation can no more affect the doctrine of the Church than those of the schismatics of the West. If before that fatal period some of their writers seem less stern, the circumstance may be explained by a little attention to the political state of the empire. After the conversion of the Roman emperors, they still retained a large portion of the ancient jurisprudence. Marriage by the Roman law was dissolved by the infidelity of either party—a law which was adopted into the Novels of Justinian. From a respect for the established government, and an apprehension of treating it with contempt, some of the fathers were reserved in the condemnation of those who dismissed their wives for the crime of adultery. Yet though sparing in their censures of repudiation, they were far from commending even the engagements of a second marriage.

The connexion that ever exists between what is true and what is advantageous, is discoverable in the public benefits which have sprung from the Catholic doctrine of matrimony. There may be circumstances in which it may seem harsh not to release either of the parties from the obligations of the marriage contract. And doubtless if the question of divorce were made a matter of mere philosophical speculation, to be decided by a reference to cases of individual inconveniences, the obligation of an indissoluble union would in many

instances give way. It is by indulging too much this philosophical speculation on the question of matrimony that Protestant writers are culpable. Were we to lose sight of the authority of the Legislator, whose simple word should awe us into submission to his law, we should soon get rid, not only of the yoke of matrimony, but of many others of his precepts. Such has been already the fatal consequence of that refining system of casuistry to which the word of God has been subjected. Not only have the mysteries of faith disappeared under its operations, but it has proved equally fatal to the precepts of morality.

Were an eloquent writer, whose fancy might range over all the possible conditions of mankind, to collect the instances of inconvenience that result from the Catholic doctrine, he would unquestionably make a strong impression on any reader whose judgment had not been already fixed by an authoritative tribunal. In their discussions on matrimony, some Protestant civilians are guided by a regard for personal convenience rather than by the authority of Christ; and thus the public good is sacrificed to a cruel and unfeeling egotism. But let the cases of individual inconvenience be multiplied and exaggerated as they may, they are lost in the magnitude of the public benefits of which the Catholic doctrine is productive; and here, as in its other tenets, the interposition of the Church serves only to protect the interests of virtue.

In proportion as any relaxation has been adopted in the severe but wholesome doctrine of Christ on the sacrament of marriage, the energy of public and domestic morality has declined. Witness the degeneracy of the East, once the seat of exalted sentiment, now sunk into brutal degeneracy; the female sex made the victims of a capricious sensuality; and the peasantry deprived by the tyranny of the rich of a virtuous connexion with one who, while associated with other wives or concubines, can never return an undivided attachment. What a prolific source of jealousy, and of

all the vexatious passions that embitter the quiet of domestic life! The confidence, the fidelity, the refined and respectful attention that uniformly accompany the marriages of the Catholic Church are gone; and the offspring, though not in the real situation, are doomed to all the miseries of orphanage. Hence the moral, as well as the physical, degeneracy which has overrun this portion of the earth. Jealousy has spread like a cancer, eating up the natural affections; and the ends of marriage are defeated by institutions which are at war with every principle of virtue. Hence the vigour of the human mind is stunted below the measure of its ancient standard; and the sad and humiliating contrast that marks the Eastern and European nations, reveals the curse which the former have inherited from the violation of the Christian law.

The practice of divorce, which is adopted by the Protestant Churches, is pregnant with much mischief to the repose of domestic life. In the very contingency of contracting another marriage during the lifetime of both parties, there is a temptation to infidelity. Instead of allaying those jealousies which may spring up among the most perfect, by the conviction that they are to live inseparably together, marriage rather gives them more strength, when qualified by the condition of a divorce. When personal dislike once takes possession of the mind, mutual attention is neglected; distrust and sullenness succeed; complete alienation is the consequence; until the unhappy individuals find no refuge from the yoke but through the crime of adultery. Not only are those ties which mutually bind man and wife weakened by this practice, but it likewise loosens all those links by which all the members of the same family are held together. If the father exchanges his first wife for another, the children are deprived of all the solace of a mother's tenderness, and abandoned, though she lives, to all the neglect of a step-mother, who must view them with aversion as the monuments of her own shame.

If the Church be empowered to judge whether those who approach other sacraments be duly disposed, the same right must extend to the sacrament of matrimony. Without such a control over persons who contract marriage, many might enter into that state without any sense of its obligations, and this holy rite would be exposed to continual profanation. This single reflection accounts for the power of instituting impediments—a power which has been always claimed and exercised by the Catholic Church. Though these impediments may seem to have been multiplied beyond necessity, yet it would be discovered, by a reference to each, that in all she was swayed by the spirit of wisdom. Her canon law on this subject is so excellent, that it has been almost entirely incorporated into the civil jurisprudence of the European nations. The object of the impediments which it enacts is to guard this important contract from the influence of fraud or violence; to protect the easy credulity of youth from the artifices of the designing, as well as to shield the marriage bed against the wiles and assaults of the seducer. It is remarkable that in the reproaches that are cast upon her discipline, its leaning to the side of virtue is discoverable; for example, in her anxiety to guard against the slightest taint of incest, she is thought to have extended too far the degrees of consanguinity within which marriage is prohibited.

