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**IN A SERIES OF LETTERS ADDRESSED TO
THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.**

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IN REPLY TO

HIS LATE WRITINGS ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, AND TO THE CHARGES
CONTAINED IN HIS LIFE OF THE REV. DR. RODGERS;

WITH

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

THE author of the present work is not unaware of the great dislike which many persons entertain of religious controversy. Whatever may be the merits of a book, the single circumstance of coming forward in a controversial shape, is almost enough to discredit it. Feeling, very deeply, the imperfections of this performance, he cannot but be extremely solicitous to guard it from that odium which the term *controversy* carries with it; and would, therefore, entreat an indulgent attention to a few brief remarks.

It is the object of controversy to defend the truth, and to repel error. Of course it implies debate, and opposition. These, no doubt, may be carried so far as to degenerate into furious contention, to the great injury of Christian charity. Like every thing else, controversy is often perverted from its legitimate purpose; for it is too much the practice of the controvertist to seek

victory rather than truth. And even when the object which the controvertist proposes to himself is a lawful one, he, very frequently, in guarding against error, forgets the still more sacred obligation of promoting brotherly love. But these are the abuses of controversy; not its necessary concomitants. Of the argument against controversy, however, derived from its abuse, I do not enter into a consideration here; since it will naturally present itself to our attention in a subsequent part of these remarks.

1. Let us appeal to Scripture on this subject.

Does it forbid us to discuss, to controvert, to contend? Very far from it. We are to hold fast the form of sound words; we are to try the spirits whether they are of God; we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. If any man come to us, and bring not the true doctrine of Christ, we are not to receive him into our house, nor to wish him God speed; such as wish him God speed being partakers of his evil deeds.

What plain and unequivocal language is this! Earnest contention surely amounts to controversy; if so, controversy is enjoined upon us by the inspired writers, in the most positive terms. We cannot suppose that such language was used accidentally. No, surely, it was well weighed; for it is evidently delivered as a permanent rule of

conduct for the disciples of Christ. Indeed it is the divinely appointed method of propagating religious truth. Force is not to be employed. Christianity is to win her way by the power of argument, not of the sword. Did not our blessed Lord himself irresistibly address the understandings of his hearers? It is true, he appealed chiefly to the evidence of miracles, in proof of his divine mission; but still he frequently addressed the Jews in the way of argument; endeavouring to convince them of his real character, by an examination of their own sacred books. Look again at the Apostolical epistles! Are they not highly argumentative? What a profound logic does St. Paul employ in confuting the Jewish errors! How anxiously does St. John apply himself to the denial of those false doctrines, which, even in that primitive age, began to be propagated with so much zeal! Here is an example for the imitation of Christians through all succeeding time. The Apostles not only exhibited the evidence of miracle in proof of the divine origin of Christianity, but laboured to guard it from corruption by profound and accurate discussion. They at once defended the truth by argument, and adorned it by example. Was controversy necessary, in the Apostolic age; and is it unnecessary now? The evidence of miracle having ceased, it is only by

the evidence of reasoning that the faith can be preserved. What, indeed, is the Christian ministry but a controversial establishment? And but for the impregnable bulwark of argument and learning, erected by the labours of the clerical order, the Christian Church must long since have sunk beneath the formidable assaults which the depraved passions of the human heart have continued to direct against her in every age. The ministry was founded emphatically for the support of the truth. They are to defend it at once from open and from secret attack; to preserve it alike from being violently overwhelmed, or treacherously undermined. And, accordingly, by profound research and unanswerable argument, they have not only completely established the divinity of Scripture, but have so successfully explained its language, as to guard it, equally, from the misapprehension of the well meaning Christian, and from the sneer of the licentious free thinker.

But is not this robbing God of the glory? By no means. Every good gift cometh down from the Father of lights; but he chooses his own method, and prescribes his own condition, of dispensing his blessings. God, indeed, has preserved the Christian faith; but he has preserved it through the instrumentality of a learned and pious ministry. This faith, in order that its excellence

and beauty may be perceived and felt, must be the subject of constant discussion.

2. There is a close analogy between the condition on which we hold spiritual and temporal blessings. What is there that we can either acquire or preserve without care and labour? Man is to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Property, health, character, would all leave us if we did not make their preservation an object of constant and solicitous attention.

How have we arrived at scientific truth, and all the blessings which it carries in its train? By anxious thought, by persevering and painful labour. Without that exercise of the mental faculties which results from the collision of controversy, society must have remained for ever in a state of comparative barbarism. Truth has gradually won her way in the conflict of jarring opinions. Even in those branches of science in which philosophers, disputing for ages, have appeared to be employed only in exchanging one system of error for another; the contest, nevertheless, has been of incalculable advantage; for, beside keeping the curiosity of the mind awake, and preserving the vigour of its faculties, it has, at length, after carrying men through the entire circle of error, led them to the true theory of nature. We have been accustomed to look up with reverence to Lord

Bacon as the father of experimental philosophy. And, undoubtedly, no other individual has ever conferred such signal benefits upon science. But the rules which Lord Bacon laid down for the discovery of physical truth, were not less the natural result of the state of the science at the period in which he lived, than of his own transcendent genius. There is hardly a rule prescribed by him, of which some trace may not be discovered in the writings of his predecessors. The merit of Bacon lay in embodying into a regular system, those hints and rules which before may be said to have existed, but in an insulated, and therefore, comparatively, an unproductive form. If Lord Bacon had never lived, the just method of philosophic investigation, and the true theory of nature, would, still, have been discovered. Physical science had arrived at that point which, in the regular order of things, was to be succeeded by the true mode of inquiry. Hypothesis had been practised until its futility as an organ of discovery was perfectly apparent; and it was, particularly, by observing the absolute nothingness of the speculations conducted upon this plan, after a thorough trial of its merits had been made, that Lord Bacon was led to direct his attention to some new mode of investigation, and to recommend experiment and observation as the only way to

arrive at an accurate knowledge of the laws of nature. The controversies, then, carried on in the schools, apparently altogether worthless, were productive of the most substantial advantages. They were one stage in the progress of the human mind;—a stage through which it was necessary to pass to arrive at the splendour of the present day. We are tempted to smile when we observe the ardour with which the studies of alchemy and astrology were pursued. But these studies kept the human mind employed, gave rise to a great multitude of experiments and observations, and, finally, led to the successful cultivation of two of the noblest branches of physical science.

The same train of remark is applicable to the perverse disputations of the schoolmen, in the departments of logic and metaphysics. Ridiculous and unprofitable as these controversies seem to be, they, nevertheless, display great mental vigour; and they gradually led to the inductive method of prosecuting the science of mind, which now prevails, and which has begun to introduce into this department, a clearness that promises to rival the certainty bestowed by the labours of Bacon and Newton upon natural philosophy.

We may take a similar view of the theological disputes which were carried on in the dark ages. They not only served to keep the religious mind

in action, but gradually prepared the way for a better system.

3. If we look into the history of the Christian Church, we shall find that the faith has been preserved from corruption, or has been restored to purity, by the influence of controversy. A copious detail of facts might be given in proof of this assertion; but a very general view will be sufficient for our purpose. We have seen that pernicious heresies began to infest the Church in the earliest ages. What if the truth had been left, according to the fashionable prejudice of the present day, to take care of itself? In other words, what if no opposition had been made to error; if no controversy had been entered into with its authors? Would the faith have been preserved in its purity? No, not even in that miraculous age. The Apostles acted a very different part; esteeming it a duty to attack error as often as it presented itself to their view. Hence the cogent reasonings of St. Paul; hence the explicit declarations of St. John, which are now appealed to as decisive on the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. When the Arian heresy became so powerful in the Church, would it have done, think you, for the orthodox to slumber on their posts? Was it not absolutely necessary that they should rouse themselves to the most vigorous exertion; that

they should call into exercise all the powers and all the affections of their nature? Who can look upon St. Athanasius, without recognizing in him the great and glorious champion of the cross? But, descending to a comparatively modern period, how was the dreadful yoke of popery broken, and the Church purified from those foul corruptions which threatened entirely to obscure the lustre of the Gospel, and to terminate in an universal apostacy from the faith? If there had been no reformation from popery, Christianity must have been lost; and the reformation from popery was the result of that enlargement and invigoration of the human mind, produced by constant debate and inquiry. It was by the sword of controversy that the Romish system of fraud and folly was destroyed. Calculated for an age of darkness, its only hope of security rested on the inaction of the human faculties. It is consistent enough in the bigoted Papist to decry controversy, and to urge implicit submission to the dictates of authority; but this is a sort of language not at all becoming in a Protestant, the distinguishing spirit of whose religion it is to inquire accurately and deeply into the doctrines which are proposed to our faith, and to bring every thing to the test of a most strict comparison with the infallible standard of Scripture.

Descending from the æra of the Reformation to the present day, who can doubt that religious light has been continually increasing; that the sacred writings are getting to be better and better understood; that the system of doctrine which promises to be most prevalent is more and more purified from conflicting errors? Pelagianism is retiring on one hand; Calvinism on the other. Man is utterly incapable, by his own *unassisted* efforts, of working out his salvation. He stands in absolute need of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, he has a real agency in the work of his salvation; and is not, as the Calvinists will have it, a mere passive recipient of irresistible grace. The great doctrine of redemption is equally vindicated from the attacks of the Socinian, who denies the necessity of redemption on one hand; and from those of the Calvinist, who limits the efficacy of redemption to a few arbitrarily elected favourites, on the other. The absurdities of Calvinism, like those of Popery, if left unopposed, would have produced universal infidelity. And to what are we to ascribe the decline of this pernicious doctrine, which may be considered as one of the most conspicuous of the religious signs of the present times? It is to be ascribed, unquestionably, to the prevalence of

enlightened discussion. The controversy relative to the points of Calvinistic divinity, has led to a most thorough investigation of the sacred writings; and this investigation has terminated in the establishment of the blessed doctrine of the redemption of fallen man through the blood of Christ, on foundations not to be shaken by the efforts of the Pelagians and Socinians on the one hand, or of the Calvinists and Antinomians* on the other. Look at the history of the Church of England, and you will constantly see a host of scholars

* It would be very unjust not to admit that many, who hold the Calvinistic doctrines, are strenuous in urging the indispensable necessity of obedience to the divine law—of holiness of heart and life—to our salvation. Such persons are equally zealous with their opponents in reprobating the shocking tenets of Antinomianism; and it must be a subject of sincere regret to the friends of vital piety, that persons who agree, at once, in ascribing the entire merit of redemption to Jesus Christ, and in insisting upon conformity to the whole law of God as necessary, on the part of man, should wrangle with one another on the subject of supposed secret decrees; instead of uniting their force in opposing the common enemy. At the same time, candour obliges me to add, that the genuine tenets of Calvinism appear to me to lead, directly and irresistibly, to the most immoral and blasphemous consequences. So the great Melancthon viewed the matter; for he did not hesitate to give to the speculations of Calvin, the title of “stoical necessity,” and to brand their author as the Zeno of his age. Still the principles in question are viewed in a different point of light by those who hold them; and while such persons unite in urging a strict conformity to the whole law of God as necessary to salvation, it is, let it be repeated, a subject of sincere regret that they should be arranged in opposition to their brethren by the dark tenets of a metaphysical system. When these tenets are brought forward, however, it is absolutely necessary that they should be opposed. Calvinism destroys the beauty and loveliness of the Christian system, and infallibly prepares the way for the introduction of infidelity.

throwing the shield of learning and piety before the true faith; at one time defending it against the assaults of papal superstition, at another against those errors both of doctrine and discipline into which many of the Reformers were led by a well meaning but intemperate zeal. And not content with preserving the purity of the faith from the contagion of superstition on one hand, and of fanaticism on the other, you behold the unrivalled scholars in question repelling, at all times, with equal sagacity and vigour, the secret and the public assaults of the boasted champions of infidelity.

Yes, if the present fashionable prejudice, on the subject of controversy, had governed the conduct of Christian scholars, we might have continued to grope in the darkness of papal error—the faith would never have been recovered from the mass of corruption with which Rome had encumbered it; or if recovered, it must, after being first defaced by fanatical extravagance, have finally perished under the attacks of a licentious scepticism.

4. The experience of this country furnishes abundant evidence of the beneficial effects of religious discussion. Suppose, for a moment, that, from the original settlement of the country, no controversy had taken place relative to the principles

which discriminate the Episcopal Church from other religious denominations. Beyond all question, she would have perished. Her distinctive principles being forgotten, and her spirit of corps extinguished, she would have been gradually absorbed by other societies of Christians. Very many Episcopal congregations have actually disappeared in this way, and all would have disappeared but for that enlightened zeal for her institutions which controversy has enkindled. Mind gravitates towards mind, not less than matter towards matter. The planets would immediately rush to the sun if there were no principle to counteract the force of attraction. And the Church would infallibly have merged in the larger religious societies around her, if she had pursued the policy, so often recommended to her, of seeking peace by forgetting every circumstance of distinction between them and her. No body of men will grow without contending for their principles; nor will any attachment be preserved for principles which it is made an object to keep systematically out of sight. Under such circumstances the laity would soon become entirely ignorant of the peculiar doctrines of the Church; the clergy would, in time, become ignorant of them also;—then would follow a complete interchange of religious offices; and this could not fail ultimately to draw

after it an incorporation of the respective bodies. Of course, the entire mass would assume the shape and features of the larger division; especially if that division should happen to be deeply impregnated with its own separate and peculiar spirit.

Thus all the doctrines and institutions of our Church; nay, her existence itself, would be sacrificed to a spurious liberality.

The progress and present state of our Church in Connecticut, will furnish a complete exemplification of the truth of these remarks. A century ago she had scarcely an existence in that State; consisting principally of about seventy or eighty families, in the towns of Stratford, Fairfield, Norwalk, Newtown, Repton, and West-Haven.* While the Church was in this low and feeble condition, an event occurred which has been productive of most important consequences. Some Congregational ministers, of distinguished talents and piety, being convinced, upon mature investigation, of the invalidity of Presbyterian ordination, resigned their places, went to England for holy orders, and became most useful and zealous clergymen of the Episcopal Church. In this number were Dr. Timothy Cutler, and Dr. Samuel Johnson,

* Chandler's Life of Dr. Johnson, p. 26, 39.

two men greatly celebrated in their day, and whose names will ever be conspicuous in the history of the early literature of this country. An event of this kind could not fail to excite much attention; it gave rise to a controversy relative to the constitution of the Christian Ministry, in which the subject was ably discussed. The Church grew; her members became better acquainted with her distinctive principles, and felt a greater attachment to them. The controversy in question has continued, at intervals, from the time of Dr. Johnson, to the present day. The result is, that the subject of the constitution of the Christian Church is thoroughly understood by the great body of the clergy of that diocess, as well as by many enlightened laymen; the Church there, is animated by a high degree of zeal for her distinctive principles; and bids fair, in the opinion of competent judges, to become, at no very distant period, the predominant religious society.

The Church of Connecticut has grown up in the midst of perpetual discussion. She is, literally, the child of controversy.

Trace, now, for a moment, the progress of this business. The Church was extremely low in Connecticut;—she scarcely supported a feeble and precarious existence. How was she revived and strengthened? By the disinterested conduct

of those excellent men who sacrificed, with a truly Apostolic spirit, every prospect of temporal comfort and prosperity, to the discharge of their Christian duty. How were these men led to inquire into the nature of the Christian Church? How did they attain to those correct views of the subject under the influence of which they acted, in changing their religious profession? The library of the College at New-Haven contained the works of some of the most distinguished divines of the Church of England. By the diligent study of these, under the divine blessing, their prejudices yielded to the force of truth. They examined the subject most thoroughly; reading the principal authors on each side, and comparing them minutely with one another. Thus it is that a faithful discharge of the duty enjoined upon us in Scripture, of contending zealously for the truth, is followed by beneficial consequences from age to age. If the illustrious divines of the Church of England had yielded to the influence of that spurious liberality which is now so much contended for, the interesting event, just mentioned, would never have occurred; and, probably, it is not going too far to say, that if the change of Dr. Johnson, Dr. Cutler, and their friends, with the spirit of inquiry which it excited, had not taken place, the Episcopal Church would, at this day,

have been extinct in Connecticut. What a contrast to this do we now behold!—A powerful and increasing Church, animated by the spirit of her institutions and services; presenting religion in a shape which will endure the test of severe investigation, and thus affording an asylum to those whom the absurdity of Calvinism would otherwise lead, first to Socinianism, and then to open infidelity. It is not less unreasonable to expect religious, than natural fruit, where you cast no seed into the earth. Use the means which God has pointed out; contend for the truth in the spirit, at once, of meekness, and of zeal; and, rely upon it, God will, sooner or later, grant the increase.

But it is not merely from the experience of the Church in the diocess of Connecticut that we derive our opinion as to the beneficial effects of free and manly discussion. Every where we have found our Church to languish, when the policy has been pursued of keeping her distinctive principles out of sight;—every where she has grown and flourished when she has had zeal and energy enough to proclaim and defend those principles. Do they, who so severely condemn religious controversy, know that a large proportion of the clergymen of our Church, now settled in the diocess of New-York, are converts from other denominations? This important fact is in the place of a volume of

argument, to prove that the Church can have nothing to fear, but every thing to hope, from enlightened and zealous inquiry. The attention of the persons alluded to, was drawn, at different times, to the subject of the constitution of the Christian Church, by the public controversies carried on in this country, relative to the divine institution of Episcopacy. Perceiving it to be their indispensable duty to give the subject a full and dispassionate examination, they entered sincerely upon the task. The result, in very numerous cases, has been a perfect conviction of the invalidity of Presbyterian ordination, and a consequent application for holy orders in the Episcopal Church. Deprive our Church in this diocese of the clergymen who have joined her from other denominations, and she would be left, indeed, in a very desolate condition. This places the utility of religious controversy in so palpable a shape before us, as scarcely to afford room for a difference of opinion. But, indeed, the case is not less clear in point of principle. For, in one word, did any body of men ever grow, who were too sluggish, or too cautious to contend for their distinctive principles? The thing is impossible—so plainly so, that a state of indifference like this, in any society, is universally regarded as an infallible symptom of approaching dissolution.

5. The only consistent way of answering all this, is to take the ground, at once, that all opinions are equally good; at least that the distinctive principles and institutions of our Church are not worth contending for. Doctrines that are kept systematically out of sight can never be valued, and must soon be lost. It would seem to be impossible, therefore, that any person who cordially embraces the doctrines of our Church, should be opposed to the public discussion of them. At all events, as the Apostle expressly commands us, to contend earnestly for the faith, to hold fast the form of sound words, and to declare the whole counsel of God, they who so decidedly condemn all defence of the principles which discriminate our Church from other Christian societies, must be reduced to the dilemma of saying either that the peculiar principles of our Church are unscriptural, or that the injunction of the Apostle is not to be obeyed.*

* It is our duty to declare the whole counsel of God—The distinctive principles and institutions of our Church are part of this counsel—Therefore the distinctive principles and institutions of our Church are to be declared. There is, obviously, no way of escaping this conclusion but by denying either the major or minor proposition. To deny the latter, is to say, that the distinctive principles and institutions of our Church are unscriptural; to deny the former, is to say, that the Apostolic command need not be observed.

It will be objected, perhaps, that the Apostle directs us to feed with milk such as will not bear strong meat; and, generally, to administer to the people their spiritual food in *due season*. Undoubtedly, a cer-

It seems, then, that all the peculiar principles of our Church are to be kept entirely out of sight. I say *all* the peculiar principles; for the objection is not to the discussion of this or that principle, but to controversy simply. Have the opposers of controversy reflected on the great variety of religious subjects from which the advocate of the Church will be excluded by the objection in question? Have they considered that it renders almost the whole of Christianity forbidden ground?

We must not introduce, for example, the subject of infant baptism, nor touch the question relative to the mode of administering the ordinance. This would involve a controversy with our Baptist brethren. If we urge the duty of receiving the sacraments, or point out the necessity of an external commission to a valid Gospel Ministry, we

tain latitude is allowed on this subject. It may be necessary gradually to prepare the mind for the reception of truths to which a disinclination, at any particular period, may exist. But where the stewards of Christ thus distribute weak instead of strong food, it is always to be taken for granted that they will labour to prepare the people for those scriptural truths, to which they may be, at the moment, opposed; and that the purpose for which they give milk is, emphatically, to fit the feeble Christian, to whom they give it, for the strong meat which he must ultimately receive. It is the duty of Christ's ministers to make known his whole will; gradually, to be sure, if necessary; but to make it known. They have no dispensing power here. The injunction is express and unqualified. Now, the doctrine, relative to controversy, which I am opposing, would exclude the distinctive principles of our Church from discussion at all times, and under all circumstances. The objection is not, simply, to the *time* of discussion; but to the *discussion itself*.

are at war with the Quakers. Nay, we must not even set forth the sacred volume as the sole standard of the Christian, in as much as this would amount to a direct attack upon the Quakers, who are peculiarly distinguished by the opinion that the light within is superior even to the written word.

Do we, following the standards of the Church, inform our people that Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, has appointed the orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in his Church; and has given to the highest order the exclusive power of transmitting the sacerdotal office by ordination? This is nothing less than an attack upon the whole body of our Christian brethren who may have laid aside Episcopacy for Presbytery.

To avoid offending the Calvinist we must never assert the universality of redemption; or call in question the infallible perseverance of the Saints. And to avoid offending the Socinian we must keep the doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ out of view, and all the fundamental principles with which it is connected.

Why not go on and say that not a word is to escape us which may imply disapprobation of any of the gross errors or corruptions of popery?

6. But religious controversy is so often conducted in an unchristian spirit—it is so grossly

abused. This is, indeed, most true. But when the abuses of controversy are objected to us, we have to reply, first, that they are the abuses of a thing which it is impossible to dispense with, and, of course, must be borne; secondly, that they are by no means necessarily connected with it; and that the conclusion to which such a mode of reasoning leads is, not that we should cease from religious discussion, but that we should conduct it in the proper temper.

What has been more grossly abused than Christianity itself! How many crimes have been perpetrated in its name! What a system of civil and religious tyranny was erected upon it in the dark ages! Shall we lay aside Christianity because it has been, and may still be perverted to wicked purposes? No, we must endeavour to guard it from corruption, and thus secure its unmingled blessings.

It is, indeed, most painful to reflect on the spirit in which Christians have disputed with one another. The glorious æra of the Reformation we look back to, on many accounts, with feelings of exultation and delight; it places human nature, in some respects, in the most illustrious point of view. But if we attend to the style in which religious discussion was conducted, we shall find cause for deep regret and humiliation. The po-

lemical writings of the greatest and best men among the Protestants were marked with a virulence which excites our astonishment. It is true, they had long suffered under a most odious and unrelenting tyranny; the public mind was deeply agitated; and there was no possibility of shaking the enormous and disgusting mass of popery, but by a strong address to the passions, as well as the understanding. But even when we make the allowances which this view of the subject imperiously requires, we start back from the intemperance of abuse which Luther and Calvin poured out upon their adversaries. The worst feature, indeed, in the writings of these men, is the acrimony with which they attacked their Protestant brethren who differed from them. Still they were sincere, zealous, and undaunted in the cause of Christ; ready, at any moment, to seal their attachment to it with their blood. Eminently pious, however, as every impartial inquirer must admit them to have been, they were, nevertheless, under the dominion, in no inconsiderable degree, of passions which the Gospel should have taught them to subdue. But, disgraceful as much of the contention that marked the period of the Reformation is to our common Christianity, will any reasonable man deny that the keen discussions of that period produced a most salutary effect upon

the human mind, and prepared the way for that diffusion of religious light which distinguishes the present age? In consequence, indeed, of this diffusion of religious light, controversy itself has been greatly improved in its spirit. The subject of religious toleration, has come, at length, to be thoroughly understood; and men begin, in their theological disputes, to approach much more nearly to the evangelical temper.

The result, then, is, as we have already observed, not that we should cease to discuss religious subjects, but that we should discuss them in the spirit of Christian meekness. When controversy is conducted in this way, we cannot very well have too much of it. In fact, it was designed by God to be the great mean of purifying, and of guarding the faith.

What course of conduct, then, is it our duty to pursue towards our fellow Christians of other denominations? We should cherish for them the most sincere good will. Bound, as we are, to wish well to all men, it is especially our duty to view with an eye of affection, those who profess the name of Jesus, and unite with us in the cordial reception of those precious doctrines of the cross which constitute the very life blood of the Gospel. This is the true spirit of Christian charity—a spirit perfectly consistent with the zealous

prosecution and defence of what we esteem the cause of religious truth. We are to display the meekness and affectionateness of the Christian temper in our intercourse with our brethren of other denominations; but we are not to sacrifice our principles to theirs:—nay, we are not to be afraid to contend firmly against what we conceive to be error, even at the hazard of deeply offending those by whom it is embraced. The Apostles were surely animated by the true spirit of the Gospel. They resisted error with a firmness which nothing could shake; and propagated truth with an unwearied and inextinguishable zeal. It is a false charity that places all opinions and all communions upon a level—a charity which religion, reason, and common sense, equally disclaim. It may be proper even to avoid all situations in which we should be in danger of compromising our principles, or of having our attachment to our distinctive institutions weakened. There is no narrowness of spirit in this. If we are persuaded that our principles are true and important, it is our sacred duty to guard them by all prudent and honourable means. This is perfectly consistent with the utmost good will towards those with whom we decline to unite, and a readiness to do full credit to their honourable efforts in a good cause. We may contribute to the same noble

object in a mode that shall be attended with no danger to our peculiar principles. If we thus act, we shall grow and flourish. But should Episcopalians place themselves in situations where they will be led to depart from the principles solemnly declared by their Church, it is to be apprehended that very fatal consequences will ensue. It is quite natural, and, therefore, excusable in our brethren of other denominations, to endeavour to draw us into situations which will lead us practically to renounce the principles which distinguish us from them, and to act as if no important doctrine was involved in our peculiar institutions. But shall we suffer our kindness of temper to get the better of the love of our Church, and the conviction of her superior truth and excellence? She is a pure and primitive branch of the mystical body of Christ. They who have separated from her are bound to return to her bosom. This is the language which she should hold. Let her never suffer a specious liberality to induce her to relax, in the smallest degree, in the maintenance of her distinctive principles. If she acts up to the purity of these principles, her destiny on this continent will be high and glorious. She is now rising rapidly in public estimation. Her numbers are increasing; she is imbibing more and more deeply the spirit of her admirable institutions and services;

and the period is not far distant, if she be faithful to herself, when she will be the bulwark of the faith in this new world. Heresy and schism have their day. Nothing is permanent but truth. Nothing will endure to the end of the world but the Apostolic Church. How did those powerful and turbulent schismatics, the Novatians, the Arians, the Donatists, notwithstanding their numbers and fiery zeal, at length pass away; leaving the Apostolic Church to hold on her steady course, and to encounter new heresies from age to age. The Presbyterians in England, in the reign of Queen Ann, composed two thirds of the whole dissenting body; now they amount to scarcely a twentieth part of that body.*

What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. The Church was established by its divine Author, as a pillar and ground of the truth. It was, emphatically, declared to be but one; and all men were commanded to be of its communion. The sum of religion consists in obedience to the will of God. When man undertakes to be so wise as to strike out into paths of his own, the consequences never fail, ultimately, to be most pernicious. Accordingly, it will be found that the Church and the faith mutually flourish in proportion as they are united with each other. Look,

* Quarterly Review, vol. x. p. 126.

for a moment, at the condition of the Christian world. Papal Europe is overwhelmed with infidelity.* Schismatic Protestant Europe has declined very much into Arianism and Socinianism. The Apostolic Church of England was the bulwark of the Reformation, and she is now the bulwark of the orthodox faith. What has become of those societies which were dissatisfied with her wise and prudent reformation from popery, and left her communion; setting up Presbyterial government, extempore prayer, and Calvinistic doctrine? They first became Arian, and now are, very generally, Socinian. The people who would not be contented with the 39 Articles, because not sufficiently Calvinistic, have thrown off the absurdities of Calvinism only to rush into apostasy from the faith. But such is the law of our nature. Extremes beget their contras. A pernicious error seldom fails to plunge its advocates, after a time, into the exactly opposite error.

The union of the true faith with the true Church is most strikingly exemplified in England. It is, and, in all probability, will continue to be no less strikingly exemplified in this country. What an alarming defection from the peculiar doctrines of Christianity has taken place in Massachusetts!

* The Papists have separated themselves from the Apostolic Church, and are in a state of schism.

The leaven is at work in the other parts of New-England; and it is much to be apprehended that a great proportion of the Congregationalists of that country, will, sooner or later, embrace the errors of Arius and Socinus. The evil, after pervading the Congregational societies, will be very apt to find its way into the Presbyterian body. So that here, not less than in Great-Britain and on the continent of Europe, the Apostolic Church and the Apostolic faith will be found in a state of intimate union.* If God has established a Church as the guardian and keeper of the faith, all separation from this Church, it may

* The Churches of Sweden and Denmark were reformed upon Episcopal principles. They retained the Apostolic constitution of the ministry. Accordingly, they have preserved the great and distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel. But how lamentably have Protestant Germany, Protestant Holland, Protestant Switzerland declined from these doctrines! Even in Scotland—to which Presbyterians appeal for the salutary influence of their system; although, in truth, the effect has been produced, chiefly, by the admirable institution of parochial schools—the editors of the *Christian Observer* tell us that the rigid system of the established Church has had the effect of dividing the literary population into the two great classes of *bigots* and *sceptics*† This will ever be the case where the peculiarities of Calvinism are inculcated. In those who embrace them they will produce a contracted and severe spirit; while such as finally shake off the yoke, will be likely to pass far beyond the line which separates Calvinism from pure Christianity, and to reject even the fundamental doctrines of the cross.

† Not having before me the number of the *Christian Observer* which contains this statement, I can only refer, generally, to the Review of a farewell address of the Rev. Mr. Chalmers to his people. In this review will be found some admirable remarks on the practical effects of Calvinism.

be taken for granted, will be likely to terminate in infidelity. This proposition, so reasonable in itself, is abundantly confirmed, as has been already shown, by the state of the Christian world.

Let us, then, Episcopalians, elevate our minds to the high and momentous duties which are before us. We are under an awful responsibility. Upon us the preservation of the true faith, on this continent, under God, depends. And we shall never fulfil our sacred trust unless our minds be penetrated with a deep sense of the superior excellence of the doctrine and worship of our Church, and with a sincere conviction of the Apostolic claims of her ministry.

Let us never be afraid to proclaim the truth; but let us always endeavour to proclaim it in the spirit of Christian love. Many of those who have separated from us adhere with a noble zeal to the distinguishing doctrines of the cross. They are still our brethren in Christ. We may love their persons, while we strenuously oppose their errors. Adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour by a holy zeal for his truth and his Church, mingled with that spirit of meekness and brotherly affection, without which the most exact conformity to external institutions, or even the most strict adherence to the orthodox faith will profit us nothing; we may hope that the blessing of God will sig-

nally crown our labours, and look forward to the period when, Christians being gathered into one fold, the Church shall exhibit the heavenly spectacle of a society at union with itself.

That period of blessedness to the Church, which the Prophets so particularly foretel, will be distinguished, we are taught to believe, by a much more general connexion of Christians in one communion. And the tendency toward this connexion may be expected to increase as the happy period in question shall approach: There are not wanting circumstances, at the present moment, which give reason to hope that the Apostolic Church is about to be greatly enlarged, not only by the extension of her system to regions which are now sunk in the darkness of paganism, but also by the return of many of those who ought never to have been separated from her.* Certain

* The work of converting the Heathen is likely to go on with success in India. From the connexion which subsists between Great-Britain and that country, there is reason to believe that the great body of the Christians of India will be regularly organized upon Episcopal principles. The vast efforts which England is making for the diffusion of Christianity throughout the world, will, probably, assume, more and more, the same primitive direction. The conversion of the Jews has actually commenced. A society, having this object in view, was established, some time since, in London; and has published several annual reports. When converts began to be made to Christianity, it became necessary to organize them into regular congregations. The question presented itself—upon what plan shall the organization proceed? Very much to the honour of the Dissenters who were members of the society, they perceived the propriety of the business being con-

it is, that the Church differs from what her great Head intended her to be in proportion as she is di-

ducted upon the plan of the established Church, and cheerfully assented to it; engaging, at the same time, to continue their patronage of the institution. An event of this kind opens the most delightful prospect to the friends of primitive order and piety.

A national society has lately been established in England for the purpose of educating the whole body of the poor, upon the new system invented by Dr. Bell, in the principles of the established Church. It is proceeding with great zeal and success. Vast sums have been subscribed towards its funds, and there is every reason to believe that it will be able to conduct its operations upon a scale as extensive as its title and constitution imply. There was an addition, during the year ending with June, 1814, of upwards of twenty thousand children to its different schools. Children are admitted into its schools without reference to the religious profession of their parents: it is, however, the established rule of the institution that the children belonging to it shall attend public worship in the national Church; subject to such exceptions, indeed, as the managers may think proper to make in particular cases. Numerous instances have occurred in which the children of Dissenters, being sent to these schools, have attended the Church of England, and, in a little while, have been followed by their parents. In this way the society will, probably, have a very powerful effect in promoting ecclesiastical union. The Church of England, indeed, is rousing herself to the most extended and vigorous exertions. A few years since, the Dissenters appeared to be gaining ground so fast as to threaten ultimately to overwhelm her. The pressure has happily served greatly to augment her zeal, and her efforts. The tide is turned; and the prospect now is, that the Church will draw back a considerable portion of the separatists to her communion.

The Episcopal Church of Scotland is increasing rapidly in numbers and in influence. The same may, certainly, be said of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. Her progress within the last twenty years has been uncommonly great. In Connecticut she bids fair soon to become the predominant religious society; and in every diocese of the union she is advancing in strength and respectability. The period, also, is approaching when prophecy gives us reason to expect that the Greek Church and the Roman Catholic Church, purified from their errors and corruptions, will return, in a good degree, to the piety of the primitive times. Almost the whole of the Christian world will then be arranged upon the model of the Apostolic Church. Those dissenting societies which have departed from the Apostolic ministry,

vided into hostile societies. It was never the design that altar should be raised against altar. On the contrary, this is forbidden by our Lord in the most express and solemn terms. History, accordingly, will inform us that nothing retarded so much the progress of the Gospel, as the disgraceful sects that sprung up, from time to time, in the primitive Church. And, in every age, the division of Christians into separate and conflicting societies, with the horrible cruelties to which such division has given rise, has contributed more, perhaps, than any other cause, to prevent the accomplishment of the dying prayer of our Lord to his Father—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME."*

will, probably, diminish in number; some of their members returning to the bosom of the Church, and others going over to Arianism, Socinianism, and open infidelity. So that at the conclusion of the scene, the true Church and the true faith will be closely connected; and schism will be proved to be the undoubted parent of heresy. The whole course of events will lead to the conclusion that the happiness, not less than the duty of man lies in unvarying conformity to the divine law; all departure therefrom never failing, sooner or later, to terminate in confusion and ruin.