But it is almost unnecessary to show how much her laws on this important head have contributed to cement all the members of society. By being obliged to contract marriage beyond a certain circle, all the duties of charity are proportionably extended; and individuals who might be indifferent to each other, are blended together by the influence of the same interests and affections. The selfishness which is engendered by close alliances is thus enlarged into a more generous sentiment, and those feudal jealousies that might spring from continual intermarriages between the members of the same family are weakened and extinguished by a connexion with some other. Thus, the impediments

which forbid the marriages of kindred multiply their number. Every matrimonial alliance becomes a new centre, attracting distant interests, hitherto, perhaps, in a state of repulsion. By preventing the affections to stagnate in the same channel, the Church propels them to a remoter distance; and her impediments of affinity and consanguinity may be deemed so many conduits through which the current of charity is kept agitated and pure, while it is circulating among the remotest members of the Christian Church.

But even nature proclaims the wisdom which forbids the union of near relatives: the degeneracy which is the result of such connexions proves that her laws have been outraged. Nay, similar unions are attended with similar degeneracy, in all the productions of the animal and vegetable world. Hence, the continual importation of foreign seeds, and the importance of varied cultivation, to prevent the soil from being wasted by the constant reproduction of the same crop. The young plant is not left to thrive on the land in which it first grew: when transported to another soil, it springs up with more rapid growth and greater majesty.

If the severity of the Catholic Church, in prohibiting divorce, be complained of, that severity may further illustrate the wisdom of her impediments. Where there is great facility of separation, it is no wonder there should be but little attention paid to those conditions which would secure the firmness of the contract. But where it is to last for life, it is equally natural that every caution should be used to provide for its continued happiness. Hence it is that the Catholic Church guards the access to matrimony with such jealous vigilance, and adjures those who enter to pause before they take a step which they cannot retrace. While in every other system, the matrimonial contract is, by its very nature, exposed to jealousy, to division, to crime, and other evil consequences, in the Catholic Church it is favourable to peace and virtue. It cherishes the concord of the domestic circle; and throws its shield

over the cradle, to protect the helpless infant against the violence of a passion which would fling him on the world, steeled against the impressions of filial love, and untaught to practise one day towards his own children a tenderness which he never experienced.

In tracing the apostolical series of the pastors of the Catholic Church, as well as in contemplating the nature of the sacrifice which they are appointed to offer, the attention of the reader has been directed to the order of its priesthood. He has seen that a distinction has been always drawn between the laity and the clergy, and has recognized the striking features that uniformly marked the ministers of religion. We have already glanced at the different gradations of which the hierarchy is composed; nor is it necessary to reckon their number or specify their prerogatives. In every age of the world the ministers of religion have formed a distinct body, and their virtues have been rewarded by the particular veneration of the people. They wore a peculiar habit, expressive of their peculiar character, and lived more retired from the world, as became the gravity of their station. The grace which the Redeemer so freely bestowed on other ranks was not denied to those who were to perpetuate his priesthood. Burdened with a heavier weight, they required more aid to sustain it; and accordingly he invested those rites by which the priesthood is conferred with the grace and dignity of a sacrament.

Although the priests of every religion have always formed a separate class in society, there is about the Catholic hierarchy a peculiar feature which has distinguished it from every other. To devote their time more effectually to the functions of the ministry, they contract the obligation of leading a single life. In the feeling of every people, chastity has been deemed an excellent and arduous virtue, of which the observance is entitled to the greatest respect. Yet, notwithstanding the estimation in which it has been held, it was practised by few, for it was deemed a sacrifice that

required more than ordinary resolution. The veneration of the Romans for the virtue of continence, we may learn from the extraordinary honours with which the vestal virgins were loaded. A numerous retinue bearing the fasces, the distinguished emblem of consular dignity, always announced their procession to the capitol; and their interposition often saved culprits from the vengeance of the law. The extraordinary respect with which it was rewarded only shows the rareness of the virtue. The sacrifice was deemed too painful to be purchased by any distinction; and though flattered by all the attention which such a powerful people could bestow, there were never more than six at a time who abandoned the enjoyments of life for a consecration to the service of virtue.\*

Yet within a short period of time an extraordinary revolution took place in the feelings of mankind, and thousands of either sex were found among the primitive Christians freely to devote themselves to a life of celibacy. Nor was this change the effect of a sudden impulse of piety which subsided with time. The practice, far from decaying, has been extended over the earth, and incorporated with the discipline of the Catholic Church in every country on which the light of the Gospel has shone. Without any control on their inclinations, numbers still contract a voluntary obligation of perpetual continence;† nay, so extensive has become the practice of this virtue that some have seriously talked of its fatal influence on society; and others have felt or affected to feel the most serious alarms for the preservation of the human species.

In its warm recommendation and extensive adoption of the virtue of continence, the Catholic Church has been only writing a practical commentary on the instructions of its founder. The Gospel expresses the highest approbation of this virtue; and it is a matter of just surprise, that the admirers of Scriptural know-

\* Lips. Syntag. de Vesta, et Virginitibus Vestalibus.