* St. John, chap. xvii. 20, 21. The prayer of our Lord for the unity of his followers, was offered, we see, upon the express ground that the world might be thus led to believe in his divine mission. Is there not, then, full reason to conclude that the diffusion of Chris-

Who will refuse to join in hailing the triumphant period when Christians, embracing each other as members of one fold, shall fulfil the prayer of their Lord? For which blessed purpose, may all prejudice be taken away on one side, all loftiness on the other; and all parties be disposed toward that teachable temper which forms the character of the true followers of the humble and holy Jesus!

tianity throughout the earth, and the return of believers to that Apostolic communion of which they were all required to be members, will, in a great degree, keep pace with one another?

A VINDICATION, &c.

COL. COLL.
LIBRARY
N. YORK.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

SIR,

SEVERAL years have elapsed since the publication of your second volume on the "Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry." I formed the determination of replying to this work immediately upon reading it; and proceeded, without delay, to make preparations for carrying my determination into effect. When I had nearly finished my answer, a Series of Letters, addressed to you by a learned divine* of our Church, was published, which appeared to me to contain so full a refutation of the most important parts of your book, as to render any further notice of it unnecessary. Accordingly, I came, pretty much, to the conclusion to remain silent; especially as you had declared your intention to take no further part in the Episcopal controversy.† But you continued to renew the attack, in different forms, on the doctrines and order of our Church; publishing, in 1811, a Sermon on the subject of lay el-

* The Rev. Dr. Bowden.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 431.

ders; and, in 1813, a Life of the Rev. Dr. Rodgers; both of which contain matter which the sincere Episcopalian must regard, not only as inaccurate in itself, but as very pernicious in its tendency. Now, when a particular system of doctrines or institutions is strongly opposed from the press, it is of very little consequence in what precise shape the opposition appears. Upon seeing you thus persevere in your animadversions upon our Church, I resolved to finish my reply to your work on the "Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry," and to connect with it a brief examination of some of the assertions and charges in your Life of the Rev. Dr. Rodgers. This last publication, especially, had given great offence to many Episcopalians, and was thought to require notice. Do not misunderstand me. I am far from intending to find fault with you for continuing to defend the principles of your own religious society, or to oppose those of the Episcopal Church. I mean merely to say that you have thought proper to prolong the discussion, and that the publication of the present work has thus been rendered necessary.

In the present imperfect state, controversy is unavoidable; being, indeed, the only way of discovering and preserving truth. It should ever be conducted with the utmost frankness. We are not at liberty to soften down the truth in order to avoid giving offence. It is our most solemn duty to oppose what we deem pernicious error. We are to take care that our zeal proceed from the right motive

—a sacred regard for the purity of divine truth, and for the best interests of man, as connected with it. A distinction is ever to be made between error itself, and the persons who embrace it. To the first we may be intolerant; but, with respect to the last, we must remember that they are our brethren, and allow no feelings to arise in our minds towards them, but those of Christian benevolence; for we are, above all things, to love one another. If this distinction be kept constantly in view, we may contend zealously for truth; while we freely exercise charity. I know there is great difficulty in doing this. That I shall invariably observe the distinction in the ensuing pages, it would betray an improper confidence absolutely to promise; but I can, at least, say that I am conscious of no other feelings towards you than those of sincere good will, and that I should deeply regret any thing that should interrupt a friendly intercourse. Some parts of your works, on which I am to remark, I regard, I will candidly confess to you, as highly exceptionable. I hope, however, I shall not forget to make due allowance for those exaggerations and obliquities to which even good men are liable in the ardour of discussion, and that I shall constantly keep it in mind, that the forbearance, which I feel called upon to exercise towards others, may be necessary, even when self-love may tell me I am blameless, to be practised towards myself. Entertaining a high respect for the virtues and piety of many, both among the

clergy and laity of your religious body, nothing could be more painful to me than the reflection that I had given them just ground of offence. I wish to plead the cause of primitive truth and order with firmness, but with humility. God forbid that any defender of our Church should be disposed to assume airs of triumph in reference to such of our Christian brethren as have departed, according to our view, from the Apostolic communion! Far be from us all such unworthy feelings!—No—While it is impossible for us to consent to the slightest modification of our doctrines, or to abstain from a free and explicit declaration of them out of delicacy to others; we would wish, by our manner of declaring them, to evince to our Christian brethren that we are governed by a sacred sense of duty, and that our strenuous opposition to their religious system, has not had the effect of obliterating those sentiments of affection which should ever unite the followers of the same blessed Master.

LETTER II.

EXTERNAL ORDER.

SIR,

EXTENSIVE currency has been given to very inaccurate ideas in relation to the **EXTERNAL ORDER** of the Christian Church.

The subject is highly important, and it will be impossible to place it in a just point of light, without descending to considerable minuteness of discussion.

The advocates of Episcopacy have, certainly, no small reason to complain of the unfair treatment which they have received. Their principles have been greatly misrepresented, and are now very far from being correctly understood. Let me beseech your indulgence, while I endeavour to do them a little justice. Repeated explanations have, indeed, been already given; but they have been almost entirely disregarded.

I propose to institute a full comparison between the language and principles of our respective societies on the subject of External Order. It will appear, I think, from the detail into which I shall enter, that the Presbyterian doctrine on this subject is much more strict and exclusive than the Episcopal doctrine. It will appear, also, that the defenders of the Church, in the allowance which they make for error, carry their charitable ideas to

an extent to which their opponents utterly refuse to follow them.

Let me entreat the candid Presbyterian to accompany me in an examination of the standards of the religious society to which he belongs, and of the writings of some of its most distinguished members.

1. *There is a visible society, called the Church, instituted by Christ and his Apostles, of which all men are commanded to become members.*

This is the Presbyterian doctrine. Indeed it is a doctrine which we meet with in every part of the sacred writings. The whole language of Scripture supposes the existence of an outward or visible Church. Take a few examples—"Feed the Church."* "Tell it unto the Church"—"if he neglect to hear the Church."† "God hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers."‡ "Give none offence to the Church of God."§ "The Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved."||

It is clear, then, that there is an outward or visible society called the Church, and that this society is of divine institution. So plainly is this doctrine recorded in the sacred volume, that Christians almost unanimously subscribe to it. Authorities need scarcely be quoted to show that such is the language of the Presbyterian society; but as I wish to prove every thing that I state, in reference to those who may not be aware of what their own

* Acts xx. 28.

† Matt. xviii. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

§ 1 Cor. x. 32.

|| Acts ii. 47.

religious articles say on the subject of External Order, I must beg you to excuse the tedious detail which it will render necessary.

“The visible Church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

This is the express language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which the Presbyterian Church, and the Associate Reformed Church in the United States, have adopted as their standard of doctrine.*

The Confession of Faith of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, which is the standard of doctrine of the Reformed Dutch Church in North-America, speaking of the visible Church, uses the following language—“Out of it there is no salvation.” “No person, of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it, maintaining the unity of the Church, submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof.” “All those who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God.”†

The same language is held by Presbyterian authors. You expressly describe the visible Church as “that *household* of God to which his gracious

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2. Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church, p. 145, 146.

† Confession of Faith of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, article xxviii.

promises, and his life-giving spirit are vouchsafed.”* The Editor of the Christian’s Magazine enters into a long and systematic argument to prove the existence of one Catholic visible Church—“the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, where he has deposited his truth, and instituted his ordinances.”†

2. *God has established a ministry in the Church, which he has made essential to its existence.*

Clergymen are ambassadors of heaven.‡ They are stewards of the mysteries of God. They are ministers of Jesus Christ.§ It is not sufficient to form a Church that there be a body of people united by the profession of the same faith, and holding communion with one another. There must be agents commissioned of God, having authority to sign and seal, to bless and absolve, in his name.

Such is the Presbyterian doctrine.

“Unto this Catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world.”|| “The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.” “To these officers the keys of the kingdom of Heaven are committed; by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that

* Letters, p. 342.

† Christian’s Magazine, vol. i. p. 57—73.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 20.

§ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

|| Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 3. Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church, p. 147.

kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”*

Attend to the language of Calvin—“Neither the light nor heat of the sun, nor meat and drink are so necessary to nourish and sustain this present life, as the office of the apostles and pastors is necessary to preserve the Church.”†

But let me refer you to a modern authority, on which you bestow very high praise. “Her ministry enters into her very being. Had the ministry ever been destroyed, the Church would have been destroyed too.”‡

The doctrine, that a ministry is essential to the existence of the visible Church, may be proved to be the Presbyterian doctrine by the following short process of reasoning.

We can be admitted into the Church only by the sacrament of baptism.§ It follows, that the Church cannot exist without baptism; otherwise

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxx. sect. 1, 2. Constitution of the Associate Reformed Church, p. 164, 165.

† Calvin’s Institutes, Book IV. chap. iii. sect. 2.

‡ Christian’s Magazine, vol. i. p. 219.

§ “Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also,” &c. Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxviii. sect. 1.

“Sacraments put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world.” Ibid. chap. xxvii. sect. 1.

By the sacrament of baptism we are admitted into the Church; and the sacraments distinguish those who belong to the Church, from those who belong to the world. Of course baptism is the *only* mode of admission into the Church: for, if there be any other mode of admission, it cannot possibly be said that the sacraments distinguish the World and the Church from each other.

there may be a society without the possibility of members; which is a contradiction. What is a society, but an organized collection of individuals? What is a Church, but an organized collection of Church members? To say, then, that there may be a Church without baptism, is to say that there may be an organized collection of Church members where there cannot possibly be a single Church member. Baptism, of course, enters into the very being of the Church. But baptism can be administered only by a clergyman lawfully ordained.*

The Church cannot exist without baptism; there can be no baptism without a ministry; of course there can be no Church without a ministry.

But, independently of this process of reasoning, it is the undoubted doctrine of the Presbyterian standards, and of Presbyterian authors, that a ministry, divinely commissioned, lies at the very foundation of the visible Church.

3. *An external commission is necessary to constitute a minister of Christ.*

It is not sufficient to justify a man in entering upon the sacerdotal office that he fancies himself to be internally called to the work. He must be outwardly set apart, ordained, or consecrated, by imposition of hands. What would be the consequence if persons, imagining themselves qualified for the ministration of holy things, were at liberty,

* "There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any but a *minister of the Word, lawfully ordained.*" Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxvii. sect. 4.

without further ceremony, to assume the clerical character? The Church, it must be immediately seen, could not exist under such circumstances. She would be overrun with clergymen totally unfit, both as to knowledge and as to character, for their sacred function. No society, indeed, can exist without the power of judging of the qualifications of its officers. The language of Scripture, on this subject, is, accordingly, very explicit. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."* Now, Aaron was visibly consecrated, or set apart to his office. So, therefore, must every Christian minister be set apart. Further—Even our blessed Saviour "glorified not himself to be made an High Priest."† He entered not upon his public ministration until he had received a regular external commission. Who, then, shall undertake to officiate in his Church without a similar commission? Of the internal or spiritual qualification of our blessed Saviour for the work of the ministry there could be no doubt. For what purpose, then, did he submit to an external ordination, but that he might set an example for the instruction and government of all succeeding ages? They, who undertake to act as clergymen upon the mere strength of a supposed internal call, not only violate the express command of Scripture, but make themselves wiser than the divine Head of the Church himself.‡

* Heb. v. 4.

† Heb. v. 5.

‡ No person, certainly, should enter upon the sacred office unless he believes himself to be drawn to it by the Holy Ghost. This is the ex-

On this subject the Presbyterian standards speak a very decided language. "There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord; neither of which may be dispensed by any but a minister of the Word, lawfully ordained."* "No man ought to take upon him the office of a minister of the Word without a lawful calling." "Ordination is always to be continued in the Church." "Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some public Church office." "Every minister of the Word is to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer, with fasting, by those preaching Presbyters to whom it doth belong."†

press doctrine of our venerable Church. All who apply for orders are required to declare that they consider themselves called by the Holy Spirit to the work of the ministry. But then it is not left to an individual to judge for himself. There is a tribunal which is to inquire into the fitness of candidates. When a person is considered by this tribunal as possessing the requisite qualifications, he is to be solemnly set apart by a regular ordination; the ordaining Bishop acting as the minister of Christ, and thus conveying the sacerdotal office from our blessed Saviour himself, the divine Head of the Church, and the source of all power in it. The necessity of an outward ordination arises from its being prescribed in Scripture; and the reason of the prescription must immediately present itself to any one who will recollect that, without suitable provision for the appointment of proper officers, no society, civil or ecclesiastical, could possibly subsist.

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxvii. sect. 4. Constitution of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, p. 154.

† The form of Presbyterian Church government agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster; examined and approved, anno 1645, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

In the Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, this language of the Westminster Divines, and of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, is adopted, word for word. Constitution and Standards, p. 497.

Such is the language of the Westminster Divines, and of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It is the true Presbyterian doctrine relative to outward ordination. We meet with it expressly and repeatedly in your Letters—"None are regularly invested with the ministerial character, or can with propriety be recognized in this character, but those who have been set apart to the office by persons lawfully clothed with the power of ordaining." "We suppose that ruling Elders and Deacons are not authorized to labour in the word and doctrine, or to administer either of the Christian sacraments."*

4. *Presbyterians admit no ordination but the Presbyterian to be either scriptural or valid.*

Nothing can be more explicit than your language upon this subject. "It is only so far as any succession flows through the line of Presbyters that it is either regular or valid. It is the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery that constitutes a scriptural ordination; and it is because Episcopal Bishops are Presbyters, and assisted in all ordinations by other Presbyters, that we consider their ordaining acts, on the principles of Scripture and primitive usage, as valid."†

Precisely similar is the language held by your friend Dr. M'Leod. "A person who is not ordained to office by a Presbytery, has no right to be received as a minister of Christ: his administration of ordinances is invalid: no divine blessing is

* Letters, p. 8, 9.

† Ibid. p. 347.

promised upon his labours: it is rebellion against the Head of the Church to support him in his pretensions: Christ has excluded him in his providence from admission through the ordinary door; and if he has no evidence of miraculous power to testify his extraordinary mission, he is an impostor." "It is improper to countenance the usurpations of prelacy, or the irregularities of independency; but since the Bishop, who *claims exclusively* the right of ordination, does, *in fact, relinquish it*, by associating other ministers with him in the imposition of hands; and seeing Independents also relinquish their claim of right of ordaining, each congregation its own pastor, by giving up the work into the hands of those who are ordained, the ordinances administered in the Episcopal and Independent Churches are held valid: the ministry is essentially Presbyterian, and upon this principle there is no necessity for re-ordaining or re-baptizing any who have had these ordinances in the communion of the Independent or Episcopal Churches."*

The claims set up in the Catechism of Dr. McLeod, and in your Letters, it will immediately be seen, are as exclusive as language can make them. It would be unreasonable to find fault with you, however, since you do nothing more than lay down the true Presbyterian doctrine, as set forth by the Westminster Divines, and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, "Ordination

* McLeod's Ecclesiastical Catechism, p. 29, 30, 31.

is the act of a Presbytery." "Preaching Presbyters, orderly associated, either in cities or neighbouring villages, are those to whom the imposition of hands do appertain, for those congregations within their bounds respectively."* In proof of these doctrines the First Epistle of Paul to Timothy is quoted, and thus Presbyterian ordination is placed on the ground of Scripture.

The Associate Reformed Church in North-America adopts the foregoing language of the Westminster Divines.† Still further—"Presbyterial Church government is the true and only form of government which the Lord Jesus Christ hath prescribed in his Word."‡ Now, ordination is one of the powers of government. It can be exercised, of course, only in the Presbyterian mode. Any other mode of exercising it is inconsistent with the ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Language of the same character is to be found in the standards of the religious society to which you belong. "It is absolutely necessary that the government of the Church be exercised under some certain and definite form. And we hold it to be expedient, and agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the

* Form of Presbyterian Church government agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster; examined and approved, anno 1645, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

† Constitution of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, p. 497, 498.

‡ Ibid. p. 475.

Church be governed by Congregational, Presbyterial, and Synodical assemblies.”*

The same standards admit the existence of but one order of gospel ministers. To this order they represent the power of ordination as confined. The power is exercised by a Presbytery. “The presiding Bishop shall, by prayer, and with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, *according to the apostolic example*, solemnly ordain him to the holy office of the gospel ministry.”†

Thus the Presbyterial form of Church government is placed on the ground of Scripture. Ordination is represented as the act of a Presbytery, and this is referred to the authority of apostolic example.

But I am dwelling unnecessarily on this part of the subject. The exclusive validity of Presbyterial ordination is the *fundamental* principle of the Presbyterial association.

Mark, then, the following simple train of propositions.

1. There is a visible society, called the Church, instituted by Christ and his apostles, of which all men are commanded to become members;

2. To the existence of this Church a divinely appointed ministry is essential;

3. There can be no ministry without an external ordination;

* Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, chap. vii. sect. 1.

† Ibid. chap. xiv. sect. 12.

4. And no ordination is valid unless Presbyterially performed.

Thus Presbyterial ordination is the basis on which the whole fabrick of the Church visible is made to rest.*

It is utterly impossible to set aside the foregoing plain statement of facts.

To say that there can be no Church without a ministry, and that there can be no ministry without Presbyterial ordination, is plainly to say that there can be no Church without Presbyterial ordination. The Westminster Divines, the General Assembly of Scotland, the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, the particular society to which you belong, unite in declaring the ministry to be essential to the Church, and Presbyterial ordination to be essential to the ministry. They all, then, make the very existence of the Church of Christ to depend on ordination by the hands of a Presbytery. You go to the full extent of this doctrine in the Letters which you have addressed to your Christian brethren; inveighing against the exclusive claims of your neighbours in the very breath with which you issue claims as exclusive as language has the power of expressing.

* I am aware that you admit Episcopal ordination to be valid. But you do not admit it to be valid as contradistinguished from Presbyterial; nay, you represent it as *substantially* Presbyterial, and rest its validity on that circumstance alone. Were it not for this, you would deem it necessary, as Dr. McLeod expressly tells us, to re-baptize Episcopal laymen, and to re-ordain Episcopal priests. But this subject will be fully considered in my next letter.

LETTER III.

EXTERNAL ORDER.

SIR,

LET us now endeavour to ascertain the degree of value which Presbyterian standards and Presbyterian authors attach to communion with the visible Church; thus depending on ordination by Presbyterian hands for its very existence. We shall then know precisely how far your society carries its pretensions, and the exact degree of importance which it gives to External Order.

The standards of Presbyterian societies expressly declare that there is NO COVENANTED POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION OUT OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

Take the following passage from the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland: "The sacraments, as well of the Old as of the New Testament, were instituted of God not only to make a VISIBLE difference betwixt his people and those that were without his LEAGUE, but also,"* &c.

League signifies agreement, or covenant. The sacraments of the Church, then, put a visible difference between those who are in league or cove-

* The confession of the faith and doctrine believed and professed by the Protestants of Scotland, exhibited to the estates of the same in Parliament; and ratified and established by act of Parliament, 1567, as the public and avowed Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland. Article xxi. of the Sacraments.

nant with God, and those who are not in league or covenant with him.

We will now attend to the language of the Confession of Faith set forth by the Westminster Divines.

“ The visible Church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”*

It would be difficult to attach greater importance to the visible Church than is implied in the above passage. There is no ordinary possibility of salvation out of this Church. If persons not belonging to such Church be saved, it must be in some extraordinary way, of which we know nothing. Communion with the visible Church, as far as we see or know, is the only method in which salvation is to be attained. Such is the express language which you yourself use in commenting on this very passage.† Now, I humbly conceive that the ordinary way of salvation is the *covenanted* way. You surely will not assert that the covenanted plan of salvation is a plan which is extraordinary and unknown to us; while there is some other plan, different from the covenanted, that is the ordinary plan of salvation. It is clear, then, that your Confession of Faith confines all covenanted title to salvation to the members of the visible Church.

Bear with me, however, a few moments longer.

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2. Constitution of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, p. 145, 146.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

“A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ *in his Church*, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are WITHIN THE COVENANT OF GRACE, the benefits of his mediation; and to DISTINGUISH THEM FROM THOSE THAT ARE WITHOUT.”

“Baptism is not to be administered to any that are OUT OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH, AND SO STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANT OF PROMISE, until they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him.”*

* Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Larger Catechism, questions 162 and 166. Constitution of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, p. 372, 373, 375.

Mark this well! We are “out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, until we profess our faith in Christ.” Then it is possible to have faith, and yet be without a covenanted title to salvation; for we are first supposed to profess our faith in Christ; and, upon the strength of this profession, are placed within the covenant by the ordinance of baptism. Faith, therefore, does not, of itself, put us within the covenant, but merely renders us fit subjects of admission.

Let us now attend to the language which you employ on this subject.

You represent it as the universal doctrine of Calvinistic Presbyterians, that all who have sincere faith in Christ are in covenant with God, whether members of the visible Church or not; in short, to use your own pointed phraseology, even supposing them never to have seen a Church officer in their lives.†

Pray, Sir, were the Westminster Divines Calvinistic Presbyterians? They hold, as we have seen, a very different language; telling us, in so many words, that all who are out of the visible Church are strangers to the covenant of grace, and providing that persons shall first have faith in Christ, and profess that faith; after which they are to be admitted within the covenant by the holy ordinance of baptism. The Westminster Catechism is the catechism of your own religious society; which society, I presume, you will, without hesitation, acknowledge to be Calvinistic.

In the chapter of your Confession which treats of saving faith, it is not said that faith places a man within the pale of the covenant of grace.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 58, 59, 60.

The position, that the standards of Presbyterian societies confine all covenanted possibility of sal-

If it were so said, the only consequence would be, that your religious standards would be inconsistent. The passages, from the catechism, which I have quoted, are as precise as language can make them. Produce opposite passages equally precise, and it will certainly be impossible to tell what your religious standards mean. But such passages you cannot produce. Any expressions that may ascribe great importance to faith, representing it as uniting the soul to Christ, and giving an interest in his favour, must be so construed as to be made consistent with the other parts of your religious articles, which speak a language, relative to the visible Church, so express as to admit of no qualification whatever. You will recollect, also, that your society acknowledges no faith to be true and saving unless it contain within itself a principle of obedience. It must be supposed, therefore, to lead men to unite themselves with that visible society where God has deposited his covenant; and, by receiving the seals of such covenant, to acquire a legitimate title to its promises.

In page 62 of the Continuation of your Letters, you represent sincere piety as giving to all its possessors a covenanted title to heaven; and this you declare to be the universally received Calvinistic opinion. Now, Sir, was there ever a pious heathen? To answer this question in the negative, is to consign the heathen world to indiscriminate perdition; for, surely, without piety, no man can see God.

Piety, you say, gives a covenanted title to heaven as a matter of course.* As then the heathens, according to you,† are without such covenanted title, it follows, that heathen piety is a thing impossible; and heathen piety being impossible, heathen salvation must be equally so. If, to escape from this monstrous doctrine, you admit that there may be piety among the heathen, you will be directly at war with yourself; for you represent the heathen as destitute of all covenanted title to salvation; whereas, to have sincere piety, and to have a covenanted title to salvation, you make to be precisely the same thing.

Sincere piety gives the Christian a covenanted title to heaven—Since piety gives the heathen a covenanted title to heaven—Then the Christian and the heathen, as to covenanted title to heaven, are precisely on a footing. The question of such title has nothing to do with signs and

* “The *sincere piety*, and, of course, the *covenant title to heaven*.” Continuation of Letters, p. 62.

† “On the same principles as to the heathen; that is, not in virtue of any *covenant engagement*, or explicit promise, but on the footing of general unpledged mercy.” Ibid. p. 37.

vation within the pale of the visible Church, is thus completely established; the passages cited

seals. Piety is its sole criterion. This is one alternative. If you do not like this, take the other. The heathen have no covenanted title to heaven; which, by the way, is your express doctrine.* Then there can be no such thing as sincere piety in the heathen world; and, of course, the heathen world must indiscriminately perish.

On one side of the dilemma lies the total destruction of the visible Church, and of the covenant of grace as a solemn transaction, distinguished by appropriate seals; on the other lies the terrific sentence—"none can be saved who have never heard of Christ, however diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."†

Again—Can any thing be more absurd than to represent piety as placing a man, *of itself*, within the covenant of grace? The covenant of grace is a solemn transaction, distinguished by characteristic signs and seals. To be within these signs and seals, is to be within the covenant; to be without them, is to be without the covenant. Was any person within the Abrahamic dispensation of the covenant without circumcision? Surely not. "This is my covenant—Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And the uncircumcised man child shall be cut off from his people."‡ To be circumcised was to be put within the Abrahamic dispensation of the covenant of grace. Baptism having succeeded circumcision as the visible seal of the covenant of grace, it is by baptism that we are placed within the pale of the Gospel dispensation of that covenant. On all this subject, your religious standards hold the exact language which I have just been using. What, then, becomes of your assertion, that every person of sincere piety is, simply by virtue of his piety, within the pale of the covenant of grace. It is as inconsistent with your religious standards as one thing can be with another; and it is not more inconsistent with your religious standards than with common sense.

You remark, that "the seals of the covenant do not form the covenant itself; the seal on a bond not being itself the contract, but only the evidence of it."|| The true question is, whether a person can be said to be within the covenant until he is within its seals. The very purpose of seals is to discriminate a covenant transaction from that which is not a covenant transaction; to determine who are within the

* Continuation of Letters, p. 37.

† Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Larger Catechism, question 60.

‡ Genesis xvii. 10, 14.

|| Continuation of Letters, p. 59.

being of so very marked a character as to leave no room for evasion.

covenant, and who are not. If this be not the purpose of seals, what is their purpose? And if persons may be completely within a covenant, independently of the appropriate seals of that covenant, what end are seals to answer?

“The seal on a bond is not itself the contract, but only the evidence of it” True—But what is it that converts an unmeaning piece of writing into a covenant binding upon the parties? It is the signing and sealing. The signing and sealing are essential to the very existence of the covenant. Until signed and sealed, the paper has no obligatory force.

The covenant you represent as a mere act of the mind. But publication is essential to the very idea of a covenant. It is an abuse of language to talk of a covenant that is confined to the mind of the party. If this language is ever used, it can only be in the way of figurative allusion. Covenant, it is true, supposes an act of the mind: such act is one essential part; but of itself it can never amount to a covenant. And although the covenanting transaction, with its signs and seals, is not the act of the mind, *abstractedly considered*; yet it is the act of the mind *embodied*, and *rendered visible*. Nothing, indeed, but an assent of the mind, made known by the appropriate solemnities of publication, is ever entitled to the name of a covenant.

Here, Sir, lies the source of all the error into which you run on this subject. Faith you make every thing. The moment a man has faith, he is ascertained to be of the elect; and once an elect person, always an elect person, is the Calvinistic rule. Well, if we are within the decree of election, we must have the highest title to heaven that God can possibly bestow. Thus the absurd doctrine of unconditional election and irresistible grace leads the Calvinist to talk in a most contradictory manner; undervaluing all visible institutions, and providing some *secret* method of entering into covenant with God.

The only way, Sir, in which you can be reconciled, on this point, with your standards, is by supposing it to be your opinion that Church membership is essential to faith; in other words, that a man cannot have faith without arriving at it through the gate of external order. You say that faith gives a covenanted title to salvation—Your standards say that none but the members of the Church have such covenanted title. Unless, therefore, you suppose there can be no faith without Church membership, you contradict your religious articles. But this doctrine would involve you in another difficulty; for, to make faith necessarily dependent on outward institutions, is to represent those insti-

Let me now remind you of the language which is held by Presbyterian authors on this subject.

My first quotation shall be from the *Christian's Magazine*. Speaking of the visible Church, Dr. Mason says, "all the ordinances are given to it—all the promises are made to it."*

The next authority to which I would refer you is that of the late learned President of the college of New-Jersey. In his *Discourse on Baptism*, Dr. Smith constantly represents the visible Church as that household of God to which is committed the covenant of grace, with all its promises and blessings.† Take a single passage—"Between the baptized and unbaptized infant, dying in infancy, there is this difference, that, to the one, the inheritance of eternal life is conveyed by *covenant* from God, under his appointed seal; the other is left to his free, indeed, but uncovenanted mercy.‡"

Let me now call your attention to the language repeatedly used in your own Letters.

The visible Church is "that household of God to which his gracious promises and his life-giving spirit are vouchsafed."§ Here, Sir, you represent the promises of the Gospel as confined to the visible Church. Such is, unquestionably, the fair

tutions as constituting the completion of the Christian character. It is, too, to run directly against the cardinal principles of Calvinism. Besides, your religious articles suppose a man to have faith before he is admitted into the Church; for they make such faith the very ground of his admission.

* Vol. i. p. 156.

† See *Discourse on Baptism* throughout.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 34

§ Letters, p. 342.

construction; especially as the conclusion which you draw, from the fact of the gracious promises of God and his life-giving spirit being vouchsafed to the Church, is, that more virtue and holiness will ever be found within than without her pale. If the promises of the Gospel are not particularly given to the visible Church, your mode of expression is very strange, and your reasoning altogether unintelligible.

Again—You represent the existence of unaffected piety out of the visible Church as a difficulty of no easy solution;* and you expressly declare, that if mercy is extended to any who are not members of that Church, it must be in some extraordinary and unknown way.† Now, the covenanted way is surely the ordinary way in which God dispenses mercy. To say, then, that if mercy is extended to persons out of the visible Church, it must be in some extraordinary mode, is to say that none but the members of that Church have a covenanted title to salvation.

Let this subject be presented in another point of view.

It is the express doctrine of Presbyterial authors, and of Presbyterial standards, that remission of sin is to be obtained only by communion with the visible Church.

Mark the strong language of Calvin: “Forgiveness of sins is a benefit so proper to the Church,

* Letters, p. 344.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

that we cannot otherwise enjoy it, but if we abide in the communion thereof. It is distributed unto us by the ministers and pastors, either by preaching the Gospel, or by ministering of the sacraments. Wherefore let every one of us think this to be his duty, no where else to seek forgiveness of sins, than where the Lord hath left it.”*

The Confession of Faith of the English congregation at Geneva, treating of the visible Church, has these words—“Wherein standeth only remission of sin.”† This confession, let it be recollected, was received and approved by the Church of Scotland.

We will now refer to the language of your own Confession of Faith, as drawn up by the Westminster Divines. “The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”‡

The language used by Presbyterian societies, in excommunicating unworthy members, and in re-

* Calvin's Institutes, book iv. chap. i. sect. 22.

† The Confession of Faith used in the English congregation at Geneva; received and approved by the Church of Scotland, article iv.

‡ Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. xxx. sect. 1, 2

storing them upon repentance, shows, in a very striking manner, the value which they attach to the communion of the visible Church. “Excommunication is the judicial excision of an offender from the visible Church of Christ, and a pronouncing him to belong to the kingdom of Satan.”*

The same doctrine is laid down in the standards of the religious society to which you belong.†

The form of excommunication used by the Associate Reformed Church in North-America concludes with the following expressions—“Therefore we did, and hereby do, in the name, and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, actually excommunicate the said A. B. casting him out of the communion of the Church of Christ, and delivering him unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh; that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”‡

The form of restoration in use in the religious society to which you belong, is in these words—“I do receive you into the communion of the Church, that you may be a *partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.*”§

It is, then, the Presbyterial doctrine that pardon is to be obtained only in the visible Church;|| that

* Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, p. 525.

† Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxx. sect. 3. Directory for Worship, chap. x.

‡ Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America, p. 580.

§ Directory for Worship, chap. x. sect. 8.

|| This is laid down generally. It is not meant to say that pardon and salvation are represented by Presbyterians as impossible out of the vi-

the officers of that Church have power to remit and retain sins, to open and shut the kingdom of heaven; and that the excommunication of an offender is a formal delivery of him to Satan.

We see now the precise degree of importance which is attached by your society to Presbyterian ordination. As the visible Church is made to rest upon Presbyterian ordination, the value which is given to the one, must, of course, be given to the other. Now it is only in the visible Church, according to the standards of your society, that remission of sin can be obtained, or that there is any covenanted title to salvation. Pardon and salvation, then, are secured by covenant to such societies as are founded on Presbyterian ordination, and to such only.

In perfect consistency with these principles, Dr. M'Leod expresses himself in the following very pointed language: "A person who is not ordained to office by a Presbytery, has no right to be received as a minister of Christ: His administration of ordinances is invalid: No divine blessing is promised upon his labours: It is rebellion against the Head of the Church to support him in his pretensions: Christ has excluded him in his providence from admission through the ordinary door; and if he has no evidence of miraculous power to

sible Church, but merely that they state it as the general rule of the divine economy, that pardon is dispensed, and salvation bestowed only through the medium of that Church. This is also the Episcopal doctrine. It is the obvious doctrine of Scripture. Greater stress no Protestant has ever laid upon communion with the visible Church than is laid upon it in the standards of Presbyterian societies.

testify his extraordinary mission, he is an impostor."*

Is it possible, Sir, to imagine claims more exclusive than those which are set up by Presbyterial authors, and by the standards of Presbyterial associations?

You tell us, it is true, that wherever certain internal qualifications are to be found, there the visible Church is to be found. But this is absurd. A VISIBLE CHURCH DISTINGUISHED BY INVISIBLE MARKS! If internal qualifications will constitute a Church, the Church may exist without either ministry or ordinances. The standards of your society are perfectly correct on this subject. They make the Church a visible society: they represent the ministry and ordinances as essential to its existence. In talking of a Church made up of internal qualifications, you are directly at war with Scripture, with the standards of your society, and with common sense.