† Matt. xix. 12, &c.

ledge should close their eyes on St. Paul's encomiums of virginity.\* Though in condescension to human weakness, he permits widows to marry, yet he expresses a wish that they would live in continence, like himself: and it is the special privilege of virgins among the host of the blessed, that they follow the Lamb wherever he goeth. The estimation in which this virtue was held by our Redeemer and his apostles will easily account for the value that has been set on it by the Catholic Church. It will likewise account for its extensive diffusion among all classes, and explain why thousands have cheerfully submitted to a privation to which the honours of the world could not hitherto reconcile the passions of men. Though so strongly supported by the most venerable authorities, there is scarcely any point of Catholic discipline against which Protestants inveigh with more warmth, than against the vows of celibacy. Nay some of them are quite offended at the fathers, for having employed all the strength of their eloquence in setting forth the merits of continence. St. Ambrose, in particular, is honoured with the enmity of those writers whose only claim to the title of philosophical may be traced to their adoption of the voluptuous maxims of Epicurus.

It will not be expected that I should dwell long on the views of those profound writers, who, in discussing the merits of celibacy, contemplate it only as far as it may influence a country's population. A nation's prosperity is not to be estimated by the number of its inhabitants; else Ireland at this moment might be ranked among the most flourishing nations of the earth. But the monastic institutions, we are told, have had an influence in checking the population of those countries, where they have been fostered. The striking contrast between the former flourishing state of the East, when it was thickly planted with monastic colonies, and its present miserable condition, may serve to illustrate this

\* 1 Cor. vii. 37, 38, &c.

important inquiry. Has the population of the Protestant states of Europe advanced by the suppression of the monastic orders and the abolition of celibacy beyond the proportion of Catholic Europe? Italy, which might be deemed the nursery of monks as well as of sages, though the theatre of almost continual wars, was more populous in the last century, than in the most flourishing period of the Roman empire.

But why introduce such a view of this institution, instead of developing the moral advantages of which it is productive to society? The tide of prejudice which ran against the practice of celibacy, has lately taken a contrary direction; and the complaints of our modern philosophers and statesmen arise from the evils of an overgrown population. Unlike Augustus, who encouraged marriage, in order to multiply the number of his subjects, our legislature is only anxious to diminish their rapid increase; and many of our philosophical legislators are expending their wisdom or their folly, in devising artificial checks to arrest the mighty mischief. Like confession, which Protestants were anxious to restore after having felt the evils of its abolition, the world is now obliged to confess that the celibacy of persons who devoted themselves to the instruction of others, was an advantage. Though they may not relish the peculiar discipline of the Catholic Church, in enforcing the celibacy of its priesthood, still they acquiesce in the justness of the principle in their attempts to introduce a similar practice. The inconveniences now complained of, reveal one important truth; namely, that while many enter into the married state, for the purpose of preserving society, its interests also require that another portion should devote themselves exclusively to its moral improvement. But these different vocations, in order to be effectual, must be free; and one of the fittest and most necessary qualifications for any situation in life, is to have voluntarily contracted its obligations. Man's will cannot be controlled by penal enactments; and hence,

the vast difference between the discipline of the Catholic Church, which leaves a life of celibacy at the choice of one's own will, and modern theories, which by forcing such a system on any class of society without a previous choice, would be offering violence to nature. No legislative authority can sanction unnatural laws. The human heart would instantly mutiny against the intolerable oppression; and surely it would be a most striking inconsistency, were any human legislature to attempt to impose by force an obligation which was deemed absurd when freely contracted; and when its burden was made sweet by the meek influence of religion.

Supposing, however, that a thick population is always an advantage to the state, how many other causes besides celibacy operate to its diminution? These causes are found to exist as well in prosperous as in poor countries; and even sometimes, to increase with their prosperity. In the most flourishing and commercial states, though there may be a great influx of wealth, there is necessarily a vast inequality of conditions; and the depression of some below the ordinary level of society, must be proportioned to the elevation of others. Hence, arts and manufactures, and the establishments of wealthy families, require a number of individuals, consigned to celibacy almost from the necessity of their condition. The same remark may extend to sailors, soldiers, servants, and others, whose dependent situation is almost incompatible with marriage. The effects produced by misery on the poor, luxury and profligacy produce on the wealthy. The licentiousness and dissipation to which they are accustomed, give them a distaste for the sober restraints of matrimony; and this distaste becomes confirmed and inveterate by the daily examples of mutual infidelity in exalted life. These causes are attended with pernicious effects; and thus we behold how frequently noble families become extinct, while those of the poor multiply to a degree no less unfavourable to the interests of

society. Now experience attests, that the influence of the monastic orders lessened those powerful causes—the extreme dependence of the poor, and the corruption of the wealthy; and hence, instead of checking, it contributed to forward the growth of a vigorous, useful, and moral population.

By the labours and industry of the monks, woods were cleared, morasses drained, and unprofitable wastes reclaimed to the purposes of tillage. The profits of those lands, instead of being dissipated in luxury, returned again to the hands that were employed in their cultivation. The people became naturally attached to individuals from whom they derived such important benefits, and we know that the feelings of the heart are the best conductors in bringing persuasion to the understanding. Contentment, affluence, and morality were generally found among the peasantry who inhabited the neighbourhood of monasteries; and princes finding the benefits of which they were productive, were induced by fresh endowments to augment their numbers. Besides the blessing which they diffused among the surrounding inhabitants, the monasteries became nurseries of virtue, and asylums of innocence to numbers who sought shelter from the vices or disappointments of the world. At present the army and navy are open to the younger branches of distinguished families, that they may establish a new, or repair a broken fortune. Hospitals are erected to afford medical assistance to the sick and infirm. But where are the establishments for repairing a broken heart, or giving consolation to those diseases of the mind, which all the aid of medicine cannot allay? They are no more! and their destroyers, not content with the ruin of those valuable institutions, have calumniated their saintly tenants, in order to justify their own plunder: and the tales which originated in malevolence, have been circulated through every medium which a varied and even fantastic literature could afford.