But you have a way of presenting this part of the subject which it is necessary particularly to consider. You make no scruple in admitting the validity of Episcopal ordination; and this you never fail to plead in proof of your great liberality. But let us place the subject in its true point of light. You admit the validity of our mode of ordination. But upon what ground do you admit it? Simply on the ground that it is IN FACT PRESBYTERIAL. As far as Presbyterianism extends, valid

* Ecclesiastical Catechism, p. 29, 30.

ordination extends: the moment Presbyterianism ceases, valid ordination ceases. Thus you say expressly—"It is only so far as any succession flows through the line of *Presbyters*, that it is either regular or valid. It is the *laying on of the hands of the Presbytery* that constitutes a scriptural ordination; and it is because Episcopal Bishops are Presbyters, and assisted in all ordinations by other Presbyters, that we consider their ordaining acts, on the principles of Scripture and primitive usage, as valid."*

No clerical succession is regular except that which flows through the line of Presbyters. It is only by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery that a scriptural ordination can be performed. Ordination in the Episcopal Church is valid only on the ground that it is performed by a Presbyter, with the assistance of his fellow Presbyters. And it is in this view of the subject alone that you regard ordinances Episcopally administered as of any significance. "It is improper to countenance the usurpations of prelacy, or the irregularities of independency; but as the ministry is essentially Presbyterian, upon this principle there is no necessity for re-ordaining or re-baptizing any who have had these ordinances in the communion of the Independent or Episcopal churches."†

This, Sir, is not less your doctrine than the doctrine of Dr. M'Leod; indeed it is, and ever has been the fundamental principle of the Presby-

* Letters, p. 347.

† Ecclesiastical Catechism, p. 31.

terial association. The Westminster Divines lay it down in the most express terms; and in that part of the standards of your society which prescribes the mode of ordination, the ground is unequivocally taken of *apostolic example*.* In fact, so rigidly is the principle of ordination by a Presbytery insisted upon among you, that you will not admit the validity of an ordination performed by a *single* clergyman, on any other ground than that which may be furnished by a case of necessity. For this, too, no passage from your standards can be adduced. You merely throw out the idea as one, which, you suppose, if the case should occur, would receive the sanction of your brethren.†

* Form of Government, chap. xiv. sect. 12.

† “Although Presbyterians, wishing to conform as perfectly as possible to scriptural example, require a plurality of ministers to be present, and to lay on their hands in ordination; yet *I have no reason to suppose* that any Presbyterian minister or church would consider an ordination performed, *in a case of necessity*, by a single Presbyter, as null and void.”‡

All this is extremely guarded. We may venture, therefore, to conclude that no case has ever occurred in which your society has sanctioned, either expressly or impliedly, the principle that ordination may be performed by a single Presbyter. The language of Presbyterian standards on this point is free from all ambiguity. “The power of ordination is in a Presbytery.” “The act of ordination is the act of a Presbytery.” Now a Presbytery consists of a number of members. Ordination, of course, cannot be performed by a single clergyman. Indeed, in placing the thing upon the ground of necessity, you plainly mark it as a departure from all the laws of Scripture, and of your religious society. Nor do you venture to say that the irregularity in question would be cured even by the necessity of the case; you have only no reason to think otherwise. This is very cautious indeed. In a word, it is the *fundamental* doctrine of Presbyterianism, that ordination can be validly performed only by a plurality of Presbyters—a doc-

‡ Continuation of Letters, p. 89.

“ If any preceding or subsequent passage in our public standards had asserted, or even intimated, that no minister is lawfully ordained but one who has been set apart *exactly in our mode*, there would be some pretext for this cavil.”*

It might be difficult to ascertain the precise idea which you mean to convey in this passage. The words, “ *exactly in our mode*,” are carefully marked in italics. Well, Sir, if you do not represent it as essential to the validity of ordination that it be performed *exactly* in the Presbyterian mode, you at least require that it be performed *substantially* in that mode. Unless, then, ordination be substantially Presbyterian, it is good for nothing. If a religious society happen to possess this mode of ordination, it may be admitted to be a Church;

trine, as I shall presently show, which leaves not, when pursued to its legitimate consequences, a single Christian Church upon the face of the earth.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

“ EXACTLY *in our mode*.” Why did you not leave out the word “ EXACTLY ?” There may be very many circumstances in an ordination no way essential to its validity. These non-essentials you have here in view; but your people may be led to suppose that some very generous idea is concealed under the words. Now, Sir, if I were disposed to imitate you on this occasion, I would say that we do not hold it to be necessary to the validity of ordination that it be performed EXACTLY *in our mode*—It is quite sufficient that the mode be *substantially* Episcopal.

Will you say that the standards of your society neither assert nor intimate that a clergyman is not lawfully ordained unless set apart by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery? How unworthy, then, of a candid disputant, to attempt to evade the true state of the fact, by having recourse to a form of expression, to which it is difficult for your readers to tell what precise idea you intend should be annexed!

if not, its pretended clergymen are impostors, and they who attend upon their ministrations are guilty of rebellion against God. True—Episcopal ordination is valid; but it is Presbyterianism that makes it so. There is a great deal of corruption about it; but it has, nevertheless, a Presbyterian tincture; just enough of that tincture to preserve it from absolute putridity. Let it be remembered, too, that in admitting the validity of our mode of ordination, you act under the impulse of an imperious principle of necessity. You are seceders from the Episcopal Church. The founders of your society were ordained by Bishops. If, then, Episcopal ordination be a nullity, you have no ministers, and, of course, no ordinances. In fact, you are obliged to take the validity of our ordination for granted; it being the foundation on which your whole fabrick rests. Episcopacy has always been branded by your society as antichristian. The Westminster Divines, and the General Assembly of Scotland, denounced it as a popish and wicked hierarchy. By the Associate Reformed Church in this country the epithets *unscriptural* and *antichristian*, are, without ceremony, applied to it. You fail not to express yourself very freely on the subject; charging our venerable Church with having departed widely from the primitive model; and representing the impurity of her ministry as the corrupt result of ecclesiastical intrigue and ambition. But still you are all under the hard necessity of recognizing the validity of Episcopal ordination; having no other method of saving your-

selves from destruction. And for the pure purpose of self preservation you admit us to be a Church; a very corrupt one, truly, but still a Church. We, unfortunately, are not able to return the compliment. Well—you represent us as a corrupt Church; and we hold you to be schismatics; utterly denying that you have either ministry or ordinances.

So far from admitting Episcopal ordination, *as contradistinguished from Presbyterial*, to be valid, you brand it as an act of rebellion against God. Now, the standards of our Church regard the Bishop as a superior officer, who alone conveys the ministerial authority; the Presbyters being associated with him merely to guard the exercise of the power, and on no other ground than that of ecclesiastical usage. It is the express doctrine of our Church that the Bishop ordains by virtue of his Apostolic character. All this you exclaim against as corrupt and monstrous. Thus, viewed with a Presbyterial eye, our clergymen are ministers of Christ; viewed with an Episcopal eye, they are presumptuous intruders into the vineyard of the Lord. By this mode of double construction, you save yourselves from all harm; while you consign us over as rebels and apostates.

Do you bring such conduct, Sir, in proof of the very low nature of your pretensions?

I appeal to every man of candour whether claims more exclusive could possibly be set up.

Presbyterianism is the source from which all valid administration of divine ordinances is derived. Where only a partial departure from the Pres-

byterial mode of ordination has taken place, the clerical office is not absolutely lost; it not being necessary that such mode be *exactly* followed. If, under such circumstances, the ordination be valid, it derives its validity from being *substantially* Presbyterian. Where the departure from Presbyterianism is *substantial*, the clerical office is lost; the Church is lost; and there is nothing to rely upon but uncovenanted mercy.

But I shall now proceed to show, that, in the business of unchurching, you go infinitely beyond those against whom you direct so much virulent declamation.

1. You unchurch the Quakers.

The ministry and ordinances you make essential; and the Quakers have neither ministry nor ordinances. You must either say, then, that the Quaker association is not entitled to the name of Church, or you must admit that the Church may exist without either ministry or ordinances; which will be directly to contradict the Presbyterian standards, and to make the Christian Church, moreover, an invisible society.

When pressed with the question, whether you acknowledge the Quakers to be a Church, you display a great want of manly candour; in fact, you seem afraid of making any reply. The question, you tell us, is not a practical one;* seeing the Quakers do not pretend to have either ministry

* Continuation of Letters, p. 56.

or sacraments. But they claim to be a true Church of Christ; they claim to be in a state of covenant with God. Will you admit them to be a true visible Church? You have not ventured to say so;* uncan- didly evading the question by a mere play upon words. Besides, your religious articles, and your distinguished writers, make a ministry so essential, that the Church cannot possibly exist without it. Will you admit the Quakers to be in a state of covenant? The standards of your society confine all covenanted title to salvation to the visible Church. "*Out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise.*" Such also is the current language of Presbyterial authors.

Upon what principle, then, do you inveigh against us for refusing to you what you make no scruple of refusing to the Quakers? Cease to complain of our want of liberality, while you treat others precisely as we treat you.†

* Continuation of Letters, p. 56.

† Very crude opinions are entertained by many on the hackneyed subject of liberality; the criterion of which is made to consist in lowering the standard both of doctrine and order as much as possible; in thinking well of all kinds of religious opinions and ceremonies. But if we have a divine system for our government, it is worse than absurd to let a pretended liberality lead us in any way to surrender its claims. True liberality of mind will show itself in maintaining our opinions with modesty, and in a perfect willingness that Christians of other denominations should possess the same freedom of thought and speech with ourselves. It will show itself in charitable allowance for the errors of our fellow men; in supposing that error may be often combined with sincere piety. But I am obliged to go over the points discussed in this letter, in order to prove the injustice and inconsistency of your treatment of Episcopalians, even upon the ground of your own opinions and principles.

2. You excommunicate the whole Greek Church, containing more members than the Protestant world united.

No ordination is admitted by your religious society to be valid unless performed by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. It is not sufficient that a single clergyman impose hands. The power, according to the Westminster Divines, is in a Presbytery; and you expressly tell us that ordination by a single clergyman could be recognized as valid only in a case of necessity.* Now, ordination, in the Greek Church, has ever been performed by the Bishop alone; and as necessity cannot possibly be pleaded for this, it follows, that ordination, as practised in the Greek Church, is unscriptural and void. Thus, ordination being essential to the ministry, and ordination, as practised in the Greek Church, being entirely unauthorized, it follows, that that Church has no ministry. But the ministry, according to the Presbyterian doctrine, enters into the very being of the Church. Thus, that large body of Christians, known by the name of the Greek Church, is placed, by you, in a state of complete excommunication.

3. The Deacons of our Church are ordained by the Bishop alone. Of course they have no authority to act in the name of Christ. Ordinances administered by them are invalid; the Divine blessing not being promised upon their labours. In

* Continuation of Letters, p. 89.

short, Episcopal Deacons are impostors, and all who wait upon their ministrations are guilty of rebellion against God.*

4. The practice of Presbyters imposing hands with the Bishop in ordination was not introduced into the Latin Church until the fourth century. We can point out the very Council by which the canon, enjoining such practice, was passed.† Your doctrine, then, that ordination can be performed only by a Presbytery, completely destroys the Latin not less than the Greek Church; thus unchurching, in fact, the whole Christian world. If the ordinations, performed in the Latin Church, in the fourth century, were invalid, all subsequent ordinations, being grounded on them, must, of course, be invalid also. Thus, Sir, in your rigid adherence to Presbyterian ordination, you have not left a Christian Church upon the face of the earth.‡

But, perhaps, you will deny the fact, that ordination in the Western Church was performed, until the fourth century, by the Bishop alone. The fact is completely proved by the most authentic evidence. But lay it out of the question—still, you represent our Deacons, and the Deacons of

* M'Leod's Ecclesiastical Catechism, p. 29, 30.

† Fourth Council of Carthage.

‡ There are, it is true, some Christian societies which do not fall under the head either of the Latin or of the Greek Church. I am not able to ascertain, at present, whether the statement, made above, relative to the practice of ordination in the Greek Church, and in the Latin until the Fourth Council of Carthage, applies to them also. The strong probability, however, certainly is, that it does.

the Romish Church, as destitute of all clerical power; and you completely unchurch the Quakers, and the whole Greek Church.

Mark, now, Sir, the very rigid character of the principle which lies at the foundation of your religious society! Sooner than yield the point that a *plurality* of clergymen is necessary to constitute a scriptural ordination, you unchurch a denomination comprehending more members than all the Christian societies in Europe, Episcopal and non-Episcopal, put together.

It is in vain to attempt to evade this plain statement of facts. Your society expressly says that there can be no Church without a ministry, and that there can be no ministry without Presbyterian ordination; it in no place recognizes the validity of ordination by a single clergyman; and you tell us that such ordination would not be received as valid, unless the ground of necessity could be fairly taken. In the Greek Church, ordination is always performed by a single clergyman; and no plea of necessity can possibly be set up. It follows, irresistibly, that the Greek Christians have no ministry, and, of course, cannot be considered as in a Church state.

In the business of unchurching, then, you go very far beyond your opponents. It is but a small portion of the Christian world that is destitute of Episcopal ordination; in fact, that mode of ordination prevailed universally until the time of the reformation; and Presbyterians now constitute the inferior number even among Protestants.

LETTER IV.

EXTERNAL ORDER.

SIR,

LET us now endeavour to ascertain how far Episcopalians and Presbyterians agree, and how far they differ, on the subject of the visible Church.

1. They agree that our Lord and his Apostles instituted a visible Church, of which they commanded all men to become members; and that the promises of the Gospel are exclusively made to this Church; in other words, that out of this Church there is no covenanted title to salvation.*

2. They agree that there is a divinely instituted ministry in the visible Church, which is essential to its existence.

3. They agree that no person can be considered as invested with the clerical character until regularly set apart by an outward and visible ordination.

Now, Sir, at what conclusion have we arrived?

* We are very far from saying that there is no possibility of salvation out of the visible Church. God forbid! It is, indeed, in the visible Church alone that God has deposited his covenant; such as fail to enter that Church, therefore, cannot be considered as in a *covenanted* state. Still they are in the hands of a merciful Being, who makes due allowance for the errors of his frail creatures; pardoning and receiving all who sincerely desire and endeavour to know and to do his will. But this point will be fully considered in a future letter.

That outward ordination is essential to the existence of the Church, and, of course, to all covenanted title to mercy. This conclusion it is utterly impossible to evade. Outward ordination, then, lies at the foundation equally of the Episcopal and of the Presbyterian creed; in each of these creeds it is made the only REGULAR AND APPOINTED CHANNEL through which remission of sin and eternal life are to be obtained. Hence for the one society to inveigh against the stress laid by the other upon communion with the visible Church must ever be the extreme of inconsistency.

In what, then, do Episcopalians and Presbyterians differ on the subject in question?

They differ, simply, as to the tribunal in which the power of ordination is lodged. Episcopalians maintain that the great Head of the Church instituted a ministry consisting of distinct and subordinate orders; giving to the highest order the exclusive power of ordaining. They, of course, go on to the conclusion, that ordination is valid only when performed by the highest order of the ministry; such ordination alone possessing the sanction of Divine authority. Presbyterians maintain that the great Head of the Church instituted a ministry upon the footing of equality; rendering ordination the work of a Presbytery. They, of course, go on to the conclusion, that ordination performed by a Presbytery is alone valid; such ordination alone being stamped with the authority of God. In short—Episcopalians say, that Episcopal ordination is the divinely instituted mode;

—Presbyterians say, that Presbyterianial ordination is that mode.

It is true, Presbyterians are obliged to admit the Episcopal Church to be a real Church of Christ; but they take care to protest against what they call her corruptions, and to admit her to be a real Church only in consideration of what they call her Presbyterianial features. The very thing, which, in her own view, gives her the character of a Church, they represent as an invention of the great adversary. So much virtue, however, do they suppose to reside in Presbyterianism, that wherever they regard it as only *substantially* existing, they consider all impurities and corruptions as cured; and, without hesitation, acknowledge the character of Church to be possessed. But the Greek Christians they excommunicate at once; and for no earthly reason, saving that they ordain by the imposition of hands of a SINGLE CLERGYMAN, instead of ordaining by the imposition of hands of a PRESBYTERY.

The two societies, then, lay equal stress upon the rite of outward ordination; differing only as to the tribunal by which it is to be performed. Each society insists upon its own mode of ordination as of exclusive validity. So far Episcopalians and Presbyterians would seem to attach precisely equal value to what may be called matters of External Order.

But I proceed to state some facts, at which the reader, if the subject be new to him, will, probably, be not a little surprised.

The error of carrying points of External Order too far has ever been a sectarian error. It is an unquestionable fact, that Presbyterians, on this subject, go much beyond their Episcopal brethren. Thus, not content with representing their own particular method of ordination as essential to the existence of the Church, and to all covenanted title to salvation, they openly tell us, that *the whole frame of their ecclesiastical government is set forth in Scripture, and is of DIVINE AND UNALTERABLE OBLIGATION.*

“It is lawful and agreeable to the word of God, that the Church be governed by several sorts of assemblies, which are composed of pastors and other elders, and are CONGREGATIONAL, CLASSICAL, and SYNODICAL. The government of the Church, by these several sorts of assemblies, in a just subordination, is called PRESBYTERIAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT; and is the *true and only form of government* which the Lord Jesus Christ hath prescribed in his word.”* “The Synod do solemnly receive the form of Presbyterial Church government, *prepared by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster*, as being in substance *the only form of government* which the Lord Jesus hath prescribed to his Church.”†

But let the Westminster Divines speak for themselves. “Christ hath instituted a government, and governors ecclesiastical in the Church.” “It is lawful and agreeable to the word of God that the

* Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church, in North-America, p. 474, 5.

† Ibid. p. 472.

Church be governed by several sorts of assemblies, which are Congregational, Classical, and Synodical." "The Scripture doth hold out a Presbytery in a Church—A Presbytery consisteth of ministers of the word, &c." "The Scripture doth hold out another sort of assemblies for the government of the Church, which we call Synodical."*

Thus, then, the whole frame of Presbyterial Church government, consisting of Congregational, Classical, and Synodical assemblies, in just subordination to each other, is declared to be drawn out in Scripture, and so placed upon the ground of divine institution. The society to which you belong, it is well known, have taken the Westminster Divines as their guides, with respect both to doctrine, and government; in fact, your Confession of Faith, and your Articles of Government, you expressly tell us, were drawn up by those Divines. Accordingly, upon recurring to your standards, I find the following unequivocal declaration: "We hold it to be expedient, agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the Church be governed by Congregational, Presbyterial, and Synodical assemblies."†

Let me refer you, for a moment, to your own letters. "The Presbyterial form of Church government is, in the New Testament, distinctly

* The form of Presbyterial Church government agreed upon by the assembly of divines at Westminster, with commissioners from the Church of Scotland.

† Form of Government, chap. vii. sect. 1.

pourtrayed." "This is the truly primitive and apostolic form."* "Christians, in all ages, are bound to make the apostolic order of the Church, with respect to the ministry, *as well as other points*, the model, as far as possible, of all their ecclesiastical arrangements."†

It is, then, the Presbyterian doctrine, that the Lord Jesus hath prescribed a particular form of government to his Church; that this form consists of Congregational, Classical, and Synodical assemblies, in a just subordination; that it is binding in all places, and throughout all time.

In short, Presbyterian government is prescribed by a divine law; habitual disobedience to any of the divine laws will exclude from the kingdom of Heaven:‡—it follows, that habitual disobedience to Presbyterian government will exclude from that kingdom. Thus the whole Episcopal Church, throughout the world, whether Protestant, Greek, or Papal; all classes of dissenters, Congregationalists, Independents, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers; in a word, all societies, not Presbyterially constituted, unless they can plead unavoidable ignorance, or involuntary error in their excuse, are consigned to perdition.

* Letters, p. 70.

† Ibid. p. 8.

‡ This is the express language of the Christian's Magazine; indeed, it must be the language of all who believe that there is a God, and that he has prescribed laws for the government of his creatures. A merciful God will, doubtless, make allowance for error. Still, it is true, as a *general rule*, that habitual disobedience to any of the divine laws will exclude from the kingdom of Heaven. Such is the declaration of Scripture—"whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James ii, 10.

How will you escape from this conclusion?— You expressly say, that Presbyterian government is prescribed by a divine law—You expressly say, that habitual disobedience to any of the divine laws will exclude from the kingdom of Heaven. It is very true, you do not make conformity to Presbyterian government so rigid a condition, that God will pardon none who may fail, through ignorance or error, to perform it. The amount of your doctrine, then, is, that none can be saved who depart from Presbyterian Church government, unless they can plead excusable ignorance or error for their departure. I do not blame you for this conclusion; but, surely, you should cease to inveigh against the claims of the advocates of Episcopacy. They have never made communion with the true visible Church more than a *general condition* of salvation. They have never failed to express their belief that God will pardon those, who, through excusable error, depart from his positive institutions. They insist no more upon conformity to Episcopal ordination than you insist upon conformity to Presbyterian ordination; nay, they lay, substantially, no more stress upon conformity to Episcopal ordination than you lay upon conformity to the whole frame of your ecclesiastical government. Ought you not, then, to apologize for the opprobrious language which you have permitted yourself to apply to your opponents in this controversy?

“The ideas of Episcopalians, on the subject of ecclesiastical government, are very different

from those of their Presbyterian brethren. They contend, simply, that the ministry is of divine institution; and that this ministry is in distinct grades, with appropriate powers. They deny that there is a form of government for the Church sketched out in all its parts in Scripture. The ministry, in distinct grades, with appropriate powers, as instituted by Christ and his Apostles, being preserved inviolate, they hold that man is left at liberty to exercise a sound discretion as to the particular mode of managing ecclesiastical affairs, and of governing the Church; or, in other words, that there is no precise model for governing the Church laid down in Scripture, from which it is unlawful to depart.”*

“ The single thing contended for, is, that there are, by divine institution, three distinct grades of ministers, with appropriate authorities. As to the rites and ceremonies of public worship, the forms of discipline, and the particular organization of that authority by which canons are passed for the government of the Church, the Scriptures prescribe no model; leaving the matter to the exercise of human discretion. Even the laity may be, and, in this country, are associated in the management of ecclesiastical affairs; and, in England, there are various officers for the same purpose; which the Scriptures no where either prohibit or enjoin. But none of these can touch the sacerdotal authorities of preaching, of baptizing,

* How's Letters to Miller, p. 23.

of administering the eucharist, of confirming, of ordaining; such authorities being reserved to an order of men expressly set apart as ministers of Christ; empowered to act as his ambassadors, to sign and seal in his name. A divine commission is necessary to qualify them for their work; it being no other than that of taking men into covenant with God, by administering to them the appointed seals. The ministry cannot be changed. Why? Because it is a divine institution; being established as the mean of visible intercourse between God and man. God acts by his agent, and thus takes man into covenant with himself. It is the divine commission that gives validity to the act performed; rendering it the act of God. If, then, you take the priesthood from the order of men to whom the great Head of the Church has given it, and place it in the hands of a different order, it ceases to rest upon a divine foundation. The sacerdotal powers are exercised by the agents of men, not by the ministers of Christ.

“ This mode of reasoning is equally conclusive to prove that laymen cannot baptize, and that Presbyters cannot ordain. And it is just as ridiculous to inveigh against the arrogance of Episcopalians for insisting upon the necessity of Episcopal ordination, as it would be to inveigh against the arrogance of Presbyterians for insisting upon the necessity of clerical baptism. Both equally believe in a priesthood; differing only as to the manner of its constitution. And why there should be more bigotry in thinking that the priesthood is

established upon the principle of subordination, than upon that of equality, I am utterly at a loss to comprehend.

“ Thus, then, the Episcopal Church simply contends for a ministry, as of divine institution; which ministry she believes to consist of distinct orders, with appropriate powers. The arrangement of these powers being made by God, cannot, she holds, be altered by any human authority. But as to the ceremonies of public worship, the forms of discipline, the particular organization by which authority is exercised in passing canons for regulating the affairs of the Church, she believes, in opposition to the Puritans, that no precise model is laid down, and that man is left to exercise a sound discretion; provided, always, that nothing be done contrary to the word, or the spirit, of the sacred oracles.”*

From what has been said, it appears, that Episcopalians and Presbyterians attach precisely the same value to the visible Church; that they equally make outward ordination essential to its existence; and that each society insists upon the exclusive validity of its own mode of ordination. But, while Episcopalians content themselves with setting forth the doctrine that there is a visible Church, to whose existence an outwardly ordained ministry is essential, Presbyterians do not thus content themselves, but go further, and represent the whole frame of their ecclesiastical government as of divine and unalterable obligation.

* How's Letters to Miller, p. 43, 44.

The reader can be at no loss to determine which society carries External Order to the greatest extent. He can be at no loss to pronounce on the correctness of the epithets which you and your coadjutors have so liberally applied to the advocates of Episcopacy.

But I have not yet done with this part of the subject.

There is a sect of Presbyterians, commonly distinguished by the title of Covenanters, whose doctrines, relative to Church government, I propose very briefly to consider. The Covenanters profess to be Presbyterians of the true and pure character. Let us, then, see how far they extend their views on the subject of Presbyterian order. Dr. M'Leod, a distinguished clergyman of the society, will inform us. "The radical principles of Presbyterianism are *essential* to society." "No system can preserve order in any society, civil or ecclesiastic, except so far as it proceeds upon the principles of *Presbyterianism*. The reason is obvious, these are the principles which the Author of human nature hath rendered *essential* to human society." "Every other system is both inadequate and *impossible*."*

Here Dr. M'Leod scruples not to represent Presbyterian order as essential to lawful society in the STATE, not less than in the CHURCH.

But let us consult the standards of the denomination to which Dr. M'Leod belongs, and we

* Ecclesiastical Catechism, p. 128, 129.

shall be able to judge of the extent to which they go in the practical application of their principles.

They hold that none but “*Christian* rulers, appointed to office according to a *righteous* civil constitution, have authority from God to rule in subserviency to the kingdom of Christ, and are to be conscientiously supported.” “There are moral evils essential to the constitution of the United States, which render it necessary to *refuse allegiance to the whole system*. This constitution is, notwithstanding its numerous excellences, in many instances, inconsistent, oppressive, and impious.” “Presbyterian Covenanters, perceiving immorality interwoven with the general and states constitution of government in America, have uniformly dissented from the civil establishments.”*

But I hasten to bring this part of the subject to a conclusion.

The error of carrying External Order too far, I repeat it, has ever been a SECTARIAN error.—You are not ignorant, Sir, of the dispute between the Church of England and the Puritans on the subject of rites and ceremonies. Read the third book of Hooker’s incomparable work on Ecclesiastical Polity, and you will see the absurd extreme to which the Sectaries carried their ideas. They maintained not only that the organization, according to which ecclesiastical power is to be exercised, is completely drawn out in Scripture; but that no rites or ceremonies are to be admitted in

* Reformation Principles, part ii. p. 106, part i. p. 136, 134

public worship, unless *specifically commanded in the word of God*. Accordingly, they declaimed against kneeling at the eucharist, against bowing at the name of Jesus, against the sign of the Cross in baptism, the use of the ring in marriage, the particular vestments of the clergy, and many other such matters, as not expressly prescribed in Scripture; and, therefore, refused to submit to them as inconsistent with their Christian liberty. Thus the Puritans held, that all the minute and particular forms of proceeding in public worship, and in the conducting of ecclesiastical affairs, are *positively* set down in the sacred volume; declining to conform to any regulation whatever, unless a *precise Scriptural warrant* for that *identical regulation* could be produced. Nor will you deny, I suspect, your adherence, in a good degree, to these rigid ideas. For example, you will not admit, I venture to say, a power in the Church to require the elements of bread and wine, in the Lord's supper, to be received in a kneeling posture. You will not admit a power in the Church even to regulate the vestments of her Clergy. These matters, nevertheless, you acknowledge to be, in themselves, indifferent; in other words, to have nothing in their nature which is forbidden by the divine law; for, you expressly say, that a Presbyterian clergyman would have no hesitation to administer the Lord's supper to persons who might choose to receive it kneeling; and you scruple not to wear a dress very much like that which the Episcopal Church has thought proper to pre-

scribe to her clergy. The objection to prescriptions of this sort, then, must be, simply, that they are not to be found in Scripture; and, such being the case, that the Church can have no authority to enjoin them upon her members. Thus, in fact, you not only insist that the form of ecclesiastical organization is settled in Scripture, but that there is so far a system of rites and ceremonies prescribed therein, that the authority of the Church is not competent to enjoin upon her members the observance of any rites and ceremonies, without producing for them a precise Scriptural direction.*

* The remarks just made, it may be said, cannot, possibly, be correct; inasmuch as Presbyterians establish various rules in religious worship, for which no precise direction of Scripture is pretended to be shown. This, however, only proves that Presbyterians are inconsistent with themselves; opposing institutions and practices of the Episcopal Church upon the very principle to which they, at other times, find themselves obliged to have recourse, in defence of their own conduct. The same inconsistency is observable in the history of your predecessors, the Puritans. They declaimed, violently, against particular rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, on the ground, that, not being specifically set down in Scripture, the Church, in requiring the observance of them, was guilty of a flagrant violation of the law of Christian liberty. But when this rigid doctrine was shown to be fatal to some of their own prescriptions, they could relax it so far, as merely to require that such prescriptions be fairly grounded, if not on *special precepts*, yet, at least, on the *general rules* of Scripture. This, in effect, was giving up their very cause itself. But the Puritans could not be prevailed upon to cease from their unreasonable and intemperate opposition to the Church of England; although, in order to sustain that opposition, they were under the necessity of advancing principles too absurd to be possibly acted upon. The perception of such absurdity and impossibility, should have led them to withdraw their objections, and unite themselves to the Church. Their prejudices, however, were too deep, and their spirit too fiery, to permit this. Thus they went on, declaiming against, and refusing

Still further—The Puritans went so far as to maintain, “that the Scripture of God is in such sort the rule of human actions, that simply whatsoever we do, and are not by it directed thereunto, the same is sin.” Hooker exposes, very fully, the absurdity of this doctrine. “In every action of common life to find out some sentence clearly and infallibly setting before our eyes what we ought to do, would trouble us more than we are aware.”* “Make all things sin which we do by direction of nature’s light, and by the rule of common discretion, without thinking at all upon Scripture; admit this position, and parents shall cause their children to sin, as they cause them to do any thing before they come to years of capacity, and be ripe for knowledge in the Scripture. Admit this, and it shall not be with masters as it was with him in the Gospel; but servants being commanded to go, shall stand still till they have their errand warranted unto them by Scripture.”†

We may deduce from the principle in question, Hooker justly observes, the complete sufficiency of Scripture, as well for the exact ma-

to conform to the ceremony of kneeling at the eucharist, that of the cross in baptism, of the ring in marriage, the observance of particular festival and fast days, and many other such matters, as not particularly enumerated and required in the plain letter of Scripture; while they could run into the glaring inconsistency of prescribing rules, which, not being able to defend, as exactly pointed out and enjoined by the very words of holy writ, they rested upon its general rules or canons; not recollecting, or not caring to consider, that the Church of England neither used nor needed any other defence of the very ceremonies which they alleged as the ground of their separation from her.

* Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. i. p. 342.

† Ibid. p. 342, 348.

nagement of *civil* concerns, as for the specific regulation of the various parts of public worship. Indeed, it was the avowed opinion of all the enthusiastic sectaries of the age, that the sacred writings exhibit a perfect system, not only of spiritual instruction, but even of *political wisdom*. "Under the influence of this wild notion, the colonists of New-Plymouth, in imitation of the primitive Christians, threw all their property into a common stock, and, like members of one family, carried on every work of industry by their joint labour for public behoof."*

The Anabaptists expressly contended, that it is inconsistent with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to submit to any law except the law of the Gospel; thus striking at the foundation of all civil government.† And the Puritans, we have seen, maintained not only that God hath delivered in Scripture, a complete, particular, and immutable form of Church polity; but also, that "the Scripture is in such sort the rule of human action, that simply whatsoever we do, and are not by it directed thereunto, the same is sin."‡

The influence of this enthusiastic spirit is felt even at the present day. For example—The society of Covenanters, who call themselves the only consistent Presbyterians, adhere very closely to the old Puritanic ideas; contending that the

* Robertson's America, vol. iv. p. 276.

† Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 100. *Ibid.*—History of the Anabaptists.

‡ Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, book ii.

scheme both of civil and ecclesiastical organization is prescribed in Scripture ; and refusing allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, because not perfectly conformed to the heavenly pattern. And the denomination to which you belong unequivocally assert the divine institution of an immutable system of ecclesiastical government.

Thus it appears, beyond all question, that the Church of England has ever occupied the true and middle ground between sectarian strictness on the one hand, and universal latitudinarianism on the other. She maintains, that the ministry is of divine institution ; that it is in distinct and subordinate grades ; and that, being thus established by God, it cannot be changed by man. She denies that " God hath delivered in Scripture a complete, particular, immutable form of Church polity." Still more does she discard the absurd doctrine, that the sacred writings contain a MINUTE AND SPECIFIC DIRECTORY for the regulation equally of spiritual and of temporal concerns.* To talk, therefore, of the stress which Episcopalians lay upon External Order, or of the extent to which they carry their ideas of the Scriptural character of their own particular system, is always to betray extreme want of information, or extreme want of candour.†

* See passages quoted from Hooker in a preceding page.

† The Puritans, it has been shown, contended that God hath prescribed in Scripture a complete form of ecclesiastical organization, and also an exact and immutable system of rites and ceremonies ; while the Church of England maintained the negative of each of these propositions. It is further to be remarked, that the Puritans laid

We will here put down, in opposite columns, begging the reader to pardon the repetition which

much more stress than the Church of England did, upon a precise observance of rites and ceremonies in reference to final salvation. This will appear from the language held by the celebrated Cartwright, who distinguished himself so much on the Puritanic side of the controversy. —“ We offer to show *the discipline* to be a part of the Gospel, and therefore to have a common cause; so that in the repulse of the discipline, the Gospel receives a check.” “ You which distinguish between these, and say, that matters of faith and necessary unto salvation may not be tolerated in the Church, unless they be *expressly* contained in the word of God, or manifestly gathered; but that ceremonies, order, discipline, government in the Church, may not be received against the word of God, and, consequently, may be received if there be no word against them, although there be none for them: you, I say, distinguishing or dividing after this sort, do prove yourself an evil divider. As though matters of discipline, and kind of government, were not matters *necessary to salvation, and of faith.*” “ These things, you seem to say, when you say that matters necessary to salvation, and of faith, are contained in Scripture, especially when you oppose these things to ceremonies, order, discipline, and government.”*

It is not less amusing than instructive to look back at the controversies between the Church of England and the Puritans. The zeal of the latter for their pretended holy discipline knew no bounds. It was the institution, they said, of God, and unalterably binding upon all Christians. Societies differently constituted were synagogues of Satan, in which it was impossible to be saved. Was any attempt made to point out the evil consequences that would result from the establishment of the discipline in question? It was immediately replied, that the discipline, being an *absolute commandment* of God, must be received, even if it should turn the world upside down.†

Let us rejoice that so much progress has been made among all denominations, since the period referred to, towards a truly catholic spirit. It augurs most favourably to the cause of Christian unity and peace; indeed, it may well be considered as among the symptoms of the approach of millennial harmony and blessedness. Let us not forget, then, while we contend zealously for what we conceive to be truth, to make the greatest allowance for, and sincerely to love one another.

* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. i. p. 399, 362.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 175, 176.

it may involve, the Episcopal and Presbyterian doctrine on the subject of External Order. The result of the tedious investigation into which we have been obliged to enter, will then appear at a single glance.

Episcopal doctrine.

Presbyterian doctrine.

1. Our Lord and his Apostles instituted a visible Church, of which they commanded all men to become members; and out of this Church there is, ordinarily, no remission of sin, and no covenanted title to salvation.

1. Ibid.

2. A ministry is essential to the existence of the visible Church.

2. Ibid.

3. Outward ordination is essential to the ministry.

3. Ibid.

4. The EPISCOPAL mode is essential to outward ordination.

4. The PRESBYTERIAL mode is essential to outward ordination.

5. Of course, without Episcopal ordination there can be no Church, and no covenanted title to salvation.

5. Of course, without Presbyterian ordination there can be no Church, and no covenanted title to salvation.

6. Presbyterian ordination is invalid; and the societies which have adopted it have no ministers and no ordinances. It should be observed, however, that a difference of opinion exists, on this point, among Episcopalians. Some hold that societies, Presbyterially constituted, although they are Christian denominations, cannot be regarded as Churches of Christ: others are disposed to concede the Church character to Presbyterian societies, but consider them as Churches in an imperfect and unsound state.*

6. Episcopal ordination is valid; being, in fact, Presbyterian. Therefore, the Episcopal society, being in substance a Presbyterian society, is a true Church. But her Deacons have no authority, and such as wait upon their ministrations are guilty of rebellion against God. The whole society of Greek Christians, being destitute of Presbyterian ordination, are in a state of excommunication.† The Roman Catholic societies, too, according to the general language of Presbyterian authors, so far from being Church-

* See note at the end of the volume.

† It is an unquestionable fact, that the very men who complain of the Episcopal Church for unchurching other denominations, unchurch an hundred Christian professors where she unchurches one such professor. Episcopalians unchurch all who have laid aside Episcopacy;‡ Presbyterians unchurch the Greek Church, containing more members than the whole Protestant world. Besides, the dissenters from Episcopacy sprung up less than three centuries ago; whilst the Greek Church has existed from the early ages of Christianity. Now multiply the immense number of Greek Christians by the number of generations that have passed since the period mentioned, and you will have

‡ It has been already stated that Episcopalians differ somewhat on this point.

7. No precise form of Church government is set forth in Scripture. The ministry, as instituted by Christ and his Apostles, being preserved inviolate, man is at liberty to exercise a sound discretion as to the proper method of organizing ecclesiastical power, and regulating ecclesiastical affairs.

es of Christ, are, in fact, synagogues of Satan.*

7. Presbyterian Church government, consisting of Congregational, Classical, and Synodical assemblies, is of divine and unalterable obligation.

the number of Christian professors who are unchurched by the Presbyterian doctrine. Compare this number with the number of dissenters from Episcopacy, multiplied by the number of generations that have passed since Episcopacy was laid aside, and you will be able to form some opinion of the matter in question. It will be seen that, in the business of unchurching, you exceed your Episcopal opponents at the rate of at least an hundred to one.

But the Presbyterian doctrine, I repeat it, unchurches the whole Christian world. What is this doctrine?—Simply, that the power of ordination is vested in a Presbytery.—Now, ordination has always been performed in the Greek Church by the Bishop alone; and was so performed in the Latin Church until the time of the fourth Council of Carthage. If the ordinations performed before the fourth Council of Carthage were invalid, those performed since must, of course, be invalid also.—Presbyterians, then, must either give up their fundamental principle, that “the power of ordination is in a Presbytery,” or stand charged with unchurching the whole Christian world.

* “The Puritans affirmed the Church of Rome to be *no true Church*, and *all her ministrations* to be superstitious and idolatrous; they renounced her communion, and durst not hang the *validity of their ordinations* upon an uninterrupted line of succession from the Apostles, through their hands.” Neal’s History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 145.

8. Neither Episcopacy nor Presbytery has any thing to do with a lawfully constituted *State*.

9. No perfect system of rites and ceremonies is set forth in Scripture. Every Church is vested with a discretionary power in this respect; provided always that nothing be done contrary to the word or the spirit of the sacred oracles.

8. Presbyterianism, some societies of Presbyterians say, is essential to all lawful society in the *State*, not less than in the *Church*.

9. An immutable system of rites and ceremonies is prescribed in Scripture; and to this system all are bound to conform.

Such was the doctrine of the Puritans; and such is now the doctrine of the most strict among their descendants. Indeed the Puritans extended the principle even to civil concerns; holding "Scripture to be in such sort the rule of human action, that simply whatsoever we do, and are not by it directed thereunto, the same is sin."

It will be proper, before leaving this part of the subject, to offer a few remarks by way of preventing misconception.

The great design of religion is to make man a

spiritual being. "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man."—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind—This is the first and great commandment—and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." If, then, we possess these spiritual qualifications, we cannot fail to be acceptable in the Divine sight; and it must be of little consequence whether we conform to any particular system of external institutions. Such is a very common mode of thinking, and of arguing. But, let it be recollected, we are to keep the commandments of God. This is, indeed, the very definition which is given in Scripture of true religion. If God has thought proper to prescribe a particular system of ordinances, can it be matter of indifference whether we conform to them? What! is it of no consequence whether we keep or violate the Divine law?—"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" Such was the reasoning of Naaman. His error consisted in making himself wiser than the inspired messenger of Heaven; and the same error lies at the foundation of the language, relative to forms and ordinances, which is so common at the present day. If we love God and man, of what consequence can it be whether we belong to this or that society of Christians? But admit that God has established a visible Church in the

world, and appointed in this Church a priesthood to act in his name; is it not our duty to enter this Church, and to wait upon the ministrations of his authorized agents? To answer this question in the negative, is to say, that it is immaterial whether we seek the kingdom of Heaven in a way of our own devising, or take the course pointed out by infinite wisdom; it is to refuse to be directed by God in the momentous business of our salvation. Of what consequence can it be, exclaims the Quaker, whether we conform to the carnal ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, provided the heart be right?—But there is a previous question—Are the ordinances of baptism and the supper of divine institution? If they are, it is impious to ask what purpose they can answer. There is no end to the absurdities in which the mode of reasoning in question must involve us. Our first parents thought it of little consequence whether they eat or abstained from eating a particular fruit. So, indeed, it was; considering the thing in itself, and without reference to the Divine command. The deist, too, may say—If I love God, it is immaterial whether I embrace Christianity or not—God requires me to give him my heart. But we are first to inquire whether there is sufficient evidence of the divine origin of Christianity. Admit it to be of divine origin, and the conclusion immediately follows, that we are to make it our rule of faith and life.

God proposes to us a certain end, and points out the means by which it may be attained. Man

is very well pleased with the end; but he thinks the means injudiciously chosen: He, therefore, sets himself to work to devise a different system.

There must, necessarily, be forms in religion; for man is a being compounded of body and soul. Still, these forms are to be regarded as means to an end. God requires us to use them with a view to those qualifications of the heart which they are designed to produce. To neglect to use them is one error—to use them without reference to the end is another. The sincere Christian proposes to himself universal conformity to the Divine law. It is his supreme desire to imbibe the spirit of his Redeemer. He sighs for deliverance from the dominion of sin; and he uses all the means of grace which God has pointed out to him, without undertaking to inquire whether they are of a nature to do him good. Holiness of heart and life is the great object of his pursuit. He pursues it, however, not in a way of his own choosing, but in humble submission to the Divine direction.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. But he chooses his own method, and prescribes his own condition of dispensing his blessings. He grants the end only to such as use the appointed means. This is, evidently, the general rule; although a merciful being may be expected to bestow the promised blessing on those whose departure from the regular method of seeking it is not wilful, but the result of frailty. “He knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust.”

But the allowance, which may be expected to be made for error, with the opinions of our respective societies on the subject, will engage our attention in the next letter.

LETTER V.

CHARITABLE ALLOWANCE FOR ERROR.

SIR,

I Have shown, beyond the possibility of dispute, that the Presbyterian doctrine is quite as strict and exclusive as the Episcopal, on the subject of outward ordination. I have shown that, in all other points connected with External Order, our Presbyterian brethren are distinguished by a very rigid turn of thinking; carrying their ideas to an extent which the Church has ever disclaimed as equally inconsistent with Scripture, and with common sense. For every thing advanced explicit and unequivocal passages from the standards of Presbyterian societies, and the works of Presbyterian authors, have been literally quoted. In opposition to all this, of what avail are your naked asseverations? How could you venture to say, that all the Presbyterians of whom you have ever heard, consider salvation as secured by covenant to such as repent and believe, whether connected with the visible Church or not? I look, Sir, for the Presbyterian doctrine, not to your unauthorized assertions, but to the standards of Presbyterian societies. In those standards I find it expressly declared, that there is no ordinary possibility of salvation out of the visible Church; that, to be out of such Church, is to be a stranger to the co-

venant of promise. Upon consulting Presbyterian authors, with whom you are well acquainted, I find it expressly declared, that the promises of the Gospel are all made to the visible Church; and that the distinction between a baptized and an unbaptized person, lies in the one having a covenanted title to mercy, while the other is left to such as is without covenant. To what, then, shall I ascribe the very extraordinary manner in which you have permitted yourself to write on this subject? Without producing one word of proof, you indulge in a strain of assertion which is contradicted by the express and unequivocal language of your public standards; and this, too, for the purpose of fixing the charge of gross misrepresentation upon your opponents in the present controversy.

Let us now take some notice of the allowance, which, in the opinion of our respective societies, is to be made for error. Here, Sir, it will be found that you fall far short of your opponents; although you have thought proper to stigmatize them as intolerant bigots, with whom it is difficult to live upon terms of Christian intercourse.*

A better illustration of the subject cannot be given than by considering the case of the Quakers, in reference to the ordinances of baptism and the sacred supper, which they are well known to discard.

* Letters, p. 19, 351.

We believe that these ordinances were established by Christ, and that the observance of them is enjoined upon all his followers. "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, &c." "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins." With respect to the sacrament of the supper, the language of Scripture is equally express—"This do in remembrance of me."—The Quakers, then, are in the practice of habitually neglecting a positive command of God; and *universal* obedience to the Divine law is prescribed as the condition of salvation. But God is a merciful being, who makes allowance for the errors of his frail creatures. *Wilful* opposition to the ordinances of the Gospel, or, indeed, to any of the Divine laws, must exclude from the kingdom of Heaven. This is a dictate of common sense. But departure from the institutions of God often proceeds less from a spirit of disobedience than from involuntary error. Here, then, we lay down the general principle, that where there is a *sincere desire to know and do the will of God*, all violations of his commands, proceeding from ignorance or infirmity, will be pardoned. It is impossible to go further than this, without giving up divine truth and divine right altogether. Submission to the laws of God is certainly necessary to salvation. To call in question the truth of this proposition, considered as a general principle, is to say that we may as well go to Heaven in the way of transgression as in that of obedience.

Well, the Quakers have laid aside particular ordinances, the observance of which is expressly enjoined by Jesus Christ upon all his followers. In this the Quakers are under a great error, for which they must answer to God. So far as the error is the result of culpable causes, it will be a subject of condemnation; so far as it is the result of infirmity, it will be pardoned. We pretend not to judge in any individual case; leaving all judgment to him who perfectly knows the heart. Thus, while we contend, on the one hand, that the sacraments are of indispensable obligation, and that persons who depart from them must answer to God for so doing; on the other, we lay down a general principle, which extends the mercy of God to all who sincerely desire and endeavour to know and do his will, whatever violations of his commands they may commit through involuntary error.

Precisely the same style of remark is applicable to those who depart from the true Church as instituted by Christ and his Apostles. Of this Church all men are commanded to become members. In refusing to become members of it, therefore, they violate the law of God. So far as their conduct is to be traced to unavoidable ignorance or involuntary error, it will be excused; so far as it is the result of pride, passion, negligence, or any other culpable cause, it will be ground of condemnation. God only can tell when error proceeds from a criminal, when from a pardonable source: He only can tell, in each individual

case, how far the heart is sincere, and how far allowance is to be made for the ignorance, the mistakes, and the prejudices of his frail creatures. Further than this it is impossible to go, without giving up altogether the right of thinking for ourselves; further it is impossible to go, without renouncing the doctrine, to which almost all denominations of Christians subscribe, that God has established one visible Church upon earth; requiring all men to enter it, and to obey its laws.

While we contend that ordinances, irregularly administered, are, in themselves, void; yet, where the irregularity is the result of excusable error, we believe that the ordinances will be blessed to the recipient. God will bestow the graces annexed to his sacraments, on the humble and the penitent, who receive them from unauthorized men; and even such unauthorized men he will bless and sanctify, where the violation of his laws is the result of frailty; not of indifference, or of pride. To such, indeed, as suffer a self-sufficient spirit to get the better of that singleness of heart, and of that conscientious love of truth, which should characterize every disciple of Christ, nothing can be held out, consistently with the express language of Scripture, but the awful threats of an offended God; and in proportion as such men are instrumental in leading the uninformed into error, will the weight of their condemnation be increased.

Thus, then, while the ordinances of the Gospel, administered by unauthorized men, are, in them-

selves, void, and no divine promise is annexed to their reception; yet, where there is *unfeigned sincerity of heart*, God, we trust, will pardon the *irregularity* for the sake of the *sincerity*. To use a trite mode of expression, he will take the *will* for the *deed*. Although the ordinances are void, being administered by a void authority, still God will accept them as valid, and make them channels of his grace. Those influences of his Spirit, to which there is no *covenanted claim*, he will, nevertheless, bestow by way of *special favour*.

Let it not, however, be supposed that we run into the absurd doctrine, that, provided a man be sincere, it is immaterial what opinions he entertains, or with what denomination of Christians he connects himself. The divine laws derive their obligatory force from the authority by which they are enacted; not from any opinion which man may happen to entertain of them. If we are in error as to the injunctions of the law of God, it is, at all events, our misfortune; and it becomes us most seriously to take care that it be not our crime. A man may be in error from his own fault. He has neglected, perhaps, the means of information: he has been altogether careless about the truth: the commands of God have not been of sufficient weight with him to lead him seriously to inquire into his situation. Sometimes error is the consequence of a vicious course of life, which has blinded the understanding, and corrupted the heart; very frequently it proceeds from a self-sufficient spirit, which cannot bring itself to

submit to the mortification of its high claims. A man is never to blame for doing what his conscience tells him it is his duty to do; but he may be very greatly to blame for having an erroneous conscience. The mistake under which he labours, on the subject of his duty, may be the result of apathy, which will not inquire; or of passion, which will be gratified. At the same time, there are innumerable circumstances which give a bias to the mind; and we often find sincere piety connected with no small portion of error. A merciful God will make allowance for the weakness of reason, for the force of prejudice, for the defects of education, and even, in some degree, for the frailty of passion. We are expressly told, that God will not be strict to mark what is done amiss; that, where there is a willing heart, he will accept us according to what we have, not according to what we have not; that he knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust. Still there is an immutable distinction between truth and error; it can never be matter of indifference which of them we embrace.

The connexion between principle and practice is most intimate. What, indeed, is practice but *embodied principle*? The characters of men are, every where, formed, in a greater or less degree, by the opinions which they entertain. Among the various sects of ancient philosophers, how constantly do we see their principles exemplified in their lives! In truth, the doctrines which any parti-

cular society may embrace, will, in time, mould and determine the character of that society. Haughty principles, as a general rule, will produce haughty conduct: licentious principles will produce licentious conduct: virtuous principles will produce virtuous conduct. Truth is in order to goodness. To promote the cause of *error*, is to promote that of *vice*; for it will, undoubtedly, hold, as a general rule, that in proportion as a country or an age declines from *truth* in its *maxims*, it will decline from *virtue* in its *practice*. Some errors, indeed, are, in a very slight degree, pernicious, when compared with others; but all error is, in a greater or less degree, pernicious. Still there are exceptions to every general rule; and, in perfect consistency with what has been said, you will often find men whose practice is better than their principles, or whose principles are much more correct than their practice. Indeed, in comparing men together, it is not uncommon to find one person superior to another in the purity of his opinions, and, at the same time, much inferior in the regularity of his life.

The train of remark in which we have indulged, will show the very great importance of embracing the system of doctrines which is revealed in the Gospel, and of conforming to the positive institutions which are therein established. The doctrines are infallibly true. The institutions are, beyond all question, divine institutions. But, in the case under consideration, independently of the native tendency of truth to perfect, and of

error to pervert the human mind, God has imposed upon us the express obligation of embracing his Gospel, and of obeying its laws. He has marked out to us the exact path in which we are to travel to his heavenly kingdom. This path, in the opinion equally of Episcopal and of Presbyterian societies, is the one visible Church to which God has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances, which are the means of grace. The Church is the body of Christ. It is enlightened and sanctified by his Spirit. Its members stand in a *covenanted relation* to God; they have a *covenanted title* to eternal life. Such as depart from the Church lose this covenanted title; wandering from the true path marked out to conduct them to the kingdom of Heaven. Still, it is not sufficient to be in the true path: we must diligently use the means of grace. The circumstance of having a covenanted title to Heaven, if we perform not the conditions upon which the title is suspended, will only aggravate our condemnation. Many, who are in the true road, will never reach the end of their journey, from the want of diligence on the way; whilst others, notwithstanding they may have wandered from the true road, will finally arrive at the great object of their pursuit, by the sincerity and zeal of their efforts to attain it. Yet it will never do to go on to the conclusion, that, provided a man be sincere and zealous, it is immaterial what course he takes to Heaven. A course having been marked out for us by God, we are all under the most sacred obligation to pursue it; turning

aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left. It is not sufficient that a man be persuaded in his own mind; it is necessary that he embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and walk in his laws. Under such circumstances alone, can he have any *covenanted* claim to mercy; although it may please God, in many instances, where he sees unfeigned sincerity, to bestow mercy, to which no federal transaction may have secured a regular title. Let every man be firmly persuaded in his own mind: let every man, at the same time, be careful that he seek the truth in singleness of heart. If, instead of honestly labouring to subdue prejudice and passion, we suffer indifference, pride, self-sufficiency, or a bitter spirit of sectarianism, to blind our understanding, and render us obstinate in error, we must take the consequences of our conduct.

There are two senses in which a condition of salvation may be termed *indispensable*. The first has reference to the right of man to comply with the condition or not as he may see proper; the second, to the question, whether there is reason to suppose that the condition will, under any circumstances, be dispensed with by God. It will readily be seen that a condition may be *indispensable* in one of these senses, when it is far from being so in the other. The positive ordinances of religion, as far as human authority and power may be concerned, are of *unalterable obligation*.

Without holiness no man shall see God. Here is a condition of salvation which is, in every sense

of the word, indispensable. The positive institutions of religion, however, are not to be viewed in precisely the same point of light. Indispensable, strictly speaking, as far as the authority of man is concerned; God, nevertheless, has power to dispense with them, and, under proper circumstances, will exercise the power.

On all this subject Episcopalians and Presbyterians entertain but one opinion. They agree that the positive institutions of the Gospel are unalterably binding upon man. They agree that departure from such institutions will exclude from the kingdom of Heaven, unless it proceed from excusable error. The allowance which Presbyterians make for departure from Presbyterial ordination, is precisely that which Churchmen make for departure from Episcopal ordination. Nay, it can be unanswerably shown, that your opponents do not carry the doctrine of Episcopacy further, in reference to future happiness, than you carry the rigid doctrine of absolute unconditional election and reprobation. For example—Eternal life is secured by the covenant of grace to those who embrace the Gospel of Christ.* The doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation is a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel; so fundamental, that without it you “would be plunged into darkness and despair;” and “the whole plan of salvation would be nothing better than a gloomy system of probabilities and peradventures; a sys-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 58, 59.

tem, on the whole, nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God.”*

Well—eternal life is secured by the covenant of grace to such as believe the Gospel; of which the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation is a most important, indeed, an essential feature. To refuse to believe in this doctrine, is to refuse to do that which the covenant of grace requires us to do in order that we may be saved. Now, Sir, will you venture to say that your opponents have ever attached greater importance than this to the doctrine of Episcopacy? It is true, you suppose that God will make allowance for those who are so unfortunate as to dissent from the peculiarities of Calvinism; but have not your opponents invariably expressed their decided belief that God will pardon the rejection of Episcopacy, where such rejection is the result of involuntary error? *Wilful* opposition to Episcopacy is certainly rebellion against God, and must, therefore, exclude from his presence. Can you say less of *wilful* opposition to the peculiar tenets of Calvinism? If these tenets constitute important doctrines of the Gospel, then we are commanded by God to believe in them. *Wilful* rejection of them, therefore, is rebellion against God; and rebellion against God must involve the destruction of the soul. In short, your opponents say that *wilful* rejection of Episcopacy will exclude

* Continuation of Letters, p. 337—339.

from the kingdom of Heaven: you say that wilful rejection of Presbytery—nay, even of the peculiarities of Calvinism, will exclude from that kingdom: and the very same allowance which you make for error in the one case, your opponents make for it in the other.

Having considered the allowance which our respective societies make for error, in reference to the system of external institutions; we will proceed to inquire, for a few moments, into the allowance which they make for it in matters relating more particularly to the doctrines of the Gospel.

Here we shall see Calvinism in its genuine character.

Presbyterians* represent faith as a condition of salvation, in every sense of the term, indispensable; in other words, they hold that God will, in no case, and under no circumstances, pardon a *fundamental* departure from truth as it respects the scheme of Christian doctrine. This results, necessarily, from the principle which lies at the foundation of the Calvinistic creed; that salvation depends upon an *eternal, unconditional decree* of God; of an interest in which decree *faith* is the *sole and infallible assurance*. Error on any fundamental point of Christian doctrine proves that the person entertaining it is not a subject of the decree of election; and, not being a subject of that decree, he is, of course, without hope. Nay,

* I mean Calvinistic Presbyterians.

so far do the Calvinists carry their ideas of the necessity of faith, as to consign the heathen world to **INDISCRIMINATE PERDITION.**

This I shall prove beyond the possibility of dispute.

“Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; who are, in time, by the Holy Ghost, enabled to believe in Christ according to the Gospel.” “They who having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion which they profess; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Saviour only of his body, the Church.”*

Let us consider these passages in detail.

“Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; who are, in time, by the Holy Ghost, enabled to believe in Christ according to the Gospel.” Here the doctrine of *partial redemption*, contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, is unequivocally set forth. Our blessed Saviour “tasted death for **EVERY MAN.**” “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the **WHOLE WORLD.**” Christ

* Westminster Catechism, questions 59, 60. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States—Larger Catechism, questions 59, 60. Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America—Larger Catechism, questions 50, 60.

hath redeemed *all* men from the curse of the law; that is, he hath made an atonement for the sins of all men; thus taking them from under the curse of a violated covenant, and placing them in a state in which it is possible for them, with the assistance of Divine grace, to work out their salvation. Universal *redemption* is one thing—universal *salvation* is another. All men are redeemed; all men are placed in a salvable state; but final salvation depends upon the conduct of each individual under the means of grace which he may have enjoyed. In opposition to this, Christ is represented, in the passage under consideration, as having purchased *redemption* only for those who will be finally saved; that is, for the elect. “*Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated to ALL those for whom Christ hath purchased it.*” In other words, all who are redeemed will be finally saved. The elect alone are redeemed*—the elect alone will be saved. To complete the doctrine, the passage goes on to state, that those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, “are, in time, by the Holy Ghost, enabled to believe in Christ according to the Gospel.” Thus the heathen world is completely cut off; belief in Christ, according to the Gospel, being represented as the invariable characteristic of the redeemed. And, to place their meaning beyond the reach of dispute, the framers of the Catechism proceed, in the very next passage, to

* “Neither are any other *redeemed* by Christ but the elect only.”
Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sect. 6.

say—"They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."

Will it be said that the design of the passage in question is simply to lay down the fundamental doctrine, that salvation is only through the death and sufferings of Christ? But this is evidently absurd. If it had been the design of the framers of the Catechism merely to express such an idea, they would, doubtless, have adopted a very different language: they would have said plainly, that there can be no salvation for fallen man but through a Redeemer. Instead of this, they declare expressly, that such as have never heard of Christ cannot possibly be saved.

Mark the language of the Eighteenth Article of our Church!—"They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy Scripture doth set out to us only the name of Jesus Christ *whereby* men must be saved." Here all is perfectly clear and easy; the evident design of the article being to declare the doctrine of salvation through the blood of a crucified Saviour. They are condemned who presume to say that man may be saved by the law under which he lives. Does the article assert that none can be saved who have never heard of Christ? By no means—It merely sets forth the death of Christ,

as the only meritorious cause of justification; as that alone BY which we may be saved.* Accordingly Episcopalians believe that none can be saved but through the merits of Christ; at the same time that many will be saved through his merits, who have never heard of his name. But the language of your religious standards is of a very different character, expressly consigning those who have not *actually heard* the Gospel to indiscriminate perdition.

Of the language in question you have not ventured to take the slightest notice. And how do you contrive to pass it by in silence? You represent me as quoting a clause from the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, distant an hundred pages from the sentence which I really did quote; and having thus got rid of the passage, you enter into an argument to prove that the language of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith is precisely the language of the Eighteenth Article of the Episcopal Church.† Passing this by for the moment, I pro-

* At the time the Articles were formed, there were persons who contended that the profession of Christianity is a thing indifferent; that the sole criterion of the favour of Heaven, is our conformity to the particular law which we may choose to embrace; and that the inquiry will be, not whether we range ourselves under the law of Christ, of Moses, of Mahomet, or any other teacher; but simply how far we have obeyed the particular law which we may have thought proper to adopt as our rule of life. It is this most pernicious opinion, Dr. Laurence informs us, that the Article so decidedly opposes; setting forth the law of Christ as that which we are bound to make our rule of life, and his merits as the only *ground* of salvation. But the Article goes no further than this. It is very far, indeed, from asserting that an actual knowledge of the person and character of Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary to salvation.

† See the whole of this matter explained at the close of this letter:

ceed to examine the section of your Confession of Faith which was not even alluded to in my Letters, but which, nevertheless, you represent me as shamefully altering, in order to make it speak a language that might suit my views.

“ Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess.”*

In order to perceive the true meaning of these words, we must take them in connexion with a few sentences by which they are immediately preceded.

“ Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also, are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess.”†

Now, the heathen world, I venture to assert.

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. x. sect. 4.

† Ibid. chap. x. sect. 3, 4.

is consigned, in this passage, to indiscriminate perdition. Let us examine it in detail.

“Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit.” To speak of *elect* infants, is to admit that there are *reprobate* infants. If it had been the intention of the framers of your Catechism to say, that God will mercifully receive all persons dying in infancy, they would have stated the doctrine in express terms—“All persons dying in infancy, being elect, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit.” A clause of this kind would have been full to the purpose. But no such idea was in the mind of the Westminster Divines; they intended to say that there are reprobate infants. Such, indeed, is the genuine Calvinistic doctrine; and the moment we admit the idea that salvation depends upon an *arbitrary, unconditional decree*, without reference to any thing in the creature moving thereunto, but resolvable solely into the sovereign pleasure of God, there is no sort of difficulty in supposing that many of those who die in infancy will be eternally lost.* The plain matter

* The distinction between elect and non-elect infants was entirely unknown to the primitive Church; not having been introduced, indeed, until the time of Calvin, of whose peculiar theory of predestination it is a natural result. Accordingly, Calvin did not hesitate to draw the conclusion, although it appears to have cost him some effort to do so.† Beza, the disciple and successor of Calvin, expressed himself on this

† See Institutes of the Christian Religion, book iv. chapter xvi. sections 17, 18, 21; where Calvin appears to have a constant reference in his mind to the distinction between elect and non-elect infants, without, however, venturing formally to declare it

of fact is, that God has elected some infants, and has passed by others. And why not pass by infants as well as adults? For adults are elected, or reprobated, without reference to any thing in them moving God to choose or reject them; but simply in the exercise of sovereign power. After consigning all persons dying in infancy, with the exception of an elect number, to perdition, there can be no great difficulty in placing the whole heathen world out of the reach of mercy. The two doctrines are, equally, the genuine result of the cardinal principle of Calvinism.

But let us proceed—"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." Here it is merely said, that persons, not externally called by the ministry of the word, may be of the number of the elect. But a man, without being thus called, may be informed of Christ, and believe in him. Accordingly, in speaking of the passage in question, you say, it "recognizes the possibility of some being saved, who have not had an opportunity of *hearing the Gospel preached.*" How very cautious is this mode of expression! Does any part of your religious standards recognize the possibility of salvation to those who have never, in

subject in the most positive and unequivocal language. In a public conference held with the Lutherans, in the year 1586, speaking of Baptism, he says, "Which many millions of infants receive, who, notwithstanding, are never regenerated, but everlastingly perish."

any shape, heard of Christ? The positive preaching of the Gospel is not the only way of bringing men acquainted with the person, character, and work of the Saviour. His person, character, and work may be known to such as have never had an opportunity of listening to a preacher in the course of their lives.

The passage, therefore, is perfectly consistent with the indiscriminate perdition of the heathen world.

Besides, it must not be so interpreted as to contradict the express declaration, "they who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature." Take the two passages together, and it is evident that the Westminster Divines, in speaking of "elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word," meant to designate those who, cut off from access to the ministry and ordinances, nevertheless hear of Christ, and believe in him.

The Divines in question were far from intending to declare, that persons who have never heard of Christ may still be saved. To annex such a meaning to the passage under consideration, is not only to do violence to language, but it is to render the different standards of your society inconsistent and unintelligible.

"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. So

also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word."

The elect persons, here spoken of, have heard of Christ, or they have not heard of him. If they have heard of him, the passage is perfectly consistent with the indiscriminate perdition of the heathen world. If they have not heard of him, it is directly at war with the declaration in the Larger Catechism of your society: "They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."

"Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess."

Is it the simple design of this passage to declare that none of our fallen race can be saved in any other way than through the merits of Christ? Surely, if such had been the idea intended to be conveyed, a very different mode of expression would have been adopted. No, Sir, the Westminster Divines had no such object in view. Let us analyze the passage. "Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common opera-

tions of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved." The persons here spoken of, hear of Christ, but do not truly come to him; in other words, do not truly embrace him by faith; and are, therefore, lost. "Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved *in any other way whatsoever*, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess."

How are the words, "in any other way whatsoever," to be understood here? Their meaning is rendered perfectly plain by adverting to the first part of the paragraph—"Others, not elected, although they may be outwardly called by the ministry of the word, yet they never truly come to Christ;" in other words, never truly believe in him, "and therefore cannot be saved." Then follows the clause—"Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever;" in any other way than by coming to Christ, that is, believing in him, or having faith in him; "be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess." The passage, then, does unequivocally make salvation impossible to all who have never heard of Christ. Such is the only construction which the words will bear. I repeat it, if the Westminster Divines had intended merely to set forth the doctrine of salvation through the merits of Christ, they would have used a very different form of expression.

The meaning of the whole passage may be thus briefly expressed—Persons not elected, although they may be outwardly called by the ministry of the word, yet not having true faith in Christ, cannot be saved—*Still less* can they be saved who have never heard of his name; for faith in him, under such circumstances, is impossible.—And this, besides being the natural interpretation of the passage, is the only one which can make it consistent with the other parts of your public formularies.

But I have entered into an unnecessary detail. The single passage, so often quoted from the Westminster Catechism, puts the subject perfectly at rest; proclaiming indiscriminate perdition to the heathen world in words as positive and unambiguous as language can supply. “They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the law of that religion which they profess.”*

You have been so prudent as not to notice this passage; although, to avoid noticing it, you were under the hard necessity of having recourse to an artifice which must injure you in the estimation of every correct and delicate mind.†

But the doctrine of the indiscriminate perdition of the heathen world is the doctrine even of your own Letters.

* Westminster Catechism, question 60.

† See the concluding part of this letter.

“ It is to be hoped that Presbyterians understand the Gospel too well to speak of *uncovenanted mercy* at all. Fallen creatures know of no mercy but that which is *promised* or secured by the covenant of grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Now, you expressly assert that the heathen are aliens from the covenant of grace. “ These writers exclude us from the covenanted mercy of God. They represent mercy as extended to Presbyterians, in the same manner, and on the same principles, as to the heathen; that is, not in virtue of any *covenant engagement*; but on the footing of general, unpledged mercy.”†

Well, Sir, fallen creatures know of no mercy but that which is promised or secured by the covenant of grace: but mercy is not secured to the heathen by virtue of any covenant engagement; therefore there is no mercy for the heathen; in other words, the heathen must be indiscriminately lost. And as your religious standards expressly declare all but the members of the visible Church to be strangers from the covenant of promise, it follows, upon the principle which you have laid down, that there can be no possibility of salvation out of that Church. You tell us that there is no mercy but covenanted mercy—the standards of your society declare that there is no covenanted title to mercy out of the visible Church—it follows, irresistibly, that none but the members of the visible Church can be saved.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 57, 58.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 36, 37.

Besides, you give us to understand, that it is faith alone that puts a man in a state of covenant with God.—“Seals,” according to your idea, “are the constituted means of recognizing a covenant transaction supposed to have previously taken place in secret, when the person receiving the seal embraced the Gospel.”* In embracing the Gospel, then, we enter into covenant with God.†

* Continuation of Letters, p. 59, 60.

† Whenever I am under the necessity of citing your strange opinions, I think it proper immediately to contrast them with the express language of those public standards to which you are canonically bound to conform. Salvation, you tell us, is secured by covenant engagement to all who have faith in Christ, whether members of the visible Church or not.^a Compare this with the language of your religious society—“Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him.”^b “Out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise.” And after a man professes faith in Christ, so as to satisfy the governors of the Church that he really possesses it, still he is out of the visible Church, and a stranger to the covenant of promise, until he is initiated into the one, and thereby placed within the other, by the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Besides, as I have more than once shown already, you are completely at war with yourself; for you tell us that “the visible Church is that household of God to which his gracious promises and his life-giving spirit are vouchsafed;”^c that the existence of unaffected piety out of this Church is a difficulty of no easy solution;^d and that if persons not belonging to the visible Church, are saved, it must be in some *extraordinary and unknown way.*^e

Thus inconsistent are the different parts of your writings.