The ponderous folio, the light pamphlet, the amusing travels, and the flippant novel, have been indiscriminately employed as the conductors of these calumnies ; and poets, historians, jurists, and moralists, have equally contributed to their propagation. But the observation of Cicero is here verified ; and time, which dissipates the phantoms of opinion, confirms the verdict of truth and nature. The calumnies which had hitherto shrouded the remains of the inmates of those monasteries are gradually falling away ; and on finding that they were not the monsters which they were represented, the public are beginning to feel some reverence for their relics. Yes, in the shifting vicissitudes of human affairs, the flow of false and vicious literature that prevailed for three hundred years has already reached its extreme limit ; the tide has already begun to return, and its retreating current is carrying off much of the light and impure productions with which it had so long inundated those countries.

If the ancient philosophers are justly admired by our modern historians, for having contributed so much to the progress of learning, the monastic orders cannot be consistently excluded from a share in their gratitude. In preserving the precious monuments of sacred and profane knowledge, they have laid mankind under lasting obligations. The influence of a single mind, that improves its own age, and bequeaths to posterity the rich legacy of its virtue and its wisdom, is of more benefit to society than the existence of thousands whose importance is scarcely felt. He, then, who hands down the immortal productions of genius and virtue, which will instruct and improve posterity to the latest period, may be considered to have fulfilled the most important duties of society. Now it surely cannot be denied, that the virtue of celibacy has been instrumental in transmitting these moral advantages.

It is this virtue that contributes most to purify the heart from selfish affections, and to exalt the social

virtues to a degree of heroism. By the detachment from the world which accompanies it, zeal for religion becomes more strong and active. The energies, which would be divided by the ordinary occupations of life, are pointed to one exclusive object, and derive irresistible strength from the singleness of their direction. Is it to be imagined, that the apostles of infidel nations, or the founders of religious orders, or those who consecrated their lives to attendance on the sick, or the redemption of captives, would have attempted such mighty things, had they been bound by the cares of domestic life? They exemplified the observation of St. Paul,—“thinking on the things of the Lord,” while “those who have wives are solicitous for the things of the world.”\* By resigning all domestic attachments, they released themselves from every impediment to their zeal, like the wrestlers at the Olympic games, who, by throwing off the encumbrances of dress, secured complete freedom to their motions.

Should the learned reader compare the lofty character of the Catholic priesthood, with the low estimation in which the married of the Greek clergy are held, he will be disposed to trace much of the contrast to the influence of celibacy. But to confine our observations to our own country; has not the celibacy of the Catholic priesthood been chiefly instrumental in the preservation of the Catholic religion? A married clergyman would have been incapable of the heroic zeal which distinguished the priesthood of Ireland; nor would the same fervour, though it were to animate them, have produced a corresponding effect on the people. The ample revenues of the Protestant clergy guard them against the contempt which would pursue indigent profligacy.† But perhaps a more humiliating spectacle could not be contemplated, than that of

\* 1 Cor. vii. 31, 32.

† See 2 Edward VI., cap. 21. The sentiments of Elizabeth regarding the marriage of the clergy may be learned from her rude conduct to the wife of archbishop Parker, mentioned by Strype in his life of that prelate.

clergymen of improved minds, without tithes or revenues, struggling to support a family by a scanty pittance, wrung from the wretchedness of the poor,—a pittance which would soon be denied. To a mind of lofty tone and cultivated sentiment, there is something so repugnant to delicacy and moral feeling, in the idea of an educated man, made more sensitive by his habits, struggling with untoward circumstances; and perhaps racked with the consciousness, that, instead of leaving to his parish a legacy of his disinterested virtue, he is entailing on it the poverty and immorality of his offspring, that I shall not offend the reader's taste by the revolting description. From such a scene, it is grateful to turn to a contrast no less real than it is striking. In spite of all the pressure with which it has been attempted to sink him beneath its surface, what is it, I may be permitted to ask, that has given the Catholic priest such an ascendancy in society? It is this holy institution. It has given an activity to his zeal, that has made him beloved by the Catholic, and respected by the Protestant. Possessing the same affections as other men, he pours into a wider channel those charities which others confine to their own kindred, and which all repay to him by a corresponding filial attachment. It is this reciprocal kindness that gives a reality to the name of father, with which the office of a priest is associated, while he transfers his affections to his adopted children, and experiences from them an ample return for the merits of the sacrifice.

It is this circumstance which gives the priest such access to the hearts of his flock, and such control over their consciences. His is not the cold dominion which is exercised with distrust and borne with impatience. If his life corresponds with the sanctity of his obligations, a willing deference awaits him; and he conquers the most grateful of all homages, the homage of the heart,—a homage, in which duty and love are blended together, and reverence for the minister of God is mitigated into a kindlier feeling for the father

of his people. While he is thus loved by his own flock, he obtains even the respect of the enemies of his religion. In the minister of their own Church, they may admire the lighter accomplishments of the world; seldom, however, are they struck with the sterner and more august features of religion. They see the Catholic priest practising a virtue which they deem almost unattainable, and from which he must derive a commanding loftiness of character. Into whatever society he enters, the sacredness of his profession is recognized; his dignity is not forgotten, if he forgets not himself; and his very celibacy throws around him a mysterious charm, which repels the approaches of familiarity, and invests him even in society with the loneliness and sanctity of an anchorite.

As the sacraments are the vehicles of the grace which has flowed from Christ's redemption, the Church has used a becoming caution in guarding them from irreverence. She has therefore not only taken care that their administration should be intrusted to an authorised priesthood, but that they should be administered in a peculiar language, and accompanied by suitable ceremonies. Unlike the dry bones mentioned in the vision of the prophet,\* which were scattered in sightless confusion, the doctrines of the Catholic Church appear with all the strength of a compact body, connected with nerve and sinew, animated with the spirit of their author, and clothed with the majestic forms of a holy and imposing liturgy. In this splendid ritual, the stern spirit of Calvinism beholds the obsolete ceremonies of the Jewish or Pagan worship; and the use of the Latin language is deemed a fit engine in the hands of the priest, to uphold the ascendancy which he has gained over the ignorance of his flock. Such are the observations that are often made on the language and ceremonies of the Catholic liturgy. It is strange, however, that we should be reproached with a resemblance in our ceremonies to those of a religion

\* Ezech. xxxvii.

which was ushered into the world by the visible interference of the Almighty. An entire chapter in Exodus is devoted to the description of the magnificent ornaments of Aaron and his sons. He that attentively reads it can scarcely undervalue the influence of ceremonies in swelling the pomp of religion. The contemplative philosopher may dispense with all external aid to sustain his devotion; yet, making every abatement for the figurative tone of the expressions, there are few, I imagine, who could resist the impressions of piety, excited by the appearance of the venerable son of Onias, "when he put on the robe of glory, and was clothed with the perfection of power, honouring the vesture of holiness, as he went up to the holy altar, while about him was the ring of his brethren,—he standing as the cedar planted in Mount Libanus, and they as the branches of palm trees, round about him, and all the sons of Aaron in their glory."\*

The ancient temple has been destroyed, it is true; its priesthood abolished, and the ritual part of the Jewish religion has passed away. But though the time has come, when the worship of the true God is neither confined to Mount Sion nor Garizim, and religion is to be estimated more by the spirit that animates than the rites that clothe it, still the founder of this spiritual religion disdained not the aid of ceremonies. He, whose voice alone could animate the lifeless clay, often lifted his eyes, or bent his knees, in a striking attitude of supplication; and the spittle, or the earth, powerless of its own nature, was often the mystic instrument of his most stupendous miracles † If Christ then accommodated himself so much to the weakness of our nature, as to adopt ceremonies for our instruction, is it not severe and unreasonable to condemn the Church for her attachment to those rites, which the example of our Redeemer has consecrated? Besides, the ceremonies of the Catholic Church bear the impression of antiquity. To survey the different

\* Eccli, cap. 1.

† John, ix. 6. See also Mark, vii. 32.

rites, which form her liturgy, would be a task of minute research that would exhaust the patience of the reader. Among them there are a few, however, that give greater activity to the zeal, and a sharper edge to the invectives, of Protestant writers. The use of the sign of the cross, holy water, exorcisms, and lighted tapers,\* appear to them so many superstitions, which afford abundant exercise to their feelings of contempt or commiseration. However they may offend the refined taste of Protestants, we shall be content to follow the practice of those ages immediately near the time of the apostles—ages which yet retained the light which their setting splendour had reflected. St. Cyprian† and Tertullian celebrate the virtue of the water used in baptism; and the latter hesitates not to affirm, “that the benediction of the priest infuses into the water the power of sanctifying.”‡ From the universal practice of the exorcisms used in baptism, St. Augustine triumphantly deduced the doctrine of original sin.§ Those who are now ashamed of the sign of the cross, must be surprised at the frequency with which it was repeated by the first Christians, since Tertullian assures us that it announced the commencement of every business, accompanied their meals and journeys, marked the conclusion of every labour, and I should be only transcribing his language in adding, that the sacred symbol of redemption was worn into their foreheads.|| Perhaps there is an exaggeration in the phrase. Perhaps, too, the frequency and ardour of their contests with the Pagans might require a more frequent display of the sacred banners under which they fought. But I have never heard of a symbol, honourable in the hour of contest, becoming ignominious in the enjoyment of triumph and repose. And while the standard of every hero is cherished with veneration by

\* “Per totas orientis ecclesias, quando evangelium legendum est, accenduntur luminaria, jam sole rutilante,” etc.—S. Hieron. Ep. Adver. Vigilant.

† Ep. 70.

§ Serm. i. ad Catechum, cap. i.

‡ Lib. i. de Baptism. cap. iv.

|| De Corona Militis, cap. iii.

his followers, let Christians reconcile with their veneration for Christ the reproaches which they cast upon the symbol of the cross, on which he achieved the conquest of death and the deliverance of mankind.