The promises of the Gospel are made to the visible Church—The promises of the Gospel are made, not to the visible Church, but to the pious.

Salvation is to be attained by fallen creatures only in the way of co-

^a Continuation of Letters, p. 59, 60. ^b Larger Catechism, question 166.

^c Letters, p. 342.

^d *Ibid* p. 341.

^e Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

In the same way, you tell us, that "salvation is promised, that is, secured by covenant engagement, to all who sincerely repent of sin, and unfeignedly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."* And when, in setting forth the utmost extent of your charitable ideas, you say, that men may be in covenant with God who have never seen a Church officer in their lives; still, you make it necessary that they should have been so situated as to hear of Christ, and to believe in him.†

Thus, Sir, you consign the heathen world to indiscriminate perdition.

There is no mercy but such as is secured by covenant engagement—Mercy is secured by covenant engagement only to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—of course, they who, "having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."‡

This, as I have repeatedly observed, is the true Calvinistic doctrine. In addition to the proof drawn from the Westminster standards, let me introduce to you a few passages from Presbyterian authors. The first author to whom I shall call your attention, is the very learned Dr. Wither-
 spoon. "Thus I have endeavoured both to ex-

venant. Salvation may be attained in an extraordinary or uncovenanted way. But I purpose, in a future letter, to bring your numerous contradictions into one view.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 58, 60.

† *Ibid.* p. 59.

‡ Presbyterian Catechism, question 60.

plain and confirm the assertion in the text, that there is no salvation in any other but Christ. There is, however, one question upon it which I would willingly pass over in silence, but that the omission of it might, to some intelligent readers, weaken the conclusion, and make them reckon the subject incompletely handled. The question is, whether an objective revelation and explicit discovery of Christ, and what he hath wrought, is necessary to salvation? or if his undertaking may not be the ground of acceptance for many who never heard of his name.”* This question Dr. Witherspoon thus resolves—“To whomsoever the true God is revealed in any measure, as merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; however obscurely he points out the meritorious cause of pardon, if they believe his word and accept of his mercy, they shall be saved. As to any others, if they are in absolute ignorance of the true God, we must say, that there doth not appear, from Scripture, any ground on which to affirm, that the *efficacy of Christ's death extends to them.*”† The author proceeds to observe—“A change must be wrought in the heart and temper of the sinner, so great as to be termed a new creation and a second birth. Now, I would beg leave to ask, how and where is this to be expected? It cannot surely proceed from the influence of fabulous deities, or be the effect of idolatrous rites.”‡

* Witherspoon's Works, vol. i. p. 273-4.

† Ibid. p. 274.

‡ Ibid. p. 278.

The learned author expressly tells us, that the efficacy of the death of Christ extends to none who are in ignorance of the true God—He expressly tells us, that there can be no mercy for those to whom the meritorious cause of pardon is utterly unknown—He expressly tells us, that that state of heart, which is essential to salvation, can never exist where fabulous deities are believed in, or idolatrous rites prevail. The heathen world, then, must be totally and indiscriminately lost. In a word, “none can be saved who have never heard of Christ, however diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature.”

Let me next refer you to the authority of the *Christian's Magazine*. The editor of this work represents faith in Christ as a condition of salvation *indispensable* in the most STRICT and ABSOLUTE sense: in other words, he makes faith in Christ so necessary, that God will, under no circumstances, pardon the want of it; so necessary, that, without it, salvation is utterly impossible.

“Faith in the Lord Jesus, as he is exhibited in the Gospel, is the *indispensable* condition of salvation.”*

The editor of the *Magazine* censures Dr. Hobart for representing communion with the true Church, through a duly authorized ministry, as an indispensable condition of salvation. It is proper to remark, that Dr. Hobart intended simply to say, that communion with the true Church, through

* *Christian's Magazine*, vol. i. p. 98.

a duly authorized ministry, is a condition with which man has no right to dispense. It never entered into his view to limit the mercy of God; on the contrary, he expressly lays down the general principle, that all who sincerely desire, and endeavour to know and do the will of God, will be pardoned and accepted by him, whatever violations of his commands they may commit through involuntary error.* And Dr. H. makes particular provision for cases of departure from the lawful ministry of the Christian Church. But Dr. Mason chooses to consider the term *indispensable* as capable of being used only in an *absolute* sense; and, under such idea, indulges in the following train of remark. "This sweeping sentence of proscription is softened by representing it as 'not inconsistent with that charity which extends mercy to all who labour under involuntary error.' But we have no ground to expect this very precarious mercy but the charity of Dr. H. and his brethren. Warrant from the word of God they have produced none, and have none to produce. No: if the condition be *indispensable*, they who reject it must perish. And if they who reject it may still be saved, it is not *indispensable*: otherwise the definition might run thus; an *indispensable* condition is that which may be dispensed with."†

If Episcopacy be an indispensable condition of

* When error is excusable, and when not, we pretend not to determine. God alone can decide in every individual case. We leave it to him.

† Christian's Magazine, vol. i. p. 94, 95.

future happiness, the only alternative is that of Episcopacy or perdition. Admit Episcopacy to be an indispensable condition, and it irresistibly follows that they who reject it are without hope. There is no escape. "The very idea of an escape, HOWEVER TO BE EFFECTED, is repugnant to that of an indispensable condition." No allowance can be made for error. Doctor Hobart and his brethren, in making allowance for error, have acted wholly without warrant from the word of God. Now let this be compared with the observations of Doctor Mason on the subject of faith. "The inquiry, whether a man shall go to Heaven or to Hell, the Scriptures have fixed to this point—whether he was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in the Lord Jesus, as he is exhibited in the Gospel, is the *indispensable* condition of salvation."*

Faith in Christ is the indispensable condition of salvation: an indispensable condition is one that can, under no circumstances, be dispensed with; therefore, without faith in Christ, salvation is impossible.

Will it be said that, in the passages which have been cited from the *Christian's Magazine*, Dr. Mason is speaking exclusively of persons to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed? On the contrary—He expresses himself in terms the most general and absolute. He makes no provision for the case of the heathen. The plain amount of what he says, is, that none can be saved who

* *Christian's Magazine*, vol. i. p. 98:

have never heard of Christ; and I am well persuaded that Dr. Mason will not hesitate to acknowledge that such is his deliberate opinion. Certain it is, that, in refusing to acknowledge it, he would be guilty of direct opposition to those standards of doctrine to which he is canonically bound to conform.

I might go on to furnish you with extracts from the writings of many other Divines on this subject; but it cannot be necessary. And I have particularly called your attention to the declarations of modern authors, that it may be seen that the decided language of the Westminster Divines continues to be used, in all its plainness, to the present day.

It has been shown that the Westminster standards unequivocally present the idea that there are infants in hell. It has been shown that they expressly consign the heathen world to indiscriminate perdition; and that the same language is held, on this point, by distinguished Calvinistic authors.

It has been shown that the doctrine of the indiscriminate perdition of the heathen is the unquestionable doctrine of your own Letters. You, in no place, express a belief that the heathen may be saved: on the contrary, in setting forth the utmost extent of your charity, you never fail to limit the possibility of mercy to such as may have heard of Christ. Besides, you tell us, expressly, that mercy is not secured to the heathen in the way of covenant engagement; and that

there can be no mercy but such as is thus secured.*

Let us now attend to the language of those advocates of Episcopacy to whom you have felt yourself at liberty to apply so many severe and degrading epithets.

1. What do they say on the subject of faith? They agree with their Presbyterian brethren, that it is the leading condition of salvation, and the basis of all other Christian graces and virtues; but they do not think themselves authorized to assert that there are no possible circumstances in which God will extend mercy to such as labour under fundamental error. Let the subject be illustrated by a reference to the great doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This doctrine is absolutely fundamental to the Christian system: such as reject it are in a great and most dangerous error; and, as a general rule, must be considered to be without hope. But here I stop, not feeling myself at liberty to say that there are no *possible circumstances* in which God will *pardon* the error of the Socinian, and receive him to mercy. On the contrary, I would lay down the general principle, that all who sincerely desire and endeavour to know and do the will of God, will be crowned with his blessing; and I am by no means disposed to assert, that real piety and fundamental error may not be co-existent. Much more disposed

* Continuation of Letters, p. 37, 57, 58.

should I be to unite with Bishop Horsley in the following most excellent observations, which do equal honour to the head and heart of that illustrious man.

“ Though truth, in these controversies, can be only on one side; he will indulge, and he will avow, the charitable belief that sincerity may be on both. And he will enjoy the reflection, that, by an equal sincerity, through the power of that blood which was shed equally for all, both parties may at length find equal mercy. In the transport of this holy hope, he will anticipate that glorious consummation, when faith shall be absorbed in knowledge, and the fire of controversy for ever quenched. When the same generous zeal for God and truth, which too often, in this world of folly and confusion, sets those at widest variance whom the similitude of virtuous feelings should the most unite, shall be the cement of an indissoluble friendship; when the innumerable multitude of all nations, kindred, and people, (why should I not add of all sects and parties) assembled round the throne, shall, like the first Christians, be of one soul and one mind; giving praise, with one consent, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb that was slain to redeem them by his blood.”*

Will you carry your charity to this extent? Far, very far from it! You will not admit the possi-

* Charge to the Clergy of St. Albans, in defence of the divinity of Christ, against the attack of Dr. Priestley.

bility of salvation, in any circumstances, to such as may be in fundamental error; for, you make salvation, as I have already observed, to depend on the eternal and unconditional decree of God; of an interest in which faith is the sole and infallible assurance. Of course, fundamental error proves the individual entertaining it, not to be within the limits of the predestinating decree.

2. What opinion do Episcopalians entertain with respect to those who are in utter ignorance of the Gospel? Do they consign them to indiscriminate perdition? God forbid! They shrink with horror from the thought. Let me briefly state their ideas on this subject.

Salvation is only through the death of Christ; but the merits of his death may extend to those who have never heard of his name.

The efficacy of our blessed Saviour's passion is set forth in the sacred volume as of boundless extent. "He died for the sins of the whole world." "He tasted death for every man." "He gave himself a ransom for all." By his death, therefore, all men are placed within the reach of mercy. To say, that a Redeemer was indispensable to the restoration of the human race to a state of favour with God, is one thing;—to say, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation to have positively heard of that Redeemer, is quite another.

Man, by transgression, had sunk into a state of captivity to sin and death. In this state he must have remained had not a Mediator interposed; it being utterly impossible for him, by any effort of

his own, to avert the penalty of the violated law. Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, expiated the guilt of transgression; thus procuring an act of grace to be passed in favour of fallen man. This act is to be traced simply to the mercy of God. But the act of pardon, although freely and graciously passed, prescribes certain conditions to be performed by man. The performance of the conditions, however, does not entitle him to claim the promised reward as his *due*; but is, simply, indispensable to his being put in *actual possession* of the blessings to which the sufferings of the Saviour constitute the only *title*.

Where the Gospel is proclaimed, obedience to the commands of Christ, wrought through faith, is the condition of salvation: where the Gospel is not proclaimed, men will be judged by the particular law under which they may have been placed. All are subject to the law of conscience; and this law, where no revealed system has been vouchsafed, will be the standard of decision. "As many as have sinned without law," says St. Paul, "shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law."* Or, to use the emphatic words of our blessed Saviour himself—"that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and

* Romans ii. 12.

did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”*

Such are the ideas entertained by the advocates of Episcopacy, with respect to the salvation of the heathen. They believe that the blood of Christ was shed for all mankind; extending not less to such as have never heard of his name, than to those who live under the full light of his Gospel. The uninstructed pagan will be tried by the law of that reasonable nature which God has given to the whole human race; and a merciful Judge will make all proper allowance for the difficulty of the circumstances in which he may have been placed. Compare this with the stern sentence of your public formularies—“ They who having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature.”†

Will you still inveigh against the contracted spirit of your opponents; or boast of the enlarged and liberal character of your own mind?

3. As to the case of infants, the advocates of Episcopacy have no hesitation in believing that all persons, dying before the commission of any actual crime, will be saved. You, on the contrary, have subscribed the Westminster Confession of Faith, which unequivocally gives us to understand that there are infants in hell. You

* Luke xii. 47, 48.

† Larger Catechism, question 60.

profess to be a devoted admirer of Calvin, who divides infants into the two classes of elect and reprobate; representing the latter as brought into the world simply that they may be for ever destroyed.*

On the subject of charity, Sir, your lips should be closed for ever.

4. Let me say a few words upon the case of the modern Jews.

The standards of your society consign them to indiscriminate perdition. For example—The Westminster Catechism cuts off the heathen from the very possibility of mercy, on the simple ground that they have not faith in Christ. Now, the heathen cannot believe in Christ; having never heard of him. How, then, can there be a possibility of escape for the Jews? It cannot be said of the Jews that they have never heard of Christ: on the contrary, they have actually rejected him. If the heathen, who, simply, have not heard of Christ, must universally perish, the Jews can have no hope; their case being much stronger than that of the heathen, inasmuch as they have not the same absolute impossibility to plead in their excuse.†

* This, surely, is not too strong a mode of expression. If persons dying in infancy perish, they must come into the world under an absolute necessity of perishing; and if they come into the world under an absolute necessity of perishing, they must be created simply that they may be destroyed. All this follows, at once, from the admitted fact, that we are not free agents until we are capable of distinguishing between right and wrong.

† This mode of reasoning proves also that the standards of your society deny the *very possibility* of mercy to Arians and Socinians, and all other heretics, who may labour under any fundamental error. If “they,

What are the ideas entertained on this particular subject by the men of whose charitableness of temper you appear to think so very unfavourably?

Do they hold the opinion that the Jews who

who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature," it is very certain that no circumstances will induce God to pardon such as, living under the light of the Gospel, nevertheless fail to receive Christ in his true character.

The heathen labour under an *absolute impossibility* of believing in Christ; and yet they *indiscriminately* perish. Jews, Arians, and Socinians do not believe in Christ, and have no *absolute impossibility* to plead in excuse. Therefore, Jews, Arians, and Socinians must *indiscriminately* perish. The conclusion is inevitable.

See, Sir, what a system of divinity you have embraced!

There are infants in hell.

The countless myriads who have never heard of Christ, constituting by far the largest portion of the human race, will be indiscriminately lost.

All the Jews who have lived since the coming of Christ, with all the Arians and Socinians that have ever existed, will perish eternally.

Of this immense multitude not an individual will be spared. God will shut up his bowels of compassion; making no allowance for the force of prejudice, for the circumstances of education, or even for ignorance that is *absolutely invincible*.

The severe and contracted opinions which now prevail among Calvinistic Presbyterians, have regularly descended to them from their Puritanic ancestors. It was one of the charges preferred by Travers against the excellent and liberal Hooker, "*that he doubted not but God was merciful to save many of our forefathers, living heretofore in popish superstition; forasmuch as they sinned ignorantly.*" Travers maintained the utter impossibility of salvation within the limits of the Papal Church. So gloomy and bitter, indeed, was the spirit of the Puritans on this point, that the person who preached the funeral sermon of the Queen of Scots, was reviled for not "*being positive for her damnation.*"*

Indeed, Sir, you should have abstained from reproaching the advocates of Episcopacy with the narrowness and bigotry of their temper and principles.

* Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. i. pages 57, 58, 61, 62, 68, Oxford edition, 1703.

have lived in Christian countries since the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, must, without exception, perish? God forbid! Salvation, as I have more than once observed, can be only through the blood of a crucified Redeemer. They to whom Jesus Christ is proclaimed, are required, as a condition of eternal life, to believe in him; and such as reject him must perish. This is undoubtedly true as a *general rule*. The question is, whether there can be any circumstances in which a failure to receive Christ in his proper character will be pardoned. Your religious society takes the ground that there can be no such circumstances; for, in the very strongest case, that of persons who use the utmost diligence in improving all the advantages they possess, and fail to believe in Christ from invincible ignorance, the Westminster Catechism expressly declares salvation to be impossible. Of course, there are no circumstances in which a Jew may be pardoned and received to mercy.

Your opponents hold on this subject a very different language.—The Jews are in a great and most lamentable error, for which they must render account; but God forbid that we should undertake to limit the Divine mercy, by saying that no allowance will be made for the particular circumstances in which the Jews are placed, and that they must *indiscriminately* perish for ever. No—we most sincerely believe that God will make great allowance for those strong prejudices which the Jews of the present day imbibe from their tenderest infancy.

He is a merciful being, and remembers that we are but dust.

“The times of this ignorance,” says the Apostle, speaking of the corrupt and idolatrous Gentiles, “God winked at”—In other words, God will not judge the Gentiles with the strictest severity: He will make allowance, to a certain degree, even for their idolatry; or rather he will suffer it to be somewhat excused by the ignorance in which they were sunk. And, in the same way, we have reason to believe that God will judge many of the Jews in mercy in reference to the almost unconquerable prejudices of their education.

Let it not be supposed that, in holding this language, we undervalue the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. Far from it!—Those doctrines are the power of God unto salvation: such as reject them lose all covenanted title to mercy; and, as a general rule, must perish. All we contend for is, that a merciful God will make allowance for the errors of his creatures, and that there may be cases in which a failure to receive Christ in his true character may be so far excused by ignorance, by prejudice, by frailty, as not to draw after it inevitable destruction. Thus far we are warranted in going by the word of God.

Let the candid reader compare these two sets of opinions; and, if he has not learned to be surprised at nothing which he may meet with in this strange world, I think he will be filled with some degree of wonder when he is told, that the advocates of the former are never weary of declaiming

against what they are pleased to call the narrow and uncharitable spirit of the advocates of the latter.

In the second letter of your work you have made an attack upon my character as a clergyman and a man, which, in gross and wanton injustice, has, scarcely, I am inclined to think, its parallel in the annals of controversy.

I have promised to lay the case circumstantially before the public; and I now proceed to the execution of the task.

In my Letters, addressed to you, I took the liberty of stating, that the standards of your religious society consign the heathen world to indiscriminate perdition; and I quoted a passage as being express to the purpose. "They who having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature."

It is true, I marked the passage as belonging to the Confession of Faith; whereas it really belongs to the Larger Catechism of your society. Of this mistake you avail yourself, to conceal from your own people the true doctrine of their articles, and to heap upon me an odium which you knew to be unmerited. Some excuse might be made for you, if I had not marked the very page in which the cited passage is contained. This circumstance takes from you all apology for one of the most cruel slanders that ever dishonoured the press.

Let us descend to particulars.

In pages 62, 63, and 64 of the Continuation of your Letters, you thus write—"Mr. How, in his zeal to prove that Presbyterians are even more uncharitable than such high-churchmen as himself and others, endeavours to throw great odium on a clause in the 10th chapter of our *Confession of Faith*, which is in the following words—'Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved *in any other way whatsoever*, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.' All that these words are intended to assert, is, that none of our fallen race can be saved *in any other way than through Christ*. The slightest perusal is sufficient to ascertain that this is their real meaning."

"The doctrine, then, of the passage alluded to by Mr. How, is simply this, That it is *false* and *pernicious* to teach that men may be saved in *any other way* than through the atoning sacrifice and sanctifying spirit of Christ. A position in which, one would imagine, all professing Christians, except *Socinians* and *Universalists*, must, without hesitation, concur. But Mr. How exceedingly dislikes it, and is determined to hold it up to detestation and abhorrence, as asserting that none who have not been favoured with the preaching of the Gospel can possibly be saved, and as consigning

the whole heathen world to inevitable perdition.* By what management does he attempt to do this? By faithfully transcribing the clause, and laying it before his readers in a fair and unmutilated form? Not at all. Had he done this, his purpose would have been defeated. Every reader would instantly have recognized in the language of our *Confession of Faith*, a perfect coincidence with that of the Scriptures.† But by a contrivance, which, it will hereafter be seen, is not unusual with this gentleman, he first essentially alters the passage, and then presents it, regularly marked with inverted commas, as if it were the real language of the article. What that language in *fact* is, you have already seen. Mr. *How* declares that it is as follows—‘They who having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature.’‡ Having thus taken out of the passage an important clause which it *does* contain, and added to it what it does *not* contain, he holds it up to his readers as consigning to inevitable perdition the whole heathen world. And, assuming this as the acknowledged construction, he vehemently declaims against it as ‘uncharitable,’ ‘cruel,’ a ‘position

* The tenth chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith has been fully examined, and proved to consign the heathen world to indiscriminate perdition. It is impossible to reconcile the language of the chapter with the doctrine that salvation may be possible to those who have never heard of Christ.

† See particularly Acts iv. 12. John xiv. 6. John xvii. 3. Gal. i. 6, 7, 8.

‡ Letters, p. 25.

of deep toned horror,' and calculated to 'fill the rational mind with dismay.'"

You charge me with a most dishonourable attempt to mutilate your religious standards in order to fix upon them an odious sense; and, to make good your accusation, you introduce a passage of those standards distant an hundred pages from that which I had cited. My quotation is literally correct; there is not the variation even of a comma. It is a serious business to make an attack upon private character. No one, properly impressed with a sense of moral obligation, or actuated by that delicacy which belongs to virtuous minds, will ever indulge in remarks which touch the fair fame of his neighbour, until he has taken all practicable methods to ascertain their truth. When you looked into the tenth chapter of your Confession of Faith, and found there a passage so very different from that introduced in my Letters, you should at least have paused before you proceeded to the conclusion, that I had corrupted it to answer a dishonourable purpose. The pause of a moment would have led you to examine the page quoted by me. If, upon examining that page, in one edition of your religious standards, you had not found the passage in question, you should have examined another edition; and had your search still proved fruitless, you should have consulted me.* I was on the

* The quotation in the 29th page of my Letters is from the edition by Bonsal & Niles, 1805. This edition contains the different Presbyterian Standards, the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Smaller

spot; and you had called upon me in relation to a comparatively unimportant matter, to ask my authority; observing, however, a scrupulous silence upon the point under consideration. Can it be imagined that you were ignorant of the clause of your religious articles which I quoted in the 25th page of my Letters? This, surely, is a most inadmissible supposition. Besides, I had marked the quotation with so much particularity as to render mistake impossible.

But, not content with accusing me of a dishonest alteration of the language of your religious articles, you proceed to hold me up to public execration, as a traitor to the Church in which I minister. The injury which you have thus done me, as many of your people will never read this reply, is, in no small degree, irreparable.

In pages 64 and 65 of the Continuation of your Letters, you use the following language—"But the most wonderful part of the story is yet to be told. It is a fact, that one of the *Thirty-nine Articles* of Mr. *How's* own Church, contains precisely the same declaration that he, with so much violence, condemns in our *Confession of Faith*. The article referred to is the *eighteenth*, which is in the following words: 'They also are to be had

Catechism, and the Directory for Worship; but it is marked on the back, simply, "Confession of Faith." I referred, accordingly, to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, p. 140. The passage is in that page, word for word: it happens to be a part, however, not of the Confession of Faith, but of the Larger Catechism.

Such is the mistake that has exposed me to so many severe accusations.

accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.' The only difference worthy of attention is, that the Presbyterian Confession of Faith pronounces the *doctrine*, that men may be saved otherwise than by Christ, '*pernicious,*' and to be '*detested.*' Whereas, the Episcopal article more harshly declares, the *persons* who hold it are to be *had accursed*. This article Mr. *How* has solemnly subscribed, and the doctrine contained in it he has canonically sworn to preach and support: and yet he declares 'he has no power to express the feelings with which this *most detestable doctrine* fills his bosom.' To what can we ascribe this conduct? I am unable to think of it without the deepest astonishment and horror!''*

The Eighteenth Article of our Church has been compared with the Presbyterian standards. They have been proved to speak a very different language; our article simply setting forth the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, while your standards inexorably pronounce damnation upon the whole heathen world. Presbyterian authors† express themselves most unequivocally upon this subject. The very words of Dr. Witherspoon have been quoted; and the *Christian's Magazine*,

* Miller's Continuation of Letters, p. 64, 65.

† Or rather *Calvinistic* authors express themselves so.

and your own Letters, have been clearly shown to exclude the heathen world from all possibility of mercy.

But my concern, at present, is with the attack which you here make upon my character as a minister of the Episcopal Church, and as an honest man.

The bulk of your readers will unquestionably suppose that I detest the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; and that I make no scruple in publicly declaring my detestation of it. They will regard me, of course, as a violator of my canonical vows, and as a man lost to all sense of virtue. You have so expressed yourself, that your readers can draw no other conclusion:—nay, you have made a direct and positive assertion, leaving no conclusion to be drawn upon the subject. And, to mark your own strong sense of the enormity of my conduct, you declare, that you are “unable to think of it without the deepest astonishment and horror.” This is a sort of language applicable only to a case of the very grossest depravity. You have, therefore, unequivocally charged that depravity upon me.

You know, perfectly well, the opinions which I entertain on the subject of the divinity and satisfaction of Christ. I had expressed myself so fully in my Letters to you, as to leave no possibility of mistake. “The meritorious cause of justification is the blood of Christ. In all that man can do or believe, there is no merit. By grace he is saved. But conditions are prescribed to him, upon the

performance of which, his salvation, through Christ, depends. And even these conditions he cannot, of himself, fulfil. The death of Christ, being an atonement for sin, brings all into a salvable state; but those only will be saved who comply with the conditions prescribed; and the influences of the Holy Spirit are so far given to all, as to enable all to comply." "How are we saved? By free grace—by an act of unmerited mercy. How are we judged? By the deeds done in the body. Nothing in man can lay a *meritorious ground* for acceptance with God; such ground being exclusively laid in the sufferings of the Saviour."*

I found fault with the Presbyterial standards, not for setting forth the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, but for peremptorily consigning the heathen to indiscriminate perdition. Of this you are fully aware; and yet you expressly tell your readers that I speak of the doctrine of salvation through the merits of Christ in terms of the utmost detestation.

You complain, very seriously, of the harsh epithets which your opponents frequently permit themselves to apply to you. It is true, we have spoken of your conduct with pointed disapprobation. Justice demanded that we should do so; and, moreover, there can be no difficulty in proving that you have indulged, to say the least, in an equally liberal use of severe expres-

* How's Letters to Miller, p. 26, 27.

sions. But all this is pretty much a matter of course in every controversy. Persons who feel strongly are apt to speak strongly. There are certain limits, however, within which the man of principle is most anxious to confine himself: He is particularly circumspect in the language which he uses when the character of his opponent is to be deeply affected by it; so guarding his words, that there may be no possibility of putting a wrong construction upon them. You have brought a direct charge against me, which you knew to be totally unfounded; and a charge, which, if true, must mark me out, in the view of every honest man, as a worthless hypocrite.

But I forbear from those animadversions which the nature of the case would most fully authorize, and leave the subject to your own silent and dispassionate reflection.

LETTER VI.

CHARGE OF AGGRESSION.

SIR,

THE most superficial reader of your Letters must perceive a constant desire in you to address the prejudices and passions of the community. You never cease to tell us how peaceful your own temper is; or to represent your opponents as actuated by a spirit full of persecution and strife. You charge us with carrying on a system of unprovoked attack upon our Presbyterian brethren: indeed, if you are to be credited, we have DENOUNCED and PROSCRIBED* them with all the wantonness of malice. You even point to the year in which this system of PROSCRIPTION was formally commenced, and to the publications in which it is contained.†

“ The formal and open commencement of this system may be dated in the year 1804. Previous to that period, indeed, several sermons, and other fugitive pamphlets, had evinced a disposition on the part of some individuals, to revive and urge certain claims, as unfounded in Scripture as they are offensive to liberal minds. But in that year there appeared, in the city of New-York, the first

* Continuation of Letters, p. 15—35.

† The Companion for the Altar, and the Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, published in the year 1804, by the Rev. Dr. Hobart.

of a series of larger publications, which evidently had for their object a system of more bold and decisive proscription than had been ventured upon for a considerable time before.*”

This charge of denunciation and proscription had been urged in your former work with great vehemence.† The Christian’s Magazine, also, had been very loud and clamorous upon the same subject. Indeed, every effort had been made to preclude a dispassionate consideration of the real merits of the case, by holding up the advocates of Episcopacy to public scorn, as wanton disturbers of religious peace.

This matter has been placed in its true light, I matter myself, in the remarks offered by Dr. Bowden and myself upon your first Series of Letters; and Dr. Hobart, in defending himself against the violent attack made upon him in the Christian’s Magazine, has entered into a detailed view of facts, which cannot fail, I should suppose, to satisfy every unprejudiced mind.‡

But, without taking the slightest notice of the explanations which have been given, you renew the charge with augmented virulence; and, as it is of a very odious nature, I shall be pardoned for examining it with some degree of minuteness.

May the advocates of Episcopacy, then, be fairly accused of carrying on a system of DENUNCIATION AND PROSCRIPTION against their brethren

* Continuation of Letters, p. 15. † Letters, p. 19, 350, 352.

‡ Hobart’s Apology, Letter V.

of other denominations? Have they displayed an *intolerant* and *persecuting* spirit?

Let these questions be candidly examined: And take care, Sir, that I do not prove you guilty of the crime with which you so violently charge your opponents; guilty of it, too, while engaged in the very act of imputing it to others.

1. A stranger, upon reading your book, would naturally suppose that the advocates of Episcopacy had represented the religious society to which you belong as unfit to be tolerated, and had openly taken the ground that it should be suppressed by law. What less could subject them to the charge of wanton denunciation and proscription? But is such the real state of the fact? So far from it, that we do nothing more than claim the right of thinking for ourselves on the subject of the constitution of the Christian Church.

We believe that there is a divinely instituted society, called the Church, of which all men are commanded to become members; that a ministry is essential to the very existence of this society; that Jesus Christ established a ministry consisting of distinct and subordinate grades, giving to the highest grade the exclusive power of ordaining; and that ordination, of course, can be valid only when regularly performed, by virtue of his authority. Such, therefore, as have laid aside ordination by the highest grade of the ministry, and substituted in its place ordination by the second grade, have lost the sacerdotal office; and, this office being essential to the very existence of

the Church, they can no longer be regarded as in a Church state.*

These opinions we have had the presumption to entertain, and to defend. Will it be believed that such is the amount of what you call a system of denunciation and proscription against our dissenting brethren? Especially when it is stated that, in contending for what we deem the true constitution of the Christian Church, we make the greatest allowance for the mistakes of our fellow men; expressly declaring our belief, that God will receive all who sincerely desire and endeavour to know and do his will, whatever violations of his commands they may commit through involuntary error?

And what will the reader say, upon being told that the very man who thinks fit to indulge in such a style of remark upon his Episcopal brethren, not only carries Presbyterian ordination to the precise extent to which they carry Episcopal; but, in speaking of the anti-Calvinistic doctrine, which they embrace, takes the liberty of calling it "a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God?"† Surely, if you may say to us, that our religious system is, in itself, quite as likely to

* Indeed, Dr. Hobart, in the works which have been so much found fault with, went no further than to represent Episcopacy as a divine institution, without which the Church cannot exist in a sound and perfect state.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 339.

carry us to Hell as to Heaven; we may say to you, without danger of giving offence, that, in laying aside the divinely instituted method of ordination, we consider you as having lost the sacerdotal power. Pray, Sir, in which case would you consider your neighbour as taking the greater liberty with you; if he should tell you that he conceived an important opinion entertained by you to be erroneous; or, that the whole scheme of your doctrine was of so horrid a nature as to be quite as likely to plunge you into the abyss of the damned, as to fit you for the paradise of God?

It is true, you do qualify this rough and terrible portrait by admitting that the consequences, which you draw from the anti-Calvinistic system, are not to be imputed to the advocates of the system, who view it in a very different point of light; and you even express a belief that many, who reject the peculiarities of Calvinism, may finally reach the kingdom of Heaven.*

* Continuation of Letters, p. 339, 340.

It is possible for an anti-Calvinist to be saved. He is better off, then, in your view, than the heathen, who infallibly perishes; or the reprobate infant ordained from the womb to the pains of eternal death. But let us not calculate too largely. The hope which you express on this subject, extends to those only who reject the Calvinistic doctrine "in words." Truly, you are one of the most cautious of men. After all you have said of the possibility of salvation to those who dissent from the dogmas of Calvin, it turns out that nothing is permitted but a VERBAL dissent. A substantial dissent, then, from the peculiarities of Calvinism, partial redemption, unconditional election and reprobation, and irresistible grace, must draw after it inevitable perdition. In fact, it is scarcely going too far to say, that you confine all hope of salvation to yourself and your Calvinistic friends. They who have never heard of Christ will be indiscriminately lost. Thus you cut off by far

But I have already very particularly inquired into the allowance which our respective societies make for error; and have shown that we go to an extent on this subject, which you unequivocally condemn.

Thus Episcopalians simply claim the right of thinking for themselves on the subject of the Christian ministry, and of decently expressing and defending their opinions.

In what, then, consists their offence? Surely, it will be said, these men must have been guilty of some outrageous attack upon their fellow Christians, or an author of common honesty would never have felt himself at liberty to apply to them such opprobrious epithets. Denouncers! Proscribers!* Wanton disturbers of religious peace! Men with whom it is difficult to live upon terms of Christian

the largest portion of the human race from the very possibility of mercy. For the whole body of Jews, Arians, and Socinians, there is no hope. And when you come to express your charitable ideas, in reference to those who adopt all your views of divine truth, except in the single article of the peculiarities of Calvinism, you take care to limit that hope to such as reject Calvinism "in words;" thus clearly presenting the idea, that a *substantial* rejection of the system must be fatal to the soul. Say not that I misrepresent you—Every word here uttered is supported by the standards of your religious society, and by your own unequivocal language. At all events, if you do not mean to say that none can be saved who *substantially* reject the Calvinistic scheme, it follows, that you really know not how to express yourself intelligibly upon the plainest subject. The fact, I fear, is, that you wished to appear very liberal; and, at the same time, felt the necessity of being extremely guarded; so as to pass for a great deal in *words*, while, upon a critical investigation, you will be found to steer clear of the error of setting the gates of Heaven more open than is consistent with the views of that gloomy class of theologians to which you belong.

* Letters, p. 19, 350, 352. Continuation of Letters, p. 15.

intercourse!* Miserable bigots, who are to be viewed in the same light with the worshippers of images, or the blind advocates of the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope!†—What have we done to merit all this at your hands?

2. Perhaps we have broached some new and strange doctrine, never before heard of in the Christian world; and this bold and unauthorized conduct you have felt it a duty to mark with the most decided reprobation.