Here, too, the feelings of human nature are in accordance with the example of Christ, and the testimonies of the primitive fathers. What mean the sceptre, the throne, the diadem, and all the splendour that encircles the person, if not to remind the people of the majesty of the Sovereign? What mean the robes that invest the officers of public justice, or the long line of attendants that guard the approaches to the judgment seat, unless to inspire respect for the majesty of the law? In these official ornaments there is surely no inherent virtue to produce such feelings; but as they are the usual habit in which dignity is invested, all are susceptible of their impression. Nay, I would venture to assert, that the coldest and most philosophical mind would feel something more of respect for a public functionary, when clothed in the robes of office, than when habited in the ordinary dress of social life. While the law then is surrounded with all the pomp of ceremony, shall religion be exposed to the rude contact of the people, and divested of every rite which could inspire awe or veneration? However, it is not solely because they excite the feelings of the heart that I insist on the advantages of ceremonies: but because they are the medium of conveying instruction to the understanding. A Roman poet,\* who was a profound observer of human nature, remarks that the images conveyed through the ears make a less sensible impression on the mind than those which pass through the organs of vision. Hence, sensible signs have formed in every age the most powerful medium of instruction. Without such forms to seize and arrest the attention, the heart might subside into languor, or be enflamed into enthusiasm. The peasant, whose mind could not reach the abstract doc-

\* "Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta,"—Horace.

trines of the Church, is instructed by her significant ceremonies, in a manner that would mock the ingenuity of human teachers. What tongue, for instance, could convey to a Christian the horrors of sin so strikingly as when he beholds the visible image of his Redeemer, weltering in his blood, and writhing on the animated canvas with the agonies of death? What discourse could awaken such a feeling sense of the frailness of our origin, as the sprinkling of the ashes,\* which, on the first Wednesday of Lent, reminds us of our kindred dust. Let not those, therefore, who soar in speculation, condemn the more simple, though not less impressive mode which nature has intended for the instruction of her children. But philosophy herself has often yielded to the magic power of the ceremonies of religion. Every reader is familiar with the anecdote of the nobleman, who, on witnessing the pomp which encircled the archbishop of Paris, while celebrating High Mass, remarked, that were he king, he would reserve to himself the exclusive performance of so splendid a ceremony. The observation reveals a truth, which his pride would fain conceal, that the splendour of the throne is overshadowed by the majesty of the altar. However, the people of France were not yet prepared for that philosophy, composed of a mixture of infidelity and servitude, which, by annihilating the priesthood, would level the strongest fence of their freedom, and enable a single despot to crush them to the earth, by wielding, like Augustus, the double powers of monarch and of pontiff.

The Catholic Church is swayed by a similar desire of instructing and edifying the faithful in the celebration of those festivals which are consecrated to religion. It has been the practice of every society to commemorate those benefactors who have rendered it signal services. The most skilful artists of Greece and Rome were employed in erecting monuments to those who

\* A ceremony warranted in many parts of Scripture. Tertullian calls the penitents of his time "Concinerati."

had protected their country by their valour, or enlightened it by their wisdom. The Jews were not less grateful in recording the merits of those who had performed any services to their nation. When Aman, the proud minister of Assuerus, meditated the destruction of the Israelites, his designs were defeated by the courage of Mardochai; and the devout people confessed their gratitude to their deliverer, by the observance of an annual festival.\* Their piety had been no less conspicuous in celebrating by a similar festival the fortitude of Judith and the fall of Holofernes.†

The history of the Machabees records another instance of the devout gratitude of the Jewish people, and of the authority of the synagogue. When the worship of the temple was defiled by the sacrilege of Antiochus, an avenger of his religion and his country arose in the person of Judas, who caught with enthusiasm the pious and patriotic admonitions of his dying father. After a variety of struggles, he expelled the enemy of his country, and restored the public worship of the temple. The memory of this event was consecrated in the anniversary of the dedication.‡ Now if the synagogue could lawfully exercise the power of instituting religious festivals, surely it will not be a great concession to extend a similar privilege to the Catholic Church, the object of God's more peculiar regard, and the depositary of a more ample authority. It may be observed, that the synagogue might have exceeded the measure of its power. I am well aware, that the exercise of power is not always a just criterion of right. But Christ himself assisted at the festival of the dedication;§ nor will it be a rash conclusion to assert, that he would not have given to a usurped authority the sanction of his own example.

What wonder, then, if the Church should consecrate certain festivals to the commemoration of the principal events which accompanied the establishment of the

\* Esth. ix. 21, 22, 23.

‡ 1 Machab. iv. 59.

† Judith, xvi. 31,

§ John, x. 22, 23.

Christian religion? It is equally natural that she should record the memories of those heroic men, who in after times combated her enemies; and who, like the son of Mathathias, purged the temple from those corruptions which threatened to overwhelm its worship. In recording the praises of any illustrious individual, the Church is only realising the prophetic language of Ecclesiasticus: "Nations shall declare his wisdom, and the Church shall show forth his praise. The memory of him shall not pass away, and his name shall be in request from generation to generation."\*

Should, however, the number of festivals be found to interfere with the industrious occupations of the people, the Church is not so unreasonable as to enforce their continuance. Wisely accommodating her discipline to the circumstances of times and countries, she consents to release those who can justly complain, from their obligation. From the inconvenience with which their observance may be attended in an industrious age and commercial country, we are not to conclude that they were attended with the same consequences at every period. On the contrary, they were in former times a blessing to the people. When every state was distracted by feudal turbulence, and the wretched serfs were doomed to oppressive labour by their tyrants, several festivals were instituted by the Catholic Church, which proclaimed to the world her merciful and pacific spirit, in affording them a temporary respite, and staying for a time the hand of lawless violence.

During the celebration of the mysteries of charity, the rage of the passions was subdued; angry quarrels were appeased or suspended; and the slave, almost sunk to the earth, respited from his toils. The advantages which were then felt are still perpetuated. The return of every festival commemorates some mystery of charity. Its influence extends even to the decorum of domestic life. All are anxious to adjust their persons, and assume

\* Eccli. xxxix. 13, 14.

a religious demeanour, on those days when they are to assemble in the common temple of their religion. Mutual kindness and civility are thus produced among the members of society. The festivals are seasons of regenerated feeling, when ancient friendships are renewed, and ancient enmities forgotten; and the man who reflects on all these advantages may be disposed to applaud the wisdom of a Church which fosters the spirit of peace; and which, in the fine language of Mr. Burke, gives a truce to the passions of mankind.

Of a Church distinguished for the antiquity and identity of its doctrine, it is natural that the public liturgy should be equally uniform and inflexible. The same language perpetuated from age to age, contributes much to the unity of faith, as well as to the uniformity of divine worship. There is a dignity about it, inspired by its antiquity, which secures a reverence for the public service, that no modern language could conciliate. Were we to lay aside the Latin tongue, and substitute a vernacular idiom in its stead; and then adopt every change by which that idiom might be improved or disfigured, our theology would become obedient to all the vicissitudes of grammar; and the dogmas of our religion might be subjected, as among the ancient Greeks, to the decisions of the philologist, until they had revolved through all the pedantic or fashionable inflexions of language. The more copious the language, the more dangerous would it be as an instrument of perverting the simplicity of the faith; and hence, it took six centuries to fix those speculative controversies which sprung up in the oriental Church, from the copiousness of a flexible tongue, abused by the perverse ingenuity of a subtle and argumentative people. On the contrary, the use of a single language corresponds with the unity of our faith. Freed from the toil of interpreting a variety of liturgies, we can have recourse to one fixed and immovable standard, the same in every age and country; and by which the

different degrees of error in the others, may be satisfactorily ascertained.

Besides, the use of a common medium opens a communication with the most distant parts of the Church, and enables us to unlock the treasures of past times. It not only facilitates our intercourse with those from whom distance and diversity of manners have separated us, but it annihilates, as it were, the intervals of time; makes us the contemporaries of every age, and the companions of the most celebrated fathers of the Church. There is something really sublime in such a view of our liturgy, resisting the revolutions of time, and subsisting unchanged amidst the variety of human opinions. I shall not allude to any classic associations for which we may be indebted to the Roman language, lest such a view of the subject might be thought profane. But it has stronger claims to our reverence, by embodying with it the collected fragrance of the faith of remote countries and times. And without any affectation of enthusiasm, it must be a source of elevated feeling to a Catholic priest, to reflect that even in the lowliest cot in which he may have occasion to celebrate the divine mysteries, he is still repeating those liturgies which are the fruit of the collected learning of the Church, and which St. Leo and St. Gregory had long since intoned under the lofty roof of the Roman basilics.

It was the policy of the Roman people to diffuse their language with their conquests, that there might be some sensible means of connexion between the different parts of the empire. It has been often the wish of statesmen that some common language might be adopted for the facility as well as security of negotiation. What they have wished in vain the Catholic Church has realised, and the use of a common language is no less a proof of the wisdom of her government than the extent of her dominion. Those among whom there is an endless diversity of faith, may well introduce a corresponding variety of liturgies. One lan-

guage best comports with one faith, and the Latin liturgy may be compared to a sanctuary in which that faith is deposited, and secured from profanation. In short, unity is the most distinguishing character of the Catholic Church. Notwithstanding the diversity of her members and the remoteness of her situation, they are still united by the influence of the same spirit which pervades them from one common head: nor shall I be deemed fanciful in denominating the Latin language the sensible organ which conveys that spirit by which all her children are connected.

Before the writer entirely resigns a labour which has detained him long, he may be permitted to make a few reflections on the nature of his work, as well as on the circumstances by which his choice of a subject has been regulated. Having devoted much of his life to the pursuits of literature and science, he perceived that, while every department was cultivated with care and crowded with competitors, that of theology was almost neglected. He speaks in reference to this country, and to the language through which its knowledge is conveyed. On the continent there have been some illustrious names, who have ennobled the first and most important of the sciences. But they were aliens in our land; nor has any individual hitherto attempted to give those learned strangers the privilege of naturalization. Theology he found like a waste, almost unreclaimed; and should it be observed that Milner devoted his time to its improvement, let it not be imagined that the present writer would deny to that illustrious individual the praise which he has earned: it required a Hercules to purge the earth before it was fit for the slow labours of industry and cultivation. Lingard appeared on this ground, but remained only so long as was sufficient to excite in all a deep regret for his departure: disheartened, perhaps, by the task of breaking a stubborn soil, or seduced by the charms of the historic muse, he soon abandoned his first pursuit, more anxious, perhaps, to rival the fame of Livy,

or of Robertson, than to follow in the train of Bossuet.