The reader, disappointed in his first conjecture, will naturally adopt this, as furnishing the true reason of the extreme harshness of the epithets in which you have thought proper to indulge yourself. What will be his surprise, when he is told, that the institution for which we contend, is as old as Christianity itself!—Even the most learned opponents of Episcopacy are obliged to admit that it prevailed in the very first ages of the Gospel. CAMPBELL and CHAUNCY date its rise at so early a period as the close of the second century. BLONDEL and the WESTMINSTER DIVINES carry the period of its commencement up to the middle; DODDRIDGE and SALMASIUS, to the beginning of that age. BAXTER, CHAMIER, and DU MOULIN, acknowledge that Episcopacy prevailed even in the first century, and before the death of the last of the Apostles.

Thus, then, upon the statement of our opponents themselves, we have contended for no new

* Letters, p. 19.

† Ibid. p. 20, 21.

doctrine; but one rendered venerable by a prescription of seventeen hundred years.*

The Church of England, when she threw off the yoke of Popery, unequivocally took the ground of the divine institution of Episcopacy; forming her offices expressly upon this principle. This appears from the ORDINAL, which prescribes three distinct offices for the ordination of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons; and which positively declares that divers orders of ministers were established by God himself.† Accordingly, the Church of England has always insisted upon the necessity of Episcopal ordination to a valid ministry; and has never suffered any persons, without such ordination, to officiate as clergymen within her limits.‡ Thus, Mosheim, speaking of

* None pretend to date the rise of Episcopacy at a later period than the fourth century. You acknowledge that it existed in that age. Thus, according to your own account, Episcopacy took its rise within something more than two hundred years from the Apostolic age; and can plead a prescription of nearly fifteen centuries.

† “Almighty God, who, by thy Divine Providence, hast appointed DIVERS ORDERS OF MINISTERS in thy Church.” The prayer represents Deacons as one of the orders of ministers appointed by God.§

“Almighty God, giver of all good things, who, by thy Holy Spirit, hast appointed DIVERS ORDERS OF MINISTERS in thy Church.”||

“Almighty God, giver of all good things, who, by thy Holy Spirit, hast appointed DIVERS ORDERS OF MINISTERS in thy Church.”¶ The prayers in the above offices represent Bishops and Priests as divinely appointed orders of the ministry; and the power of ordination is given by the Ordinal to the Bishop alone.

‡ “No man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in this Church, or suffered to execute any of the said func-

§ Office for ordering of Deacons.

|| Office for ordering of Priests.

¶ Office for ordering of Bishops.

the Church of England, says, "it constantly insisted on the divine origin of its government and discipline, and scarcely allowed the other reformed communities the denomination of a true Church."*

Upon the same principles has the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country invariably acted. Without going back to the earliest period of her history, let me remind you of the conduct pursued by Doctors Johnson, Cutler, Chandler, and many other worthy and learned men in the State of Connecticut; who, convinced, upon mature examination, of the Divine institution of Episco-

tions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION OR ORDINATION."†

* Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 437.

Mosheim should have said, that the Church of England constantly insisted upon the divine origin of the *different orders of the ministry*. She never held that there is any particular *form of government and discipline* which is exclusively of divine right. Upon this point, indeed, she carried on a long dispute with the Puritans, who contended, that "God hath delivered in Scripture a complete, particular, immutable form of Church Polity." Mosheim, however, meant to say, that the Church of England has constantly insisted upon the divine institution of distinct and subordinate orders of the priesthood, and upon the necessity of Episcopal ordination to a valid ministry. He has expressed himself inaccurately in using the terms "government and discipline;" for, although these include the form of the ministry, yet they include many other things which are not particularly fixed by any divine law, but are left to be regulated by human prudence. Such are the ceremonies of public worship, the forms of discipline, and even the particular method of organizing that ecclesiastical power by which canons are passed for the government of the Church. Of these no specific and immutable system is drawn out in Scripture; but man is left to exercise a sound discretion; provided, always, that nothing be done contrary to the word or the spirit of the sacred volume.

† Preface to the book of Consecration of Bishops, and of ordering of Priests and Deacons.

pany, ceased to act as congregational clergymen, in which capacity they had officiated for some years, went to England for the purpose of obtaining a valid commission, and became most zealous and powerful advocates for the cause of primitive truth and order. From the time of Dr. Johnson to the present day, the subject of Episcopacy has been discussed in this country by a succession of able writers. Previous to the revolutionary war the Episcopalians here were destitute of Bishops. This was an intolerable grievance; and the American Church struggled long and unsuccessfully to get it redressed. Her applications to the English Bishops gave rise to an animated controversy, in which the whole subject of the constitution of the ministry was entered into, and the divine right of Episcopacy strenuously and unanswerably maintained.

So far, then, from broaching any new and extraordinary doctrine, the institution for which we contend, even by the admission of its most learned antagonists, has prevailed for the long space of seventeen hundred years. And not one of its opponents pretends to date its rise at a less distant period than the fourth century; within two hundred years of the very age of the Apostles. To all which, it is to be added, that the Church of England has put the principle in question at the very foundation of her reformation from popery; that the Episcopal Church of this country, when the revolutionary war had placed us in a state of independence, formally adopted the articles and

offices of the Church of England, and has uniformly refused to admit any persons assuming to be ministers of Christ, within her altar, until they had been regularly consecrated according to those offices; and that, from the very period of emancipation from papal tyranny, the doctrine of the divine right of Episcopacy has been maintained, both in Great-Britain and in this country, by a succession of as enlightened scholars, and as eminent saints, as ever adorned the Christian name.

It is by you and your brethren, Sir, that new and strange principles have been introduced. And, not content with separating from that divinely instituted ministry, which, from the Apostolic age, has been considered as an essential ingredient of the Church of Christ,* and thus plunging into the sin of schism; you brand with the most opprobrious language all who have the firmness to point out the nature of the sin, or to defend the cause of primitive truth and order. What is this but the very spirit of intolerance?

3. Further—The persons, whom you censure, have incurred your displeasure in the discharge of a sacred duty.

* “It was the general received persuasion of the ancient Christian world, that *Ecclesia est in Episcopo*, the outward being of a Church consisted in the having of a Bishop.” “Nor was this order peculiar unto some few Churches, but the whole world universally became subject thereunto; insomuch as they *did not account it to be a Church which was not subject unto a Bishop*.” Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. iii. p. 125.

It has been shown that the standards of our Church expressly declare that there have been three orders of ministers from the time of the Apostles; that these orders are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; that Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, did institute them; and that no one can be received by her as a Christian Minister, unless invested with that character by a person clothed with Episcopal power. These standards we have subscribed. It is our duty to defend them. It is our duty to bring the truths which they set forth to the view of our people, that they may know the doctrines of their Church, and thus be preserved from wandering after self-constituted teachers, who have no authority to administer the ordinances of Christ, or to expound his word. If, through our neglect, the people, over whom we have charge, are led into practices which the Church pronounces to be schismatical, how shall we answer it to our consciences, or to our God? This is a very solemn consideration, and ought to sink deep into the heart of every Episcopal divine.

In speaking of one of the articles of our Church, you take the liberty of observing, that we are canonically bound to preach and support the doctrines it contains; expressing the astonishment and horror with which our failure to preach and support them has filled your bosom. Well, Sir, we are as much bound to defend one of the standards of our Church as another. Now, it is undeniable that our Church sets forth the divine institution of Episcopacy; requiring such clergy-

men as are desirous of joining her from Presbyterial societies, before they approach her altar, to be re-ordained. In neglecting to enforce these truths, then, we should run into that very offence which you censure with such extreme severity.

You tell us that our articles are Calvinistic; and that, in neglecting to preach Calvinism, we violate our canonical vows. Well, the ordinal of our Church, you will admit, places Episcopacy upon the footing of divine right: We are bound, then, to maintain the divine right of Episcopacy.

If we fail to maintain a doctrine of our standards, you accuse us of a breach of plighted faith.

If we set forth the divine right of Episcopacy, which you will not venture to deny to be a doctrine of those standards, you brand us as bigots and disturbers of religious peace, with whom it is difficult to live upon terms of Christian intercourse.

Surely you are the most unreasonable, or we are the most unfortunate of men.

In a word, the doctrine which has given you so much offence, is as old as Christianity itself; it has been constantly acted upon by the Church of England, and by the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country; and we are under a sacred obligation to explain and defend it upon all proper occasions.

4. Whatever may be our claims on the subject of external order, it is at least very certain that they fall far short of those which are set up by the Presbyterial association. This, I flatter myself, I have

completely proved. You make a ministry absolutely essential to the very existence of the Church; and the exclusive validity of Presbyterian ordination is the fundamental principle on which your whole society is erected. The Westminster Divines tell us that the power of ordination is in a Presbytery, and quote the very passages of Scripture which they consider as bearing them out in their assertion. The particular association to which you belong, in describing the mode of ordination, expressly rests it upon Apostolic example. In your Letters, the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery is declared to be the only Scriptural or valid mode of conveying the sacerdotal office. Thus you put the ministry at the foundation of the Church, and Presbyterian ordination at the foundation of the ministry; while you are in the very act of inveighing against the exclusive claims of others.

Again—the standards of Presbyterian societies expressly declare the whole frame of their ecclesiastical government in Church Sessions, Presbyterian Assemblies, and Synodical Assemblies, to be of Divine and unalterable obligation; while Episcopalians hold that there is no form of government for the Church drawn out, in all its parts, in Scripture. Nay, some of the Presbyterian associations go so far as to represent the principles of their ecclesiastical government as essential to lawful society in the STATE, not less than in the CHURCH; and yet, strange as it may appear, leading individuals in such societies are violent in

their censure of the Episcopal Church, because she presumes to think distinct and subordinate grades of ministers to be of Apostolic institution.*

What now shall we say of your attempt to hold up the advocates of Episcopacy as wanton proscribers of their brethren of other denominations? The Episcopal Church asks only to be indulged in thinking for herself, and in decently expressing and maintaining her principles. This privilege you are unwilling to allow her. If she ventures to exercise it, you raise an outrageous clamour against her, and endeavour to overwhelm her with public odium. You are to be permitted to "write, preach, and print, your testimony against her corruptions;" and to set forth, in positive terms, the exclusive validity of your own method of ordination; while the least attempt, in any of her clergy, to state or defend her principles, however temperate their language, and however they may qualify their claims by allowance for the errors of their fellow men, is to draw upon them all the weight of your displeasure, and all the virulence of your invective.

5. It seems that the system of proscription, as you call it, was formally commenced in the year 1804. Thus Dr. Hobart is marked out as the original aggressor, and in terms calculated to expose

* I have not cited authorities in proof of the assertions here made, because the subject has been fully considered in the 3d, 4th, and 5th Letters, where the reader will find all that is now said fully established by quotations from the standards of Presbyterian societies, and the works of Presbyterian authors.

him to the view of the public as a wanton violator of the religious rights of others. A very brief statement of facts will enable the reader to judge how far, in this attack upon Dr. Hobart, your conduct possesses the sanction either of consistency or of truth.

In the year 1804, Dr. Hobart published two works, entitled, a "Companion for the Altar," and a "Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." These works are addressed solely to Episcopalians, and contain a brief statement and defence of the doctrine of their Church on the subject of the Christian Ministry. The subject is discussed with very great mildness. Indeed, *it is not even pretended* that the works in question are marked by any intemperance or severity of style. On the contrary, the utmost allowance is, on all occasions, made for error.

The reader will now see the amount of what you are pleased to denominate a system of attack and proscription. Dr. Hobart explained and defended an acknowledged doctrine of the Episcopal Church, in works addressed solely to the members of that Church, and composed in a spirit of the utmost mildness and decorum. Surely, no candid man would see, in a case of this kind, any thing more than the exercise of an unquestionable right, or rather the discharge of a sacred duty.

You will permit me to express my surprise that you should have confined your view, on this subject, within so very limited a period. If the prin-

ciples which you apply to the case of Dr. Hobart be at all correct, it will be easy to show that the Episcopal Church has been long since grossly and wantonly assailed. Indeed, I might refer you to the conduct of the Westminster Divines, and of the General Assembly of Scotland; both of which expressed themselves, habitually, in the most violent terms on the subject of Episcopacy; openly and repeatedly denouncing and abjuring it, in their public and solemn acts, as a popish and wicked hierarchy. And the war carried on by these bodies against Episcopacy, has been continued, by their friends and admirers, to the present day. But I will not refer you to a period or country so distant. Let me simply point out to you the recent conduct of Presbyterial Societies, and Presbyterial authors, within the United States.

Take the following passage from the Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church in North-America.

“ The Scripture acknowledgeth no degrees of rank or dignity among the ministers of the word; but hath established them in a perfect equality of office and authority. The distinction of superior and inferior clergy, under whatever form or pretext adopted, is highly unscriptural and anti-Christian.”*

The standards from which this passage is taken, were published several years before the appearance of those works of Dr. Hobart which have

* Page 477.

given you so much offence. Let me not be misunderstood. I am far from intending to find fault with the Associate Reformed Church on this occasion. Notwithstanding, indeed, they have used such strong language, even applying to our Church the opprobrious epithet of *anti-Christian*; still, Episcopalians have never complained. But they have surely had reason to consider themselves as most deeply injured and insulted, if there be any correctness in the view which you take of this subject.

Dr. Hobart contends that Episcopacy is a divine institution, and that all Christians are sacredly bound to conform to it. This, according to your view, is a gross attack upon other denominations. It follows, irresistibly, that the Associate Reformed Church, in branding all subordination in the ministry as anti-Christian, have committed an outrage upon their Episcopal brethren; and as the standards of this Church were published long before the works of Dr. Hobart, it is preposterous to represent the system of proscription as commencing with him.

The association to which you belong represents its own mode of ordination as the Apostolic one,* and sets forth its own particular form of ecclesiastical polity as possessing the sanction of Scripture and primitive usage.† What is this but declaring Episcopacy to be founded in corruption and usur-

* Form of Government, chap. xiv. sect. 12.

† Ibid. chap. vii. sect. 1.

pation? Indeed, you tell us expressly, that Episcopacy is the offspring of ecclesiastical intrigue and ambition:* you admit that Presbyterians have been in the habit of “writing, preaching, and printing, their testimony against the corruptions of the Episcopal Church.”†

But the standards of your society declare its charity in reference to those who differ from it on the subject of ecclesiastical government. Very true. But does not Dr. Hobart expressly declare his belief that God will bestow his grace on those who, through excusable ignorance or error, depart from his external institutions; that he will mercifully receive all who sincerely desire and endeavour to know and do his will? The amount of the matter, then, is this—Your religious society admits no ordination to be scriptural or valid, but such as is performed by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery: Dr. Hobart admits no ordination to be valid unless Episcopally performed. Your society expresses its charity for those who differ from it in opinion: Dr. Hobart expresses a similar charity. And while your society consigns the heathen world to indiscriminate perdition, and unequivocally sets forth the doctrine that there are infants in hell, Dr. Hobart turns with disgust and horror from such opinions, as alike repugnant to every view which reason can take of the attributes of God, and to the express declarations of the sacred volume.

* Letters, p. 11.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 51.

If, then, the language of Dr. Hobart may be truly represented as the language of "attack and proscription," it follows, that the Episcopal Church has been long since attacked and proscribed in the public standards of most of the Presbyterian societies of this country.

Let me now remind you of the language which individual authors of your profession have been in the habit of using.

Mark the following passage from Dr. Mason's Letters on Frequent Communion, published in the year 1798!

"We reject in a mass the corruptions of Popery, and of her ape, Prelacy. We renounce the religious observance of Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, &c. and the festivals in honour of a troop of saints and saintesses, as superstitious, and inconsistent with Gospel worship, how graceful soever to the anti-Christian calendar."*

I do not quote this for the purpose of complaining of it. Dr. Mason had a right to express his opinion on the subject of the institutions of the Episcopal Church. I certainly think that he has exercised the right with great roughness; and that, in talking of Prelacy as the ape of Popery, and of the Festivals of our Church as superstitious corruptions of Gospel worship, he has given his name to a very absurd accusation. Clear it is, if your ideas be correct, that Dr. Mason must stand charged with having commenced, in the year

* Page 89.

1798, a system of gross "attack and proscription" against the Episcopal Church. It would be difficult to find words more expressive of contempt and abhorrence than those which Dr. Mason uses. You will search in vain in the productions of Dr. Hobart for language of so coarse a character.

Let me next refer you to a discourse delivered by the Rev. Dr. Livingston before the New-York Missionary Society, and published by order of that society. In this discourse you will find the following very free expressions:

"Ecclesiastical dignitaries, spiritual Lords, and all the pageantry of the hierarchy, in its *various modifications*, which have debased the Gospel, and metamorphosed the kingdom of Christ to a kingdom of this world, will be finally trampled in the dust, and despised by Christians."*

The constitution of the Episcopal Church is here spoken of in terms of the utmost severity; the time being joyfully anticipated when it will be at once despised and detested throughout the Christian world. Language of this sort is no where to be found in the works of Dr. Hobart which you esteem so very reprehensible. While Dr. H. contends strenuously for the distinctive principles of his Church, he carefully abstains from every contemptuous form of expression. The discourse of Dr. Livingston was preached and published previously to the year 1804.

It is extremely painful to me to occupy so much

time in this way; but you have advanced a most unjust and bitter charge against the Episcopal Church, from which I feel it a duty to defend her. This it is impossible to do, without entering into an unpleasant detail of facts.*

6. It is really amusing to compare what you say of the works of Dr. Hobart with the manner in which you speak of your own Letters. These being addressed exclusively to Presbyterians, it was your expectation, you tell us, that they would not be considered as of the polemic character; but would be suffered to pass without notice;† and you accordingly proceed to charge us with intruding into your Church to attack you in the peaceable performance of your official duties.‡

But is it not remarkable that it should never have occurred to you to apply your new principle to the publications of Dr. Hobart? They are addressed solely to Episcopalians; and, from their very nature, can be intended for Episcopalians alone.

Your Letters, being addressed solely to Presbyterians, are a mere private affair; and no man can publicly animadvert upon them, without committing an offence against your rights and privileges. The works of Dr. Hobart, as limited in their ad-

* The foregoing facts are also stated in Dr. Hobart's Apology for Apostolic Order, where the charge of aggression is unanswerably confuted.§

† Continuation of Letters, p. 19.

‡ Ibid. p. 35.

§ Apology, p. 33—39.

dress and intention as your Letters, amount, nevertheless, to a public attack upon other societies of Christians, which they are bound to repel with contempt and indignation.

Will you never cease to be at variance with yourself?

But let it be further observed, that Dr. Hobart confined himself to a discussion of principles. He did nothing more than set forth and defend the admitted doctrines of the Church to which he belongs. There is not a single personal remark in his publications. Have you followed his example? Very far from it! Subordination in the ministry you continually represent as the offspring of Ecclesiastical ambition:* you tell us that our Church has deviated far from the simplicity of the Gospel:† you “write, preach, and print, your testimony against her corruptions.”‡ But of all this I make no complaint. If you think our Church corrupt, you have a right to say so. Without a privilege of this kind, free discussion would be impossible. But you are not content with representing our Church as corrupt and unscriptural; you go on to indulge in personal invective against her advocates. They are wretched bigots, with whom it is difficult to live upon terms of Christian intercourse;§ they are no better than the worshippers of images;|| they are to be viewed in the same

* Letters, p. 11.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 51.

|| Ibid. p. 21.

‡ Ibid. p. 10, 11.

§ Letters, p. 19, 351.

light with those who hold that the Pope is infallible, and that there is no possibility of salvation out of the Church of Rome.* The narrowness of their views, and the slenderness of their information, it always delights you to dwell upon.

See, then, the true state of the case!

The standards of Presbyterian societies had declared the Episcopal Church to be unscriptural and anti-Christian in her ministry: they had expressly set forth their own mode of ordination as the only Apostolic or valid mode, and their own form of ecclesiastical polity as of divine and unalterable obligation. Presbyterian authors had spoken of the Episcopal Church in terms of the greatest contempt; they had represented her worship as superstitious, and inconsistent with the purity of the Gospel; they had declared Episcopacy to be the ape of Popery, and had hailed the period, as rapidly approaching, when it would be trampled in the dust, and universally despised: They had never ceased to "write, preach, and print, their testimony against the corruptions of the Episcopal Church." In this state of things, Dr. Hobart published two works, entitled "A Companion for the Altar," and "A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." In these works, addressed solely to Episcopalians, he stated and defended the doctrine of Episcopacy, as declared in the standards of the Church of which he is a

* Letters, p. 21.

minister; making always, however, the greatest allowance for conscientious error, and indulging in not a single personal remark. Immediately an outrageous clamour is raised against him; he is branded as a bigot and a fool; an anonymous writer attacks him with shameful intemperance in the public prints; he is charged with setting on foot a system of odious denunciation and proscription. When it is stated that his publications are addressed solely to Episcopalians, and are designed for their instruction in the acknowledged principles of their Church, the plea is rejected with contempt; his works are declared to be nothing less than a public assault upon his neighbours.

Look now at the other side of the matter.

Dr. Miller addresses to his people a Series of Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry, in which, not content with branding Episcopacy as the corrupt result of ecclesiastical fraud, and with setting forth the exclusive validity of Presbyterial ordination, and of Presbyterial Church government, he goes on to indulge in the utmost severity of *personal* remark. Is an attempt made to refute his reasoning, and to repel his charges? He very piteously tells us, that his Letters are a private affair between himself and his people, of which no one has a right to take any notice.

Dr. Hobart explains and defends the acknowledged principles of his Church, in a style free from all intemperance, and without the slightest

intermixture of personal remark. This is a deliberate system of proscription. The author is an outrageous disturber of religious peace: he is a bigot and a fool.

Dr. Miller contends most zealously for the exclusive validity of Presbyterian ordination, and of Presbyterian Church government; and not satisfied with perpetually telling his readers how far the Episcopal Church, through the influence of prelatical fraud and ambition, has wandered from scriptural purity, continually vents himself in the application of the most injurious epithets to the persons of her advocates. This is a mere private affair; so much so that it is an act of positive rudeness to take any notice of it.

What a specimen of consistency and of candour!

7. But where will all this sort of complaint and crimination lead us? If the view which you take of this subject be correct, theological discussion must be entirely given up. Has the Quaker a right to complain because the sacraments are insisted on as of indispensable obligation? Is the Socinian denounced and proscribed whenever the doctrine of the divinity of Christ is represented as fundamental to the scheme of the Gospel? Surely, it is possible to exercise charity at the same time that we contend for truth. Men should never be considered as guilty of attack upon their fellow Christians simply for bearing testimony against what they conceive to be pernicious error. It is a solemn duty to expose error, and to recommend truth. It may be the highest act of charity

to warn our fellow men of the danger of their situation. If the language of menace or insult be made use of, then, indeed, religious liberty may be considered as invaded. It is to the spirit with which controversy is conducted, rather than the particular principles contended for, that we are, in this view of the subject, to attend. To be sure, if men openly take the ground that such as differ from them in opinion ought not to be tolerated, they may fairly be regarded as the common enemies of the Christian world. But there is a very wide difference between strenuously urging a doctrine upon the understandings and consciences of our fellow men as of vital importance, and calling upon the civil magistrate to crush, by the force of his authority, all who refuse to receive it as an article of faith.

Let then Christians of all denominations be considered free to maintain what they conceive to be truth, and oppose what they conceive to be error, with all the zeal and energy which the subject may seem to them to authorize. Let this be regarded as nothing more than a fair exercise of the rights of conscience. At the same time, let all recollect, in the midst of their zeal, that they are fallible; and thus be led to respect in others that right of judgment which they claim for themselves. Had you acted in the spirit of this rule, your Letters on the Christian Ministry would have met with a very different reception from those against whose opinions they are levelled. But in the lofty confidence with which you advanced

your own views of ecclesiastical order, you appeared entirely to forget that your opponents had quite as much right to be positive as yourself. In the spirit of your work, Presbyterial order is set up as a sort of idol, before which we are, at least, to be compelled to be dumb, if not to fall down and worship. For what great difference can there be between attempting to silence an antagonist by the sword of the executioner, and by branding him as a ferocious bigot, who denounces and proscribes all that presume to reject his dogmas? Had you permitted us to maintain the divine right of Episcopacy as freely as you maintain the divine right of Presbytery, we should have regarded you as a candid controvertist, and should have abstained from that severity of animadversion, of which, in the Continuation of your Letters, you so bitterly complain. But, Sir, in replying to your work, we considered ourselves not only as contending against pernicious error, but as grappling with an adversary, who openly professed his determination to reduce us to abject submission. What wonder that intolerance of this kind, in the nineteenth century, should call forth a spirit of indignant resistance!

LETTER VII.

OPINIONS OF THE REFORMERS.

SIR,

I Do not think it necessary to follow you in the exact order which you have pursued: indeed, this would interfere with a regular and perspicuous discussion. In the present letter, I propose to examine what you have said of those illustrious men who purged the Church from the foulness of the papal corruption. We will direct our attention, in the first place, if you please, to the REFORMERS of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

“The Fathers of the Reformation in England were Presbyterians in principle.” “It does not appear that any of them thought of placing Episcopacy on the footing of divine right.”*

To this statement you strictly adhere in your second publication.†

It appears from your Letters that you are not unacquainted with the ordination offices of our Church, nor with the fact that those offices were drawn up by the very men whom you represent as Presbyterians in principle.‡ Besides, your atten-

* Letters, p. 219. † Continuation of Letters, p. 225—236.

‡ You tell us expressly, that Archbishop Cranmer had a principal hand in drawing up the forms of ordination of the Church of England.||

|| Letters, p. 222.

tion was particularly directed, by Dr. Bowden and myself, in our reply to your first Series of Letters, to the Ordinal of the Church of England. You very prudently decline, in your second work, all notice of this authentic document, while you still adhere to the statement which you had previously given as perfectly correct. You, therefore, cannot plead either ignorance or error.

Let us examine the *Ordinal*, and see how far you are correct in asserting that it was drawn up by PRESBYTERIANS.

We will look, in the first place, at the preface: "It is evident to all men diligently reading Holy Scripture, and ancient authors, that, from the Apostles' time, there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."*

A Presbyterian, then, is one who believes that the *three distinct orders* of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, have existed from the time of the Apostles, and of course were established by them.

Again—"No man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal consecration, or ordination."†

* Preface to the Book of Consecration of Bishops, and of ordering of Priests and Deacons.

† Ibid.

A Presbyterian, then, considers Episcopal ordination as absolutely essential to the exercise of a valid priesthood; refusing to wait upon the ministrations of any man who has not been commissioned by a diocesan Bishop.

But let us proceed to the Ordinal itself. And here we are immediately struck with the fact, that it prescribes three distinct offices; one for the ordination of Deacons, one for the ordination of Priests, and one for the ordination of Bishops. When a Deacon is raised to the office of Priest, he receives a new commission: when a Priest is raised to the office of Bishop, he receives a new commission.

A Presbyterian, then, is one who believes that a Presbyter is made a Bishop by being again ordained.

Still further—The first prayer in the office for ordering Deacons, commences thus: “Almighty God, who, by thy Divine Providence, hast appointed divers orders of ministers in thy Church.”

The same kind of language occurs in the office for ordering Priests: “Almighty God, giver of all good things, who, by thy Holy Spirit, hast appointed divers orders of ministers in thy Church.”

In the office for the consecration of Bishops, we have the very same words: “Almighty God, giver of all good things, who, by thy Holy Spirit, hast appointed divers orders of ministers in thy Church.”

Is it possible to find language more full, or more explicit? Three orders of ministers have existed from the Apostles' time—these orders are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons—Almighty God, by his Holy

Spirit, did institute them: And to preserve the distinction, thus divinely established, no man is to be esteemed a lawful minister unless Episcopally ordained. Still, the reformers who drew up the Ordinal, you tell us, were "Presbyterians in principle;" not one of them entertaining the "thought of placing Episcopacy upon the footing of divine right."

But how do you establish your assertion, that the reformers of the Church of England were Presbyterians in principle? Do you refer your readers to the Ordinal which these venerable men composed, and endeavour to prove, by a critical examination of its contents, that it speaks the language of parity? Very far from it! The Ordinal contains the matured and final opinions of the English reformers on the subject of the ministry: they composed it as a permanent standard of practice for the Church; and, accordingly, it has continued to be her guide from the Reformation to the present day.

Aware of the difficulty which the Ordinal throws in your way, you resolved to surmount it by a bold assertion. Thus you speak in your first Series of Letters: "Those who wish to persuade us that the venerable reformers of the Church of England held the divine right of Diocesan Episcopacy, refer us to the ordination service drawn up by them. But those who insist on this argument, forget that the ordination service, as it now stands, differs considerably from that which was drawn up by Cranmer and his associates. If I mistake not,

that service, as it came from the hands of the reformers, did not contain a sentence inconsistent with the opinions which I have ascribed to them. Above an hundred years afterwards, in the reign of Charles II. this service was revised and altered.”*

You could not venture to be positive. “If I mistake not.” And not only do you substitute hypothesis in the place of fact, but you give us no authority for what you say. Thus we are to take your conjectures for established truths. The fact is, that the Ordinal was not altered, in the reign of Charles the second, in any thing at all material.†

* Letters, p. 224, 225.

† The act of Parliament for drawing up an Ordinal, passed in the year 1549, not long after the accession of Edward VI. to the throne. It begins thus—“It is requisite to have one uniform fashion and manner for making and consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” We see, therefore, that the act of Parliament, under which the Ordinal was drawn up, expressly recognizes the distinction in the orders of the ministry. Accordingly, in the preface to the Ordinal, and in the prayers of the ordination offices, divers orders of ministers are formally declared to be of divine institution.

In the Ordinal set forth in Edward’s reign, the words in the office for consecrating a Bishop are—“Take the Holy Ghost, remember that thou stir up, &c.” The words in the present Ordinal are—“Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Bishop.”

The alteration was made in consequence of a cavil of the Papists, in which they were joined by the Puritans, that the word Bishop not being used, it was impossible to determine to what office the person, on whom hands were laid, was intended to be consecrated. Perhaps a more ridiculous criticism was never employed. The two offices for consecration of Bishops and of Presbyters, are perfectly distinct. A person who had been ordained Presbyter according to the one form, if raised to the office of Bishop, was again consecrated according to the other. It could not but be known to what office an individual was ordained; there was, literally, no possibility of mistake in the case. But factious men are ever ready to dispute, and make trouble. Accordingly, the Papists raised the difficulty, which has been just mentioned,

Every word which I have quoted stood in the old Ordinal precisely as it stands in the present: the prayers of the ordination offices were exactly the same. This was stated by Dr. Bowden and myself in our reply to your first publication. We called upon you to establish your assertion, that the Ordinal had been materially changed in the reign of Charles II. To all this you make no reply; passing by the whole subject of the ordination offices of our Church, although they are the very hinge on which the particular point in controversy turns, without a word of notice.

Well—you asserted that the ordination service was materially changed in the reign of Charles II.—we denied your assertion, and called for your proof. In your reply you produce no proof, but leave the subject entirely unnoticed. Your assertion, relative to a change in the Ordinal, then, is to be considered as given up. But still you persevere in making Presbyterians of the English reformers.

Let us, then, draw out your account of a Presbyterian into a full definition.

He is one who believes that Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, did institute divers orders of ministers; that these orders are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; that to the highest of these the power of ordaining exclusively belongs; and that no per-

and the Puritans were not ashamed to join them in it. The alteration was introduced to take away all pretence for the cavil.

This subject is very fully explained by Dr. Bowden, in his second volume on Episcopacy, Letter XIV.

son can be considered as a lawful minister of Christ without having received Episcopal ordination or consecration.

Instead of endeavouring to ascertain the opinions of the reformers in question, from those public forms of ordination which they established for the permanent regulation of the practice of the Church, you perplex and confuse the reader with a mass of extrinsic evidence.

You quote "The Institution of a Christian Man," and "A necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man;" two books which were composed and published by the English reformers several years before the Ordinal appeared—You refer to the conduct of Archbishop Cranmer upon the death of Henry VIII.—You introduce an extract from the Questions and Answers of "a select Assembly of Divines," called for "the resolution of several questions relative to the settlement of religion."—All this is of a date prior to the year 1550, in which the forms of ordination and consecration were solemnly fixed in the Church of England.

You go on to derive evidence from events subsequent to the period above mentioned; referring us to an act passed in the thirteenth year of the reign of Elizabeth; to the conduct which the English reformers observed towards some eminent foreign Divines, particularly Calvin; and to the license granted by Archbishop Grindal to John Morrison, a Presbyter of the Church of Scotland.

Now, Sir, on all this I have two observations

to make. In the first place, if the documents and facts, to which you refer, really speak the language which you labour to make them speak, it is nothing to the purpose: in the second place, they do not speak that language; but, when properly examined, militate against the very positions which you bring them to confirm, and establish the very doctrines which you bring them to overthrow.

In the first place, then, if the documents and facts, to which you refer, really speak the language which you labour to make them speak, it is nothing to the purpose. Admit that the English reformers, when they composed the "Institution, and Erudition of a Christian Man," and when the select Assembly of Divines was convened, were really favourable to the doctrine of ministerial parity; the only consequence is, that, upon more full investigation, they found reason to change their opinion. At the time of drawing up the Ordinal, they unquestionably believed in the divine institution of distinct and subordinate orders of ministers, with appropriate powers. "Almighty God, who, by thy Holy Spirit, hast appointed divers orders of ministers in thy Church." Here we have the conclusion in which the English reformers rested when they had completed their inquiries. How unfair is it, then, in examining into the opinions which these men entertained on the subject of the ministry, to pass, *without notice*,*

* You take not the slightest notice of the *Ordinal* in your second work; and in the first, you only very briefly refer to it, for the purpose of making an assertion which you ought to have known to be utterly

the authentic document from which alone those opinions may be fully, and with absolute certainty, discovered, and dwell on partial extracts of books put out for temporary use in the infancy of the Reformation, and with respect to which it is well known that very different accounts are given by opposing writers!

Again—if it be admitted that the facts, to which you refer, of a date subsequent to the year in which the Ordinal was established, are exactly as you represent them, the only consequence would be, that the history of the Church of England furnishes instances of the violation of her principles by secret enemies, or injudicious friends. Is there a Church on earth whose history will not present us with similar examples? When a Church expressly lays down a principle in her standards, is it not preposterous to point us to cases in which, through the difficulty of the times, she was led to infringe that principle?

The reformers of the Church of England, you tell us, were Presbyterians. We answer, that these reformers, in the standards which they drew up for the perpetual government of the Church, expressly declare that Bishops, Priests, and Deacons are distinct and subordinate orders of the ministry, and that to the highest of these orders the power of ordination is exclusively given. What reply do

unfounded; and when called upon to prove the assertion, you remain perfectly silent. You do not attempt to prove, and still you have not the magnanimity to retract. This, too, with respect to a fact on which the truth of an important head of your book wholly turns.

you make? Why, you tell us that Archbishop Grindal, in the reign of Elizabeth, many years after the Ordinal was established, gave a preaching license to John Morrison, a Presbyter of the Church of Scotland. You say not a word about the Ordinal, which can alone determine the question, but put us off with the loose conduct of an Archbishop who was called to an account by the Privy Council for his irregularity. The case of Grindal you have not fairly stated; but take the fact to be precisely as you give it, and it amounts simply to this, that Grindal violated the standards of the Church to which he belonged. Thus, then, although the reformers of the Church of England expressly declare, in a standard which they deliberately composed for the government of that Church, that Episcopacy is a divine institution, you pass by this standard without a word of notice, and assert, that they were Presbyterians, because, in the reign of Elizabeth, John Morrison, who had never been Episcopally ordained, was, nevertheless, permitted, by Archbishop Grindal, to preach and administer the sacraments. In the same way you might prove that the English reformers rejected the whole doctrine of the authentic call and commission of the Gospel ministry, from the circumstance of laymen, in the difficulty and confusion of the times, having the address to get into livings in the Church.

Suppose it to be admitted that Calvin never received ordination—would it follow that the Presbyterians do not believe in the necessity of an

outward commission to a valid ministry? Just as much as it follows, from the irregularity to which Archbishop Grindal was prone, that the reformers of the Church of England were not Episcopalians.

In the second place, the documents and facts, to which you refer, do not speak the language which you endeavour to make them speak; but, when properly examined, militate against the very positions which you bring them to confirm, and establish the very doctrine which it is your design to overthrow.

It is not my intention, however, to enter minutely into this part of the subject. Having shown that the standards, which the English reformers established for the perpetual government of the Church, set forth, in the plainest and strongest terms, the divine institution of Episcopacy, it is not material to inquire into the progress of their opinions. It is sufficient to know the conclusion in which their investigations terminated. Besides, a tedious detail of quotations would be necessary; and it is my earnest wish to prevent the present work from swelling to an inconvenient size. I should, however, consider it a duty to follow you, step by step, for the purpose of showing how little reliance can be placed upon your statement of facts, or citation of authorities, had not the task been most fully and ably executed by Dr. Bowden.* He has left nothing for me to say. It is by presenting partial quotations that you give

* Bowden on Episcopacy, vol. ii. letters 14 and 15. vol. iii. letter 12.

to the early declarations of the English reformers the appearance of being favourable to the doctrine of parity. Dr. Bowden has laid the whole evidence before the reader, and has thus driven you at once from a position, which you evidently considered as of great importance, and which, with characteristic positiveness, you had repeatedly pronounced to be impregnable.

Before leaving this part of the subject, however, I think it proper to take a little notice of what you have said relative to Archbishop Cranmer. Let me solicit your attention, in the first place, to the very inconsistent accounts which you give of the venerable Primate.

You declare, expressly, that Cranmer was a Presbyterian in principle; believing Bishop and Presbyter to be the same by divine right, and regarding the doctrine of ministerial parity as the doctrine of Scripture, and of the primitive Church.*

Now, see how you speak of the Archbishop in another part of your work! "The first consists of those who believe that neither Christ nor his Apostles laid down any particular form of ecclesiastical government, to which the Church is bound to adhere in all ages. That every Church is free, consistently with the divine will, to frame her constitution agreeably to her own views, to the state of society, and to the exigences of particular

* Letters, p. 119, 243, 244.

times." "This is well known to have been the opinion of Archbishop Cranmer."*

Here Cranmer is represented as a perfect latitudinarian; believing the whole constitution of the Christian Church to be a mere human affair, and subject to alteration, from day to day, as prudence may dictate. The ministry is thus placed upon the footing of simple expediency; for, being part, indeed the principal part, of the constitution of the Church, it is of course liable, according to the language of this passage of your Letters, to be perpetually varied to suit "the exigences of particular times." Still, you tell us, in a subsequent page,† that Cranmer considered Bishop and Presbyter as the same by divine right. This is to place the clerical office on the footing of divine institution. And if the clerical office be of God, how can it be said that the constitution of the Church, of which that office is the chief ingredient, is a mere affair of expediency, and subject to perpetual alteration by human authority?

At one time you assert that Cranmer viewed the whole constitution of the Christian Church as a creature of human policy, and liable to incessant change; at another, that he considered the great and leading principle of that constitution as fixed by God himself.

When authors are in very eager pursuit of victory, it is extremely difficult for them to steer clear of contradiction. Cranmer, according to the hu-

* Letters, p. 12.

† Ibid. p. 219.

mour you happen to be in, is now an Erastian; now a Presbyterian; but never an Episcopalian, although he drew up the standards which lie at the foundation of the Church of England, and which impart to her her Episcopal character.

But there is further evidence of the opinion entertained by the venerable Archbishop on this subject.

He compiled a Catechism, in which, according to Bishop Burnet, he “fully owns the divine institution of Bishops and Priests;* and, in his well known sermon on the Power of the Keys, which is considered as containing high Church notions, he uses precisely the same language. “And so the ministration of God’s word was derived from the Apostles unto others after them by imposition of hands, and giving the Holy Ghost, from the Apostles down to our days. And this was the consecration, orders, and unction of the Apostles, whereby they, at the beginning, made BISHOPS and PRIESTS, and this shall continue in the Church, even unto the world’s end.”

Let us see how you interpret this plain and unequivocal passage. “It speaks of the Apostles making Bishops and Priests. And does not every Presbyterian grant that there were many Presbyters in the Apostles’ days who had no pastoral charge, and who were, of course, no Bishops.”†

Thus you obstinately persevere in making a Presbyterian of Cranmer. The Archbishop tells us

* History of the Reformation, vol. ii. page 71.

† Continuation of Letters, page 232.

that the Apostles, in the beginning, appointed *Bishops* and *Priests*. Well, we are to understand him as speaking in the prevalent language of his day. In his time Bishops and Priests were distinct orders; they had been distinct orders, you expressly admit, from the fourth century to the time of the Reformation, throughout almost the whole extent of the Christian world. Cranmer himself was a Bishop, and exercised power over Presbyters. He had been raised from the office of Presbyter to that of Bishop by a new ordination; and in the Ordinal he expressly ascribes the creation of the distinct orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, all possessing clerical power, to the Holy Spirit.

The liberty which you take is contrary to the established laws of criticism, and would lead to endless uncertainty. Unless an author is to be construed according to the usage of the period in which he lives, how shall we ever ascertain his meaning? Words are perpetually changing their signification. If we abandon the period in which the individual wrote, to what period shall we go? Shall we wander back five, or ten, or fifteen centuries? Cranmer tells us that *Bishops* and *Priests* were appointed by the Apostles. He gives us no hint that he means to be understood in a sense different from the received sense of the words in his time; he is, of course, to be understood as saying that the Apostles established distinct and subordinate orders of the priesthood. This, however, does not accord with your system;

and, in attempting to reconcile the language of the Archbishop to your views, you not only run into the gross absurdity which I have just been exposing, but contradict yourself, by setting at naught a principle which lies at the foundation of your religious society, and which it is the great object of your whole book to defend. “Does not every Presbyterian grant that there were many Presbyters in the Apostles’ days who had no pastoral charge, and who were, of course, no Bishops?”* Now, the very cardinal principle of Presbyterianism is, that Bishop and Presbyter, in the New Testament, are convertible titles; a Presbyter being a Bishop, and a Bishop a Presbyter. Upon this ground the whole argument, from the community of names, obviously proceeds. But it turns out that Bishop and Presbyter always mean distinct things; a Presbyter being a clergyman without a pastoral charge, and a Bishop being a clergyman with one. If they have this distinct signification, how can they be convertible terms?

But let us see whether you are consistent with yourself. “The Apostles gave the name of Elder to the pastors and rulers of the Churches which they organized.”† In this passage we are informed, that the Presbyters spoken of in the New Testament, were the pastors and rulers of

* Continuation of Letters, p. 232. Cranmer says that the Apostles, in the beginning, established BISHOPS and PRIESTS. Poh! He only meant that the Apostles appointed some Presbyters with livings, and some Presbyters without them. Are you serious?

† Letters, p. 34.

particular Churches; but it now appears that Presbyters, in the Apostolic age, were persons who had no pastoral charge.

Again—"These terms are uniformly employed in the New Testament as convertible titles for the same office. An attentive consideration of the following passages will establish this position beyond all doubt. The first which I shall quote is found in Acts xx. 17, 28. '*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders (or Presbyters, Πρεσβυτερους) of the Church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, (or Bishops, Επισκοπους) to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.*' In this passage, it is evident that the same persons who, in the 17th verse, are styled *Elders* or *Presbyters*, are, in the 28th, called *Bishops*."*

Here you tell us, and tell us truly, that the Apostle addresses the Presbyters of the Church of Ephesus as the pastors of that particular Church. But now you assert that Presbyters in the Apostolic age had no pastoral charge, and were not Bishops.†

The Presbyters of Ephesus were the Bishops of Ephesus; in short, the Presbyters and the Bishops of Ephesus were one and the same body of men, with a double name. Yet the Bishops of Ephesus had the pastoral charge of the Church

* Letters, p. 34.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 232.

there, and the Presbyters had not the pastoral charge of it; in other words, one and the same body of men, at one and the same point of time, were the pastors of the Church of Ephesus, and were not its pastors.

I might go on to produce other passages in which you are equally at war with yourself on the point in question. For example, in commenting upon 1 Peter v. 1, 2, you say—"The construction of this passage is obvious. It expressly represents Presbyters as Bishops of the flock, and solemnly exhorts them to exercise the powers, and perform the duties of the office. In short, the title of Bishop, as applied to ministers of the Gospel, occurs only four times in the New Testament. In three of these cases there is complete proof that it is given to those who are styled Presbyters; and in the fourth case there is strong presumption that it is applied in the same manner."*

Here you say that Presbyters are Bishops of the flock; that is, pastors of particular Churches, possessing all the powers, and subject to all the duties connected with a fixed charge;† nay, you go so far as to affirm, that the word Bishop, in *every instance in which it occurs in the New Testament*, is applied to Presbyters; yet now you tell us that Presbyters, in the Apostolic age, were clergymen without a pastoral charge, and Bishops clergymen with one. The term Bishop, in every instance in

* Letters, p. 38, 39.

† The very definition which you give of a Scriptural Bishop is, that he was a clergyman with a particular pastoral charge.

which it is used in the New Testament, is applied to the Presbyter, and yet the Presbyter was not a Bishop.

The Presbyters of the Apostolic age were not Bishops of the flock.* The Presbyters of the Apostolic age were Bishops of the flock.†

Again—"The case of the Elders of Ephesus is still more decisive. The government of this Church is evidently vested in the Elders."‡ Here you expressly say that Presbyters were persons who had the care and government of a particular Church. Now you as expressly say that Presbyters were persons who had not the care and government of a particular Church.||

In your attempt to make Presbyterians of the English Reformers, you call Raignolds, Stillingfleet, and White, to your aid. But the standards drawn up by the Reformers in question, expressly assert that the orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with distinct and subordinate powers, were established by Almighty God. Of what consequence, then, is the dictum of Raignolds, Stillingfleet, or White? Raignolds was a noted and violent Puritan. You have not pointed us to the page of the Irenicum of Bishop Stillingfleet in which the opinion you ascribe to him is expressed. I think it extremely probable that you have misunderstood him. However, be this as it may, it is well known that the Irenicum was published by Stillingfleet at the early age of twenty-four, and

* Continuation of Letters, p. 232.

† Letters, p. 38.

‡ Ibid. p. 44.

|| Continuation of Letters, p. 232.

that he afterwards retracted, most fully and explicitly, the leading opinions which it contains. Your statement relative to Bishop White is extremely inaccurate. This excellent Prelate takes divine right in the most rigid sense, as founded on some positive precept, and as admitting of no alteration or modification even in cases of necessity. The great design of his pamphlet was to show that, in the necessity to which the Episcopal Church of this country was reduced, a temporary departure from Episcopacy would be perfectly proper. It was his express proposition, that the departure should continue only until the lawful succession could be obtained. And whenever he speaks of the Reformers, or other leading divines of the Church of England as admitting that Episcopacy is not of divine right, he understands divine right as extending only to institutions founded on some explicit and positive command of God himself.* In this sense no person has ever pretended that Episcopacy is a divine ordinance. Its advocates represent it as an institution established by the Apostles, acting in conformity to the will of Christ, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: they do not pretend that there is any passage of Scripture commanding, in so many words, that there shall be three distinct and subordinate orders of the ministry.

* The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States considered, 12mo. Philadelphia. 1782. Let the pamphlet be carefully read through, and it will be found that I have given a correct view of the ideas of its author.

On this subject Bishop White is perfectly correct.

“ There having been an *Episcopal power* lodged by Jesus Christ with his Apostles, and by them exercised generally in person, but sometimes by delegation, as in the instances of Timothy and Titus; the same was conveyed by them, before their decease, to one pastor in each Church, which generally comprehended all the Christians in a city, and a convenient surrounding district. Thus were created the apostolical successors.”*

Bishop White, then, in representing the English Reformers as giving up, in reference to Episcopacy, all claim of divine right, takes the words in a strict and absolute sense, as implying positive precept, and excluding all departure from the succession even in cases of necessity. He is very far from saying that the English Reformers did not consider Episcopacy as an Apostolic institution. He is very far from saying that they did not regard it as established under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in conformity to the will of Christ. How could he tell us any such thing with the Ordinal of the Church of England before his eyes!

Thus you misrepresent Bishop White altogether; retailing to us his words, but in such a way that your readers will not understand them in the sense which they were intended to convey.

The Church of England, then, was reformed upon Episcopal principles. She retained that con-

* Case of the Episcopal Churches considered.

stitution of the ministry which had been established by Christ and his Apostles, and which had prevailed for the long period of fifteen hundred years, throughout the whole extent of the Christian world. This single fact is of more weight than all the testimonies which are cited in your book. In the Church of England the Reformation was conducted with the most profound deliberation. The eminent men to whom this important work was committed examined the subject slowly, calmly, maturely. They felt their ground at every step; testing all the doctrines and institutions to which their attention was turned by the standard of Scripture, and of the primitive faith. Their progress from error to truth was gradual: We are enabled to trace it with considerable distinctness by the books which they put out, and by interesting transactions in which they participated.

In England, the Reformation was begun by the government, and by the higher orders of the clergy; of course, there was no impediment in the way of a thorough investigation of the whole subject, or of any system of measures which that investigation may have pointed out as proper to be adopted.* In the countries in which a parity

* The superstitious and arbitrary temper of Henry VIII. indeed, embarrassed the Reformers, and prevented them from pursuing that course which their own superior wisdom would have dictated. It required time, however, for the emancipation of the Reformers themselves from some of the errors of popery. When the inimitable youth, Edward VI. ascended the throne, things had become ripe for a thorough change. Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and their fellow labourers, were, at length, delivered from the absurdities of popery; and their excellent Sovereign

in the ministry was set up, the Reformation was commenced by the inferior orders, in opposition to the existing government, both of Church and State. The situation of things was not favourable to sober and dispassionate inquiry: on the contrary, it led to precipitation and irregularity. The Reformers, who were thus circumstanced, not being masters of their own conduct, were unable to proceed with that calm and collected temper which so eminently distinguished their English brethren. Accordingly, the Church of England has ever been regarded as the ornament and bulwark of the Protestant cause. The Church of Rome has always viewed her with an eye of particular jealousy, and directed against her the most systematic and persevering opposition.

But it was not in England alone that the primitive and scriptural form of the ministry was retained. The same course was pursued in the Churches of Sweden and Denmark. "The internal government of the Lutheran Church is equally removed from Episcopacy on the one hand, and from Presbyterianism on the other; if we except the kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark, who retain the form of ecclesiastical government that preceded the Reformation, purged, indeed, from

was always ready to give his sanction to every thing that tended to the purity of religion. There was, indeed, a most fortunate concurrence of circumstances. And after the dark interval of Mary's reign, the wise Elizabeth, and her faithful counsellors, made it their object to restore things, as neatly as possible, to the state in which they had been left by the primitive Reformers.

the superstition and abuses that rendered it so odious.”*

The account which you give of the Church of Denmark and Sweden is totally inconsistent with that of Mosheim. He distinguishes between the Church of those kingdoms, and the Lutheran Church, as it is constituted in Germany; the latter, he tells us, has seceded equally from Episcopacy on the one hand, and Presbyterianism on the other; while the former has not thus seceded, but is Episcopal, having retained the form of ecclesiastical government which preceded the æra of the Reformation. But, if your account be true, there is no difference between the Bishops of Sweden and Denmark, and the Lutheran Superintendents. Mosheim, and his learned translator, M'Lean, could not have been ignorant on this point. I must, therefore, rest in the account which they have given. Besides, it appears from your own statement, that the Presbyter, in the Churches of Denmark and Sweden, is raised to the office of Bishop by a new ordination.† This is not the case with the Lutheran Superintendent, and it marks a substantial difference between him and the Swedish or Danish Bishop. If there be no distinction, by divine right, between the Bishop and Presbyter, why should a new ordination be thought necessary to convert the one into the other? Surely this would present, if your supposition be correct, a most strange and flagrant inconsistency.

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 287. † Letters, p. 241

When you tell us that the first Archbishops and Bishops of Sweden were set apart to their offices by mere Presbyters, I would take the liberty of asking on what authority you make the assertion. You have given no authority; and yet it is a point of so much importance, in reference to the constitution of the Swedish Church, that you must have been anxious to place it beyond the reach of controversy. Doubtless, therefore, you had no authority to produce. If you will take the trouble of examining what Mosheim has said on this subject, you will find that the Bishops of Sweden and Denmark were compelled, by the civil power, to submit to the Reformation.* The Churches of those kingdoms, then, were, at no time, without a valid Episcopacy; and thus your attempt to place them upon a Presbyterian foundation has totally failed.

Even admitting that it is customary, in the Swedish and Danish Churches, for Presbyters, in the absence of the Bishop, to ordain Presbyters, the only consequence is, that the persons thus ordained are destitute of all clerical power. Still the Episcopal succession may remain uncorrupted. If it be customary for Presbyters to ordain Bishops, then, indeed, the succession is lost; at least it is lost in all those cases in which it may be necessary to trace it through any other than the first order of the priesthood.

If, in the Swedish and Danish Churches, the

* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 78—87.

order of Presbyters be considered as equal, or rather synonymous, by divine right, with the order of Bishops, it is certain that Mosheim and M'Lean have presented a very erroneous view of the subject. For Mosheim, after expressly telling us that the Churches of Denmark and Sweden have not departed from Episcopacy, proceeds thus —“ The Lutherans are persuaded that there is no *law of divine authority* which points out a distinction between the ministers of the Gospel, with respect to rank, dignity, or prerogatives; and, therefore, they recede from *Episcopacy*.”* The term Episcopacy, then, is here used by Mosheim as marking a distinction, *by divine right*, between the order of Bishops and that of Presbyters; of course, according to his statement, the Churches of Sweden and Denmark recognize this distinction, and are founded upon it.

In England, Denmark, and Sweden, the Reformation proceeded with more calmness, regularity, and deliberation, than in any other part of Europe. The civil power in Denmark and Sweden conducted the business; in England it was conducted by the Bishops, under the protection of the civil power. The same favourable state of things did not any where else exist. Germany, for example, exhibited a scene of the most dreadful contention. Luther and his followers were opposed not only by the ecclesiastical authority, but by the imperial government. The

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 288.

Reformation being commenced by the inferior orders of the clergy, and by the people, Episcopacy was, of course, laid aside. Had Luther been a Bishop when he entered upon his opposition to the Papacy, the Lutheran Church, without doubt, would have been reformed upon primitive ground; but being opposed by the whole Episcopal order, Luther and his fellow labourers were reduced, as they alleged, to the necessity of founding their ecclesiastical system upon new principles.* Not being able to procure Bishops, they established Superintendents, with all the powers of Bishops, and wanting nothing but consecration to invest

* It may not have been *absolutely impossible* for the foreign Reformers to procure Bishops; undoubtedly there was great difficulty in the way; and the Reformers themselves considered the difficulty so great as to plead the *necessity* of their situation in excuse for their departure from Episcopacy. The circumstances of the case, therefore, can be considered only as *excusing*, not as *justifying*, the conduct of the Reformers. Indeed, it is no easy matter to determine the degree of difficulty in procuring Bishops that existed at the period of which we are speaking. The civil government, in some of the countries of Europe, was extremely hostile to the Reformation, and, under the influence of the Papal court, immediately adopted measures of violence towards any Bishops who showed a disposition favourable to the cause of the Protestants. This was particularly the case in France and Germany. Whether the Reformers were justifiable in proceeding upon the basis of Presbyterial ordination, even supposing them to have laboured under an *absolute impossibility* of procuring Bishops, is a question into which I do not choose at present to enter. At all events, they were bound to adopt the Episcopal constitution as soon as they had the power of doing so. But it is extremely difficult for men to retrace their steps; particularly when they are wandering from the true course. A thousand obstacles immediately occur to prevent a change. We can never, therefore, be too careful in avoiding all departure from divine institutions; for it is impossible to calculate the extent of the evil which even a slight departure may ultimately produce.

them with the full Episcopal character. Did these men believe in ministerial parity as the doctrine of Scripture and of the Primitive Church? If such were their opinion, why did they not establish parity, and make it the basis of their ecclesiastical system? Besides, in adopting the plan of distinct and subordinate orders of the ministry, Luther and his friends represented it as necessary to prevent schism, and to secure the peace and order of the Church. Let it be recollected, too, that they established the system of imparity as the *permanent* system of their association. If, then, they believed the Scriptural system to be a system of parity, it follows, that they thought themselves wiser than the Apostles, and that they regarded a departure from the divine law as absolutely necessary to preserve the Church from destruction. It is impossible to evade this conclusion. If, indeed, the plan had been a *temporary imparity* in the ministry, to be quickly succeeded by a *permanent parity*, the conclusion might not so irresistibly follow. But to say that Luther regarded ministerial parity as the doctrine of Scripture, while, at the same time, he established imparity as the perpetual rule of his ecclesiastical system, is, certainly, to place him in no very favourable point of light.

But I undertake to assert, that Luther and Melancthon were desirous of reforming the Church fully upon Episcopal principles. Evidence of this is to be produced which you will find it, I presume, no easy matter to resist.

Luther professes that if the Popish Bishops would cease to persecute the Gospel, “we would acknowledge them as our Fathers, and willingly obey their authority, which we find *supported by the word of God.*”* The same doctrine is advanced by Luther in a tract entitled his Resolutions.†

Mark the following striking passages from the Augustan Confession, and the Apology for that Confession, both of which were drawn up by Melancthon! “The Bishops might easily retain the obedience due unto them, if they urged us not to keep those traditions which we cannot keep with a good conscience.”‡ “We have oft protested, that we do greatly approve the ecclesiastical polity and degrees in the Church, and, as much as lieth in us, do desire to conserve them. We do not mislike the authority of Bishops.”§ “I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of Bishops. For I see what manner of Church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. I do see that hereafter will grow up a greater tyranny in the Church than there ever was before.”|| “By what right or law may we dissolve the ecclesiastical polity, if the Bishops will grant to us that which in reason they ought to grant? And if it were *lawful* for us to do

* See Chandler’s Appeal Defended, p. 239.

† Vol. i. folio, p. 309. Probo quamlibet civitatem habere debere Episcopum proprium *jure divino*, quod ex Paulo ad Titum ostendo dicente—hujus rei gratia reliqui te Cretæ, &c.

‡ Augustan Confession, p. 109.

§ Apol. Augustan Confession, p. 363.

|| Apol. Augustan Confession, p. 325.

so, yet surely it were not *expedient*. Luther was ever of this opinion.”*

The following strong language is contained in a letter written by Melancthon to Luther, in the year 1530. “Zuingle has sent hither, in print, his Confession of Faith. You would say neither more nor less, than that he is not in his senses. At one stroke he would abolish all ceremonies, and *he would have no Bishops.*”†

The careful historian Strype, after stating that in the Reformation, as conducted by Cranmer, the Ecclesiastical Polity was retained, adds, “which the wise Melancthon did so approve of, that he professed he had often propounded it in Diets of the German nation.” “And this I add,” continues Strype, “that it might be observed how Archbishop Cranmer went by the same measures in the Reformation of the Church of England; maintaining the Hierarchy, and the revenues, dignities, and customs of it, against many in those times, that were for the utter abolishing them, as relics of Popery. Such a correspondence there was between our Archbishop and the wisest, moderatest, and most learned Divines of Germany.”‡

It is clear, then, from the evidence which has been adduced, that the Lutheran Reformers were decidedly opposed to the system of ministerial parity; indeed, that they considered it as utterly inconsistent with the peace and order of the

* Melanct. Camerarius Hist. Con. August. p. 389.

† See Milner's History of the Church of Christ, vol. v. p. 577.

‡ Strype's Memorials of Cranmer, p. 287, 288

Church. It is equally clear that they were extremely desirous of retaining the Episcopal constitution of the ministry, and of founding all their proceedings upon it. They repeatedly offered to receive Bishops, and to place them at the head of their system. When all this is taken in connexion with the very pointed language of some of the extracts which have been exhibited, it is difficult, if not impossible, to resist the conclusion, that the Lutheran Reformers considered Episcopacy as a primitive and Apostolic institution. Accordingly, not being able, as they supposed, to procure Bishops, they established Superintendents with Episcopal authority, and wanting nothing to make them real Bishops but a regular consecration. Still, on the other hand, it would certainly appear, from some of the testimonies which you have cited, that the Lutheran Reformers really considered ministerial parity as the primitive and scriptural doctrine. Indeed, it is no easy matter to ascertain the precise ideas which they entertained on the subject in question; their views, it is very probable, were not a little fluctuating. The true conclusion, upon a fair view of the whole subject, is, perhaps, this. If Luther and Melancthon had been Bishops, they would have reformed upon Episcopal principles, and the doctrine of the divine right of Episcopacy would have been the unequivocal doctrine of the Lutheran Church. But being nothing more than Presbyters, they laboured, in vain, to procure the Episcopal succession. Opposed by the whole Episcopal order in

Germany, they were reduced, as they supposed, to the necessity of proceeding without it: they did proceed without it, and set on foot Presbyterial ordination; to which they probably reconciled themselves, in the first instance, on the ground that necessity will justify a departure from general laws. But the irregularity of their practice soon began to produce some effect upon their opinions. Having adopted Presbyterial ordination, they defended it on the ground of necessity; but gradually, from the well known constitution of the human mind, proceeded to talk of Bishop and Presbyter as being one in the New Testament, and at length to represent the superiority of the Bishop to the Presbyter as founded in mere human policy. This is the natural course of things. An irregular example being set, it is at first excused, then justified, and finally clothed with a divine sanction. In this way, too, the fluctuating and contradictory language which occurs in the writings of some of the original Reformers, is to be accounted for. Having departed from the scriptural and primitive constitution of the Church, they found themselves in a perplexed and embarrassed situation. It is natural even to the best men to attempt to place their own conduct in the most favourable point of light: hence, having acted on the ground of Presbyterial ordination, the Reformers, although they pleaded necessity at first, and recognized Episcopacy as a primitive institution, still were not disinclined to find arguments in Scripture that might

sanction ordination by the hands of Presbyters. There are few, if any, minds sufficiently powerful to resist this tendency of our nature: so that a temporary departure, on alleged principles of expediency or necessity, from an institution acknowledged to be divine, will seldom fail to lead in the end to a *total* and *permanent* departure from such institution.

These observations are applicable to Luther and Melancthon, but in a still greater degree to Calvin, whose conduct and opinions I shall now proceed, with all possible brevity, to consider.

In page 243 of your Letters you thus write—

“The whole body of the Reformers, with scarcely any exceptions, agreed in maintaining that ministerial parity was the doctrine of Scripture and of the Primitive Church.” And in page 237 of the same work, speaking of Calvin, you say—“he totally rejected all ministerial imparity.”

It was for the purpose of testing these positions that I entered into a view of the conduct and language of the Reformers. We will now briefly examine how far they are applicable to the case of Calvin.

1. It is capable of being completely proved that Calvin did not profess to lay aside the order of Bishops, because he preferred the Presbyterial system, but that he pleaded necessity in excuse for his conduct; declaring his perfect readiness, indeed; his strong desire, to embrace Episcopacy, whenever he should be able to procure it without

submitting to the corruptions, and the arbitrary claims of the Church of Rome.

See the explicit language which he uses in the Confession of Faith which he composed in the name of the French Churches.

“In the mean time, we would not have the authority of the Church, or of those Pastors, or Superintendents, to whom the charge of governing the Church is committed, taken away. We confess, therefore, that these Bishops or Pastors are reverently to be heard, so far forth, as, according to their function, they teach the word of God.”*

In one of his Epistles, Calvin discusses the question—“What is to be done if a Popish Bishop shall be converted to the Reformed Religion?” He thus decides—“It is such a Bishop’s part to do his utmost, that all the parishes that belong to his bishoprick be purged from all errors, and from the worship of idols; showing himself a pattern to all the Curates of his Diocess, and inducing them to admit that reformation to which we are invited by the word of God; and which altogether correspondeth to the state and practice of the Primitive Church.” Calvin concludes, that the possessions and authority of the converted Bishop should be left with him.†

* Confess. Fidei nomine Gall. Eccles.

† Calvin. Epist. p. 466. See, on this point, Bishop Hall’s Divine Right of Episcopacy, part i. sect. 2. where the good Bishop breaks out—“Thus he, wisely and moderately: Not first of all, stripping him of his Episcopal power, as some hot heads would have done. You hear how judicious and moderate Calvin’s opinion was then; and had he been in your late pretended Assembly at Glasgow, or this of Edin

Calvin severely censures the Prebends and Clergy of Collen, for endeavouring to put their Archbishop out of his place, inasmuch as he had declared in favour of reformation.* Writing to Ithavius, a Polonian Bishop, whom he styles illustrious and reverend Lord Bishop, far from advising him to lay aside his Episcopacy, he exhorts him to *consider what place he holdeth, and what burden is imposed upon him.*† In his Epistle to the king of Poland, Calvin expresses his approbation of all the degrees of the Hierarchy of the Ancient Church, even including the order of Patriarchs; and he seems to advise the king to introduce the system into his own dominions.‡

The Duke of Somerset, Protector of England, in the minority of Edward VI. wrote to Calvin on the subject of the Reformation of the English Church. What was Calvin's reply? Did he condemn the office of Bishop, as unfounded in Scripture? Did he advise that Episcopacy should be laid aside, and Presbyterial order substituted in its place? Very far otherwise—Not a word escapes him in disparagement of the Episcopal office: on the contrary, taking the ground that the Bishops

burgh, what vote he would have given. How happy were it for your Churches if all among you, who so much honour his name, would as readily submit to his judgment. Sure I am, had it been so with you, you had been as far from defying Episcopacy in holy professors, as you are now from truth and peace."

* Calvin. Epist. p. 517.

† Johannes Calvinus illustri et revendo Domino Jacobo Ithavio Episcopo Epist. p. 287.

‡ Calvin. Sereuiss. Regi Polon.

ought to keep their place in the Reformed Church, he thus writes :

“ They must all of them be sworn, the Bishops themselves as well as the Rectors of every parish, to deliver no other doctrine in their sermons, but such as is contained in the Articles of Religion.”*

It would appear, indeed, from a well attested fact, that Calvin made an actual attempt, at one period, to introduce the Episcopal constitution into the Church of Geneva.

Take the following passages from the excellent and accurate historian, Strype. “ How Calvin stood affected in the said point of Episcopacy, and how readily and gladly he and other heads of the Reformed Churches would have received it, is evident enough from his writings and Epistles.”† “ They (the foreign Protestants) took such great joy and satisfaction in this good king (Edward VI.) and his establishment of religion, that Bullinger, Calvin, and others, in a letter to him, offered to make him their defender, and to have Bishops in their Churches, as there were in England; with a tender of their service to assist and unite together.”‡ This scheme appears to have been defeated by a forgery of the Papists. The last letter of Calvin on the subject was intercepted by Bonner and Gardiner, two Romish Bishops, who returned an ungracious answer, which offended Calvin, and led him to give up the project. This is asserted

* Calv. in Epist. ad Angliæ Protectorem.

† Strype's Life of Archbishop Parker, p. 69, 70.

‡ Strype's Memorials of Cranmer, p. 207.

in a paper in the hand writing of Archbishop Abbot, found among the manuscripts of Archbishop Usher, and published by the historian Strype.*

In perfect agreement with this is the celebrated passage in Calvin's work on the necessity of reforming the Church. "If they will give us such an Hierarchy, in which the Bishops have such a pre-eminence as that they do not refuse to be subject unto Christ, &c. &c. then I will confess

* "Perusing some papers of our predecessor Matthew Parker, we find that John Calvin, and others of the Protestant Churches of Germany and elsewhere, would have had Episcopacy, if permitted. And whereas John Calvin had sent a letter in King Edward VI. reign, to have conferred with the Clergy of England about some things to this effect, two (popish) Bishops, viz. Gardiner and Bonner, *intercepted* the same; whereby Mr. Calvin's offerture perished. And he received an answer, as if it had been from the reformed Divines of those times; wherein they checked him, and slighted his proposals. From which time John Calvin and the Church of England were at variance in several points; which otherwise, through God's mercy, had been qualified, if those papers of his proposals had been discovered unto the Queen's majesty during John Calvin's life. But being not discovered until, or about the sixth year of her majesty's reign, her majesty much lamented they were not found sooner: which she expressed before her council at the same time, in the presence of her great friends, Sir Henry Sidney, and Sir William Cecil."†

The important fact, above stated, corresponds with the part acted by Calvin at the conferences which were held at Worms, by order of the Emperor Charles V. Calvin accompanied the delegates who were sent by the Protestants to that assembly. In the articles drawn up by these delegates on this occasion, is the following sentence. "Our learned men have expressly yielded ordination to Bishops, if there may be a Reformation." Thus it appears that Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, were quite disposed to reform the Church on the ground of Episcopacy—that they deliberately offered to do so—and that they finally proceeded on a different system, from the difficulty of procuring Bishops without yielding to the demands of the Church of Rome.