Were the present writer disposed to obey the first suggestions of his fancy, he, too, would have selected a subject of historical composition. But, having found a region almost unexplored by the English traveller, he preferred the toil of adventure to the gratification of taste: and perhaps, in this preference, he has been swayed by one of those accidents of situation which have so sensible an influence on the events of human life. Having devoted much attention to the profane writers of antiquity, in order to explore the treasures of their wisdom, he discovered over their pages a faint glimmering of light, such as is described by the sweetest of their own poets,\* revealing the original from which it had been derived. This twilight of knowledge he was resolved to trace to its real source: and following Plato and the Grecian sages in their travels, he found that the oracles of Sion, rather than those of Delphi, were the true source of their inspiration. The interest which must hang round a land that was the scene of such stupendous wonders, will justify the attention which he has bestowed on the laws and religion of the inhabitants of Judea. However, it became necessary to record the fall of the Jewish dispensation, and to show that however long the Hebrews might enjoy, they were not destined to possess for ever the exclusive protection of Heaven. Disposed rather to follow the evidence of history than the illusions of fancy, he has pursued this interesting subject until the extinction of the Jewish Synagogue, and the vocation of the Christian world, attested the ruin of one religion and the rise and triumph of another.

If the avenue to God's sanctuary detained him so long, it was natural that he should pause to contemplate the temple to which it conducted. If the rights of the heir in the state of infancy were deserving of consideration, they must have been doubly interesting

\* "Ibant obscuri, sola sub nocte, per umbram."—Æneid vi, 268.

after he had attained full maturity. These rights must have therefore awakened a keen competition in every age, and it was, therefore, his duty to mark the characters which have always distinguished the disobedient and disinherited children from the communion of the legitimate offspring. In the performance of such a task, it became necessary to trace the series of succession from St. Peter to the reigning pontiff, in order to ascertain the branches that are still vivified by the primitive stock, as well as those which have withered and decayed. The ample space which the successors of the apostles have filled in the eyes of mankind, required that the writer's attention should be turned to the centre of their jurisdiction. He has faithfully deduced the spiritual sovereignty of the bishop of Rome from the office of chief pastor with which Christ invested Peter; and has not failed to observe the successive steps by which the power of a secular prince has been gradually associated with the office of a spiritual pontiff. In his reflections on the rise, and progress, and decline of the temporal power of the popes, he has been far from copying the remarks of popular historians, many of whom have perverted the noble purposes of history to minister to the prejudices of their readers. But viewing their characters in reference to the times in which they lived, and the circumstances in which they were placed, he generally found them more deserving of the praise than the censure of posterity. It is easy to fling obloquy on the memory of the dead. But such men as Innocent and Gregory will remain unhurt amidst the innocuous calumnies of hostile writers; and while piety or patriotism shall be ranked among the virtues, so long shall their strenuous labours in the cause of religion be entitled to gratitude. In prosecuting at such length the subject of the temporal power of the popes, the magnitude of the topic is the only apology he can offer. He has been also swayed by the consideration of its intimate connexion with the political state of his own country; nor shall

he hesitate to confess that he loved to linger on the name of Rome, so venerable by its classical, yet dearer still by its religious, associations.

From a minute delineation of the genuine character of the supreme pontiff, and of his subordinate associates, by which they may be distinguished from every schismatical usurper of the altar, the writer has passed to the consideration of the rites of their religion. The efficacy of its sacraments, the uniformity of its liturgy, and the wisdom of its festivals, have been successively reviewed, to show that the Catholic Church is not less rich in the profusion of its graces, than it is striking in the splendour and majesty of its evidences. By the superficial and unthinking, the sacraments of the Church may be viewed as little else than symbols of an external communion between its members. But whoever has fully explored the subject must be struck with the wonderful combination of wisdom and of mercy, that appears in these instruments of salvation. From his cradle to his manhood, and from his manhood to the grave, religion deserts not the tender object of her solicitude. She watches at his birth, and protects him in his childhood, by regenerating him in the waters of BAPTISM. At that doubtful period of life, when the struggle between grace and nature becomes most fierce and likely to be most fatal, she anoints him with CHRISM more efficacious than the oil, which strengthened the wrestlers in the ancient combats, and puts a staff into his hand to sustain his faltering footsteps. Occasionally refreshed with the EUCHARIST,—“the bread which came down from heaven,”—he journeys on his pilgrimage; and should he stumble in his path, he rises again, aided by the grace of PENANCE, with renovated energy, from his fall. Should he stop in his career without trying the perils of any other state of life, religion lingers with him; but should he resolve to go forward and cross the threshold of ORDERS or of MARRIAGE, religion, like a faithful sentinel, still “watches at the pillars of the

gate," to warn him of his danger, or cheer him on his way. And when at length he reaches the goal of life, exhausted by fatigue, and ready to sink under the accumulated wounds of his spiritual warfare, religion, faithful to the last, watches at his couch, with peace on her accents, and "healing on her wing." Touched with the sacred UNCTION, the emblem of soundness and of strength, his bruised spirit is restored, and all the Christian hero is roused within him: obedient to her voice, which bids it depart with hope, his soul freely leaves its confinement, while religion, still following with longing eye, sends forth a fervent prayer for its repose; till at length, bearing the precious mediation of his immolated Son, she accompanies the departed spirit to the tribunal of the Almighty.

THE END.



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