† Strype's Life of Parker, p. 76.

that they are worthy of all anathemas, if any such shall be found, who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience.”*

Does not the evidence thus cited abundantly prove that Calvin preferred the Episcopal constitution; that he was desirous of seeing it universally established; that he regarded it as the solemn duty of all the Reformers to adopt it; and, indeed, that he even viewed all those who should refuse to submit to it, where it could be procured, as unworthy of the Christian name?

The testimony which I have brought forward is of the most unequivocal character. Nevertheless, you shrink not from the arduous task of explaining it away. Let us see, for a moment, how far you have succeeded. On the striking passage from the work of Calvin, *de Necessitate Ecclesiæ Reformandæ*, you thus comment—“It is only saying that Calvin stood ready to approve of a *scriptural* and *primitive* Episcopacy, whenever it should be introduced. And would not all Presbyterians say the same thing? Nay, it is the happiness of our Church, that we have such an Episcopacy.” “The venerable Reformer meant no other.”†

Permit me to ask you whether you seriously propose this as a correct interpretation of the passage in question? Inveterate prejudice has truly a wonderful power in blinding the understanding.

* Joannis Calvinii tractatus theologici omnes, in unum volumen certis classibus congesti, &c. p. 69.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 303.

Calvin was in possession of the Presbyterian form of Church government, which you style the only *scriptural and primitive Episcopacy*: to this form he had already submitted. When charged with departing from the primitive Episcopal constitution of the Church, he replies—Give me an Episcopacy in which the Bishops shall not refuse to be subject to Christ, and I will most reverently receive it;—that is, according to your interpretation, give me Presbyterian Episcopacy, to which I have already conformed, and I will conform to it.

After this specimen of your manner of getting rid of the testimony of Calvin, it can hardly be necessary to detain the reader with your explanations of other passages, of a similar character, from his works.

2. But I go much further, and undertake to show that Calvin regarded Episcopacy as an institution of the Apostles, and, therefore, binding upon all Christians; insomuch that nothing but the greatest urgency of circumstances could excuse those who should fail to conform to it, from the charge of deep criminality. The last part of this proposition, is, indeed, proved incontestibly by the single passage from the treatise on the Reformation of the Church: Let us see whether the first part of the proposition is not susceptible of being established with equal certainty.

In speaking of Jerome's comment on Isaiah vi. Calvin uses these words—"The Bishop was not so above the rest in honour and dignity that he

had *dominion* over his fellows. But what office the *Consul* had in the *Senate*, to propose matters, to ask opinions, to go before the others with counselling, admonishing, and exhorting, to *govern the whole matter with his authority*, and to put in execution what is decreed by common counsel, the same office hath the Bishop in the assembly of Priests." "But if the Bishops," to use the language of the judicious Hooker, "were so far in dignity above other ministers, as the Consuls of Rome, for their year, above other senators, it is as much as we require."

In the same spirit, Calvin represents it as highly probable that St. James was *Prefect* of the Church of Jerusalem.* A Prefect is a chief officer or governor. It is quite absurd to compare him with a Presbyterian Moderator, who is nothing more than a mere temporary chairman, appointed for the purpose of keeping order in debate.

Further—"We learn also, from this place, that there was not then such an equality among the ministers of the Church, but that some one presided in authority and counsel."†

Here Calvin is treating of the Church as it existed in the time of the Apostles, and as it is organized in Scripture. Well—He expressly disclaims the idea of ministerial parity—He declares that some one presided in authority and counsel. And how do you get over this explicit language? Why, you tell us that Calvin merely means to say,

* In Galat. c. ii. v. 9.

† Com. on Titus i. 5

that the passage in question recognizes the legality of the Presbyterian practice of choosing a Moderator to preside in Presbyteries and Synods. What authority has a Presbyterian Moderator over his fellow Presbyters? None. He merely presides and keeps order during the sitting of the Presbytery. Does he preside in authority as Paul represents Titus to have presided in the Church of Crete? The supposition is an insult to common sense itself.

Take the passage precisely as translated by yourself,* and the whole object of it is to show, not that Titus was a Presbyterian Moderator, but that he was not *sole* and *absolute* ruler in Crete;

* "It may be objected, that too much power seems to be given to *Titus*, when the Apostle commands him to appoint ministers over all the Churches. This, it may be said, is little less than kingly power; for, on this plan, the right of choice is taken away from the particular Churches, and the right of judging in the case from the college of Pastors; and this would be to profane the whole of the sacred discipline of the Church. But the answer is easy. Every thing was *not entrusted* to the will of *Titus* as an *individual*, nor was he allowed to impose such Bishops on the Churches as he pleased; but he was commanded to *preside* in the elections, as a *Moderator*, as it is necessary for some one to do. This is a mode of speaking exceedingly common. Thus a Consul, or Regent, or Dictator, is said to create Consuls, because he convenes assemblies for the purpose of making choice of them. So also *Luke* uses the same mode of speaking concerning *Paul* and *Barnabas*, in the *Acts of the Apostles*; not that they alone, authoritatively appointed Pastors over the Churches, without their being tried or approved; but they *ordained* suitable men, who had been elected, or chosen by the people. We learn also, from this place, that there was not, then, *such* an equality among the ministers of the Church, as was inconsistent with some one presiding in authority and council. This, however, is nothing like the *tyrannical and unscriptural prelacy* which reigns in the papacy. The plan of the Apostles was extremely different." *Miller's Continuation of Letters*, p. 294, 295, 296.

that his power might be checked and limited by that of the people on one side, and of the Presbyters on the other. Calvin illustrates the subject by comparing the power of Titus in the Church of Crete, to the power of a Consul, Regent, or Dictator, who convenes deliberative assemblies, and presides in them. He illustrates the subject, also, by comparing the power exercised by Titus in Crete to the power of ordination exercised by Paul and Barnabas in the Churches which they visited. These Apostles, Calvin tells us, did not, by their sole authority, select persons to be ordained, and without any trial or approbation, impose them upon the Churches; but an election or approbation on the part of the people was necessary before the Apostles could exercise the ordaining power. With the accuracy of Calvin on this point of popular election, in the time of the Apostles, I am not now concerned; but the comparison proves that he regarded the distinction between Titus and the Presbyters under him, as similar to that between Paul and Barnabas and the Presbyters and people of the cities in which they administered the rite of ordination. Paul and Barnabas were not absolute on this point; they could not ordain such persons as they might please, independently of every other tribunal: the people were entitled to be heard as to the fitness of candidates. So Titus was not an absolute ruler; his power being limited by that of the Presbyters and people over whom he authoritatively presided. Such is the reasoning of Calvin. It can never be

made to refer to a mere Presbyterian Moderatorship.

That I have interpreted Calvin accurately, in this instance, will further appear from the words which immediately follow the passage under consideration. "We learn, also, from this place, that there was not then such an equality among the ministers of the Church, but that some one presided in authority and counsel. This, however, is nothing like the *tyrannical and unscriptural prelacy* which reigns in the papacy." Now, Calvin expressly declared, that if he could have such an hierarchy as that of the Church of England, he would embrace it, and submit to it with the utmost affection and reverence. The passage under consideration, therefore, can be regarded, certainly, as nothing less than an explicit acknowledgment of the apostolic institution of distinct and subordinate orders of ministers in the Church of Christ. Titus is admitted to have been the supreme governor of the Church of Crete, with power to direct and control, in certain respects, the other ministers of the word.

One passage of this kind is sufficient to outweigh a thousand vague and indirect testimonies. I shall, therefore, trespass on the patience of the reader no further, on this point, than in presenting a single declaration of the same unequivocal character, from a letter written by Calvin to an old friend, who had become a Bishop in the Church of Rome. In this letter, although it is very long, not a word occurs unfriendly to the office of Bishop:

on the contrary, the office is expressly recognized as of divine institution.*

What, now, if you should be able to cite declarations of Calvin which seem to be of a different spirit and tendency? We must come to one of two conclusions. Either Calvin was perpetually contradicting himself, or his early and unbiassed opinions in favour of Episcopacy, gradually yielded to that pernicious influence which irregular conduct seldom fails to exercise, even over well constituted minds.

You undertake, indeed, to prove, that the earliest opinions of Calvin were on the side of ministerial parity, and for this purpose quote several passages from his Institutes of the Christian Religion. Some of the passages militate against the very cause which you bring them to support:† For example, Calvin tells us that the Presbyters in every city chose one out of their own number to whom they specially gave the title of Bishop, and he cites Jerome as testifying that this practice prevailed in Alexandria, from the time of Mark the Evangelist; that is, from the time of the Apostles. And what authority had the Bishop? Let Calvin answer. “The office which the Consul had

* See Durell's View of the Foreign Reformed Churches, p. 162—where the following passage from the letter, is introduced. *Episcopatus ipse a Deo profectus est. Episcopi munus Dei autoritate constitutum est et legibus definitum.*

† The rest are vague, and fairly admit of an interpretation consistent with the doctrine, that Episcopacy was a primitive and apostolic institution: indeed, they must be construed in this way, to preserve their author from palpable contradiction.

in the Senate to propose business; to collect opinions; to preside in consulting, admonishing, and exhorting; to *direct by his authority, the whole process of business*; and to put in execution that which was decreed by the common counsel of all; the same office had the Bishop in the assembly of Presbyters."* What if Calvin seems to say, after this, that the superiority of the Bishop to the Presbyter rested upon human custom? Why, the result is, that he is inconsistent with himself; in his eagerness to defend the system of ministerial parity, upon which he had so long acted, suffering his ingenuity to pervert his judgment. I say, the system upon which he had so long acted; for you run into an error on this subject which it will be proper to point out. You begin your extracts from Calvin with his Institutions, which, you tell us, were his first theological work, and were published so early as the year 1536, before he had ever seen Geneva; intending in this way to make it out that his earliest opinions were on the side of the divine institution of the system of ministerial parity. It has, indeed, been shown, that the language of the Institutes is often decidedly hostile to the Presbyterian doctrine; but, after so frequently charging your opponents with utter ignorance of the works of Calvin, and of the incidents of his life, are you so uninformed as not to know that the first edition of the Institutes, published in the year 1535, was a mere *sketch*, and that it did not ap-

* Institutes, book iv. chap. 4.

pear in its present enlarged state until the year 1558? Beza, in speaking of the original edition, calls it, “operis longe maximi rudimentum.”* The work, as it appeared at first, consisted of but twenty-one chapters; and thus it continued in all the editions through which it passed until the year 1558, when it came forth in its present form, divided into eighty chapters, and four books. If you will consult Bayle’s Dictionary, you will find these facts distinctly stated.† And yet you quote the enlarged edition of the Institutes to show the opinions of their author in the commencement of his theological career. How do you know that the passages which you quote from the present edition of the Institutes were in the original sketch, published in the year 1535? You surely have no right to take it for granted.

See how Calvin was understood by his admirers!

Mons. Daille, a French Protestant divine, speaks thus explicitly:—“Calvin himself honoured all Bishops that were not subjects of the Pope, &c. such as were the Prelates of England. We confess that the foundation of their charge is good and lawful, *established by the Apostles according to the command of Christ.*”‡

* Beza, in vita Calvini, p. 367.

† “The last edition, either French or Latin, revised by the author, is of 1558. In that edition the work was divided into four books, and each book into several chapters, of which there are in all fourscore. The edition of 1550 is divided only into one and twenty chapters.”
Bayle’s Dictionary, vol. iv. London, printed by James Bettenham, 1736.

‡ Bingham’s French Church’s Apology for the Church of England.

Monsieur De Le Angle, another divine of the French Protestant Church, in a letter addressed to the Bishop of London, writes thus:—" Calvin, in his treatise of the necessity of the Reformation, makes no difficulty to say, that if there should be any so unreasonable as to refuse the communion of a Church that was pure in its worship and doctrine, and not to submit himself with respect to its government, under pretence that it had retained an *Episcopacy qualified as yours is*; there would be no censure or rigour of discipline that ought not to be exercised upon them."*

Jacobus Lectius, a Senator of Geneva, and Public Reader in the University, in a book dedicated to the Syndics and Senate, uses the following language:—" We maintain that those are true and lawful Bishops whom St. Paul describes in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus; and we do not deny but that there were such formerly in that great kingdom of Great-Britain, and that at this very day there are such Bishops there." " Neither was there any of our divines, I think, who ever denied it to be a most ancient custom in the Church, *from the very times of the Apostles*; to wit, that one should have the chief care of the Church, sitting, as it were, at the helm of the sacred ship. And they did so treat of the limitation of that pre-eminence according to the word of God, that they have professed, by their public writings, that it was madlike to think meanly of the order of

* Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation.

orthodox Bishops, to whom, therefore, our men, and amongst them, Calvin, Bucer, Beza, Sadeel, and others, have deferred all manner of honour and affection.”*

After all, there is no little difficulty in ascertaining the precise opinions of Calvin on the subject of the constitution of the Christian Church and ministry. He is not always consistent with himself. Perplexed and embarrassed between the system which he had adopted in practice, and the irresistible evidence of ministerial imparity, presented both by Scripture and antiquity, he knew not how to extricate himself from his own labyrinth: He found himself unable, probably, either to form or to express any *perfectly definite ideas*. It is certain, however, that he rejected, unequivocally, the doctrine of absolute *parity* among the ministers of the word, and that he declared his readiness to submit to such an Episcopacy as that of the Church of England; denouncing the heaviest anathema against all who should refuse to follow his example.†

Beza, the friend and successor of Calvin, thus

* Durell's View of the Foreign Reformed Churches, p. 169, 170.

† Dr. Durell, after carefully examining the writings of Calvin, with particular reference to his opinions on the subject of the ministry, gives the following as the result—“For all that I have either read of, or in him, or seen produced out of his writings, I am of this mind, that *Episcopacy* was the government that he approved most, and that he took it to be, as it is undoubtedly, of apostolical institution; though his opinion was, that the Church, according to her exigences, in relation to places, times, and other circumstances, may dispense with it.” *Durell's View of the Government and Worship in the Foreign Reformed Churches*, p. 161.

expresses himself in a letter to Archbishop Whitgift:—"In my writings touching Church government, I ever impugned the *Romish* hierarchy, but never intended to touch or impugn the ecclesiastical polity of the Church of England."* Beza further speaks of the Episcopacy of the Church of England as a singular blessing of God, and prays that she may ever enjoy it.† He uses, in the same treatise, the following strong language, which is entitled to your very particular attention:—"If there are any who reject the *whole order of Episcopacy*, God forbid that any man of a sound mind should assent to the madness of such men."

Tried by the declarations of Calvin and Beza, you and your friends would certainly be condemned as inexcusable schismatics.

The celebrated Martin Bucer, one of the most learned and judicious of the original Reformers, thus speaks of the authority of Bishops:—"By the perpetual observation of all Churches, *even from the Apostles' times*, we see, that *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost*, that among Presbyters, to whom the procuration of Churches was chiefly committed, there should be one that should have the care or charge of divers Churches, and the whole ministry committed to him; and, by reason of that charge, he was above the rest; and, therefore, the name of Bishop was attributed peculiarly to those chief rulers."‡

* Life of Whitgift, printed by Snodham, 1612

† Beza. Resp. ad Sarav. cap. 18.

‡ De cura. curat, p. 251.

It is not going too far to say that the difficulty which the Reformers found in procuring Bishops alone prevented Episcopacy from being universally retained. The Romish Church was extremely vigilant upon this point. The moment a Bishop showed any disposition to join the Reformers, he was made the subject of bitter persecution. This is particularly apparent in the history of the Protestant Church of France, to which I would now take the liberty, for a few moments, of soliciting your attention.

Peter Du Moulin, an eminent professor of this Church, thus writes:—"Our adversaries unjustly accuse us to be enemies of the Episcopal Order. For we must be altogether ignorant in history, if we do not know that antiquity speaks honourably of that degree. Eusebius, in his Chronicle, witnesseth, that a year after our Lord's death, James, our Lord's brother, was established Bishop of Jerusalem; and that ten years after, Euodius was created Bishop of Antioch, and that after James succeeded Simon in the Bishoprick of Jerusalem, from whence descended the succession of Bishops in Jerusalem. St. Jerome, in his book of ecclesiastical writers, saith, that Polycarp, St. John's disciple, was by that Apostle made Bishop of Smyrna. In the same book he saith, that St. Paul established Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus Bishop of Crete. And Tertullian, in the thirty-second chapter of the book of Prescriptions, calleth those Churches Apostolical Churches, and buds and sprigs of the Apostles, whose Bishops

were established by the Apostles," &c. "If sometimes we speak against the authority of Bishops, we condemn not Episcopal Order in itself, but speak only of the corruption which the Church of Rome has induced into it," &c.*

It is to be observed that Du Moulin here undertakes to speak in the name of the French Church: thus speaking, he admits that there are instances of Episcopacy in the apostolical practice, and that it agrees, moreover, with the practice of all antiquity. The fair inference from the language of Du Moulin is, that the French Church would readily have submitted to Bishops, if Bishops had been its reformers. Indeed, he expressly says that, "God having permitted the work of reformation to be carried on only by the inferior clergy, they thought it meet to keep themselves within the bounds of the order of Priesthood; that if ever it were God's will that the Bishops themselves should reform and embrace the true doctrine, there might be no contestation with them for jurisdiction and pre-eminence, but all manner of readiness, on the reformed ministers part, to submit to the Bishops, and to acknowledge them for their lawful superiors and prelates." "As for me, I nothing doubt but those things were so ordered by them, according to the exigency of the times, because their condition did not permit them to do otherwise."†

Monsieur Gaches, one of the ministers of Charonton, thus writes in a letter to Dr. Brevint:—

* Moulin's Buckler of Faith, p. 345, Lond. Edit. 1631.

† Durell's View of the Foreign Reformed Churches, p. 119.

“ Would to God we had no other differences with the Bishops of France, but their dignity: How cheerfully should I submit myself to them! although you know that their yoke is heavy, far heavier than that of the Bishops of England. How comes it to pass then that those of your Presbyterians that are great, understanding, and wise men, have such an aversion against moderate Episcopacy? And why do they refuse to have communion with Ignatius, Polycarp, Cyprian, Chrysostom, and all that holy company of the purest antiquity? ”*

Monsieur De Le Angle, in a letter to Dr. Bre-
vint, uses the following strong language:—“ I cannot tell what these haters of the peace of the Church mean, that prattle up and down, and talk as if the French Churches were great adversaries of the Episcopal order. God forbid, Sir, that we should have such a perverse and rash opinion. I am sure that neither Monsieur Daille, nor Monsieur Amiraut, nor Monsieur Borchart, nor any of my colleagues of Rouen ever approved of it.” “ An Episcopacy, framed after the model which was exercised with so much success by those *Prelates* of the *Apostolic Churches*, which Christ calls angels, such as Clemens, Polycarp, Ireneus, Cyprian, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Austin, and many others of the like kind, who have been in the Church the sweet savour of Christ; it is a most sacred and most ancient order, and if the Apostles themselves were not the au-

* Durell's View of the Foreign Reformed Churches, p. 125.

thors of it, certainly it was instituted by apostolic men, who might say of their ordinances of this nature the same that the Apostle said sometimes, after he had gravely resolved some questions, about which he had no express command from God—“*I think, also, that I have the Spirit of God.*”*

But we have much more decisive evidence on this point. Take the following passage from a letter of the celebrated Peter Martyr to Beza:—
 “The Church of Troyes is very great, and increases daily: the Bishop thereof is now become a zealous promoter of the kingdom of Christ, and instructs his flock in the purity of the Gospel.”
 “He sent for the Elders of the Reformed Church, and desired them to consult among themselves prudently and piously, whether they might accept of him as their Bishop. If they did, he would then go on, as he had begun, to edify and augment to the utmost of his power the Church committed to his charge. But if they thought him not qualified for so great a work, they should deal freely and plainly with him: for in that case he was resolved to resign his Bishoprick, and live as a private Christian among them.” “He was unanimously acknowledged and received by them all as a true Bishop: and his authority and piety did great service to the Church of Christ. Praised be God, who takes these methods to govern and advance the kingdom of his Son.”†

Here is a most decided testimony of the readi-

* Durell's View of the Foreign Reformed Churches, p. 143, 144.

† Pet. Mart. Ep. 57, ad Bezam, p. 1143.

ness of the French Protestants to adopt the Episcopal constitution of the ministry. But mark the issue! The Papists, greatly alarmed, commenced a severe attack upon the Bishop of Troyes, and finally succeeded so far as to prevail upon the king of France to expel him from his diocess. For this we have the testimony of the French historian Thuanus.*

But further—Several of the Bishops of France, about the same period, evinced a disposition favourable to the Reformation; in consequence of which they were accused of heresy, and summoned to appear before the Consistory of the Inquisition at Rome. Three of them were deprived, and the rest suspended until they should vindicate themselves from the charge of heresy. Unfortunately, most of them returned to the Church of Rome; but Cardinal Castilion, Sangelasius, and the Bishop of Troyes, embraced the Protestant faith; continuing to act as Bishops until they were forced to withdraw by the civil power. The historian Spondanus gives us this information; † and he compiled his history from writers who were contemporary, or nearly so, with the events which they relate. ‡

Of the same character is the testimony of Dr Du Moulin, son of the celebrated Peter Du Mou-

* Thuan. tom. ii. lib. 28. p. 48.

† An. 1563, p. 21.

‡ Thuanus, lib. 35. Homerus Tortora Hist. Franc. lib. 3. Gaburius Vit. Pii 5. lib. 2. cap. 4. Catellus Hist. Occitan. Onuphrius Vit. Pii 4.

lin, whom we have already mentioned. "How soon both pastors and people may be brought to submit to Bishops, hath been tried by the Bishop of Troyes, and that of Meaux, who, as soon as they began to forsake the errors of Popery, were acknowledged by the Protestant Churches within the verge of their jurisdiction for their Diocesans. The Archbishop of Vienna and Bishop of Orleans were once about to have done as much, and would have found the like obedience from the Protestant party; but the great stream of the state proved too strong for them to swim against." "There was a time when some of their prime men feeling the inconveniences that follow the want of ecclesiastical subordination, moved Cardinal Richelieu to place it among them by his authority, pretending that it would bring them nearer to the Roman Church: But he flatly denied to give way to it, and told them, if you had that order, you would look too like a Church."*

Accordingly, the celebrated Mons. Du Bosc expressly says that the Protestants of France followed the Presbyterian system, "because necessity obliged them to it; because Reformation having been begun by the people and by inferior churchmen, the places of Bishops remained filled with men of a contrary religion, so that they were *constrained* to content themselves with ministers and elders as well as they could. If Bishops had embraced the Reformation at first, I

* Preface to his Father's book, called the Novelty of Popery, p. 2, 3.

make no doubt but that their order had been maintained in the ecclesiastical polity.”*

It is clear, then, that the Protestants of France were anxious to reform the Church upon Episcopal principles, and that they were prevented from doing so, simply by the difficulty which they found of procuring Bishops.†

The Papists understood their business too well. They determined that the Protestants should not possess the advantage of an Apostolical ministry; and, unhappily, their efforts were attended with no small degree of success. On the continent of Europe they prevailed by measures of violence; and in England, where the Reformation was patronized by the civil government, they put in operation a system of the most shameful intrigue, to produce separation from the established Church. A specimen of Papal fraud I have already mentioned, in the case of Bonner and Gardiner, who intercepted a letter from Calvin, Bullinger, and other Reformers, offering to receive Bishops; to which they forged an ungracious answer, and thereby defeated the measure. It is, besides, a notorious fact, that the Papal court constantly employed agents, in the reign of Elizabeth, to travel through England, declaiming against the

* Durell's View of the Government and Worship of the Reformed Churches, p. 122, 123.

† For many of these facts and quotations relative to the Protestants of France, see Bingham's French Church's Apology for the Church of England, book iv. chap. 4.

established Church, and crying out for further reformation.

The most eminent divines of the Reformed Church of Holland excused their departure from Episcopacy on the ground of necessity: Nay, they expressed a perfect readiness to submit to the Episcopal constitution—they declared it to be their ardent wish to see that constitution restored—they even went so far as to pledge themselves to take all practicable measures to effect its restoration. But the civil government was opposed to the thing; the reason of which opposition is thus stated by the historian Collier:—"The States, upon their revolt from the king of Spain, destroyed seven Sees, and applied the revenues to the public service. The names of them are these; the Bishoprick of Harlaem, in Holland; of Middleborough in Zealand; of Lewarden, in Friesland; of Groningue, in Gronningen; of Deventer, in Overryssel; of Ruremonde, in Guelderland; and the Archbishoprick of Utretcht; to which the Bishops of the other Sees, above mentioned, were suffragans.

"Thus, 'tis possible, the gain of sacrilege prevailed to break the Apostolical government. Those at the helm might be averse to the continuing Episcopacy, for fear some of the old endowments should be expected to maintain it."*

* Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 718.

Nor was it in Holland alone that difficulties of this kind were thrown in the way of a primitive reformation of the Church; the same spirit was strongly at work in England.

"Another sort of men there are, which have been content to run on

Thus in Holland, as in France, Episcopacy was put down by the violence of the secular power.

The truth of all this will fully appear from the accounts which have come down to us, relative to the famous Synod of Dort.

Bishop Carleton, one of the English delegates to that Synod, gives the following statement:—"I openly protested in the Synod, that it was a strange proposition which had been inserted in said confession, namely, *that Christ instituted an equality among the Ministers of the Gospel*. I publicly declared that it could no where be shown that Christ had ordained such an equality; that he had chosen twelve Apostles and seventy disciples, and that those Apostles were invested with an authority and superintendency over all others, and that the

with the Reformers for a time, and to make them poor instruments of their own designs. These are a sort of godless politics, who, perceiving the plot of discipline to consist of these two parts, the overthrow of Episcopal, and the erection of Presbyterial authority; and that this latter can take no place till the former be removed, are content to join with them in the destructive part of discipline, bearing them in hand, that in the other also, they shall find them as ready. But when time shall come, it may be, they would be as loth to be yoked with that kind of regiment, as now they are willing to be released from this. These men's ends in all their actions, is distraction; their pretence and colour, reformation. Those things, which, under this colour, they have effected to their own good, are, 1. By maintaining a contrary faction, they have kept the clergy always in awe; and thereby made them more pliable and willing to buy their peace. 2. By maintaining an opinion of equality among ministers, they have made way to their own purposes for devouring Cathedral Churches and Bishops' livings." *George Cranmer's Letter to Mr. Richard Hooker, prefixed to the first volume of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," p. 107 Oxford edition, 1793.*

Church had constantly and uninterruptedly maintained the same subordination. I appealed in this affair to all the ancients, and to all men of learning of the present age; yea, I earnestly challenged any man in the Synod to prove the contrary. The Lord Bishop of Salisbury is my witness, and all the doctors that were with me, for I was the mouth of them all; and there was not one man in the assembly that pretended to contradict me: from whence we justly concluded that they were all of our opinion."

Bishop Carleton adds, that in a conference with some of the most learned divines of the Synod, he told them "the cause of all their troubles was the want of Bishops:" to which, "their answer was, that they had a great honour for the good order and discipline of the Church of England, and heartily wished they could establish themselves upon this model: but they had no prospect of such a happiness; and *since the civil government had made their desires impracticable*, they hoped God would be merciful to them."*

In perfect correspondence with this is the account given by Bishop Hall, another of the English delegates to the Synod. "When the Bishop of Landaffe had, in a speech of his, touched upon Episcopal government, and showed that the want thereof gave opportunities to those divisions which were then on foot in the Netherlands, Boger-

* Brandt's History of the Reformation, vol. iii. p. 288. Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 717, 718.

mannus, the president of that assembly, stood up, and, in a good allowance of what had been spoken, said, Domine, nos non sumus adeò felices. Alas, my Lord, we are not so happy. Neither did he speak this in a fashionable compliment, (neither the person, nor the place, nor the hearers were fit for that) but in a sad gravity, and conscionable profession of a known truth; neither would he, being the mouth of that select assembly, have thought it safe to pass those words before the deputies of the States, and so many venerable divines of foreign parts (besides their own) if he had not supposed this so clear a truth as that Synod would neither disrelish nor contradict. What, do I single out a few? All the world of men, judicious, and not prejudiced with their own interests, both do, and must say thus, and confess with the learned Casaubon, Fregeville, and Saravia, that no Church in the world comes so near to the Apostolic form as the Church of England.”*

The British delegates to the Synod of Dort, then, expressly asserted, in the Synod, the divine institution of Episcopacy; appealing to the ancients, and to all men of learning, and challenging the members of the Synod to disprove what they had said. And what was the result? “Not one man in the assembly,” says Bishop Carleton, “pretended to contradict me: from whence, we justly concluded, that they were all of our opinion.” Here we have the positive de-

* Bishop Hall’s Divine Right of Episcopacy, part i. sect. 4

claration of Bishop Carleton, that the members of the Synod of Dort were regarded by the English delegates as universally admitting the divine institution of Episcopacy. What, now, Sir, shall we think of the very contemptuous terms in which you have thought proper to speak of the ignorance displayed by me relative to the proceedings of the Synod in question?*

* “ Mr. How has allowed himself to speak on this subject in a way for which I really feel at a loss to form an adequate apology.”* Mr. How has simply spoken the language of the English delegates to the Synod of Dort. Bishops Carleton, Hall, and Davenant, are the persons to whom your lofty charges of ignorance and disingenuousness must be applied. “ It never occurred to me, before I saw Mr. How’s pamphlet, that it was possible for any well informed man, who valued his reputation, to give such a statement as that gentleman has done, of the sentiments of the principal divines of the Reformed Churches.”† It would be easy to mention a number of very learned and excellent men who have spoken of the Reformers in stronger terms than those which you so bitterly complain of in my Letters. But let me refer you, for a moment, to the language of the well known, and universally respected and admired, Bishop Hall.

“ But first, ere we enter the lists, let me advise you not to deceive yourselves vainly with the hope of hiding your heads under the skirt of the authority of those Divines and Churches abroad, which retain that form of government whereto you have submitted; for know, their case and yours is far enough different: they plead to be, by a *kind of necessity*, cast upon that condition which you have *willingly chosen*. They were not, they could not be, what you were, and might still have been. Did any of them forsake and abjure that function of Episcopacy which he might freely have enjoyed, with the full liberty of professing the reformed religion? Did ever any wise man or Christian Church condemn that calling for itself? Yea, if the last Bishop of Geneva had become a Protestant, and consented in matter of doctrine to Calvin, Farret, Viret, have you, or any man living, just cause to think that the city would not gladly have retained his government

* Continuation of Letters, p. 364.

† Ibid. p. 380.

observations I am completely supported by the unequivocal testimony of the English delegates.

still, and thought themselves happy under such a protection? Would they have ejected him as an enemy whom they might have enjoyed as a patron? Would they have stood upon his Episcopacy, while they had his concurrence in the truth of religion? *No man that hath either brain or forehead will affirm it; since the world knows the quarrel was not at his dignity, but at his opposition to the intended reformation.* Hear what Calvin himself saith for himself and his co-partners.* Bishop Hall proceeds to quote various passages from the writings of Calvin, which have been already given, and then adds—"Do you hear your doom from your own oracle? Make account, therefore, of the merit and danger of Calvin's just anathema."

"And that the French Reformers may not herein be thought to go alone, take notice, I beseech you, what the German divines of the Augsburg confession have freely professed to this purpose." The Bishop goes on to present a number of passages relative to the German Reformers, particularly Melancthon and Luther, and then says—"See now, I beseech you, how willing these first Reformers were to maintain and establish Episcopal government; how desirous to restore it, how troubled that they might not continue it: might they have enjoyed the Gospel, they would have enjoyed Episcopacy. In whose steps then do you tread while you defy it? Certainly if the Genevan and German prelacy would have but tolerated a reformation of the Papal corruptions, *there had never been either a parity of ministers, or a lay Presbyter in the world to this day.*"†

I have never used language so pointed and strong as this; and yet you talk of my "astonishing ignorance, misconceptions, and misrepresentations." For all I have said, I can appeal to the authority of Bishop Hall, whom you style an "eminently learned and pious divine."‡ Bishop Hall, too, it will be recollected, lived shortly after the Reformation, and had full opportunity of knowing the opinions and acts of its original conductors. He tells us that the foreign Reformers, with one voice, pleaded the necessity of their situation in excuse for their departure from Episcopacy; that they expressed the most anxious desire to retain it; that they pronounced the heaviest anathema upon all who should voluntarily depart from it; that all this is so notorious that "no man who hath either brain or forehead" will call it in question; in fine, that if the original Genevan and German Reformers

* Hall's Divine Right of Episcopacy, part i. sect. 2. † Ibid. part i. sect. 2, 3.

‡ Miller's Letters, p. 250.

But why did not the Reformed Church of Holland adopt Episcopacy, and place it at the foundation of her ecclesiastical system? The divines of the Synod of Dort shall answer the question. "We heartily wish we could establish ourselves upon this model: but we have no prospect of such a happiness; and since the civil government has made our desires impracticable, we hope God will be merciful to us." Here, then, was the difficulty. The civil power would not suffer the Episcopal constitution to be restored. And the historian Collier gives us the reason. "The States, upon their revolt from the King of Spain, destroyed seven Sees, and applied the revenues to the public service." "Those at the helm might be averse to the continuing Episcopacy, for fear some part of the old endowments should be expected to maintain it."*

But does not this cast great discredit upon the venerable Synod of Dort? I can only say, I am not bound to vindicate the character of the Synod—I state the facts, and the testimony—The reader will judge for himself. In truth, Sir, the Synod of Dort was a political engine; being so contrived as to act always in subserviency to the views of the State. It is impossible to read the excellent history of Brandt,† without being forc-

had been Bishops, the system of ministerial parity would never have had existence. Will you talk to us, then, of the "astonishing ignorance, misconceptions, and misrepresentations" of Bishop Hall?

* Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 718.

† History of the Reformation in and about the Low Countries, in 4 vols. folio—a work celebrated for its impartiality

bly struck with this fact. "The Synod," said Martinius, one of its most distinguished members, "is nothing more than a political farce or comedy, in which statesmen act the chief parts."* To the same effect is the language of the celebrated Lewis Du Moulin—"The civil magistrate will suffer none to appear at the council but such as approve of their doctrine." "If the States General had been on the side of the Arminians, they might, without doubt, have easily procured a Synod that would have been entirely Arminian."† And the very distinguished Marcus Antonius de Dominis, whom Brandt calls a miracle of learning, expressly says—"The Synod of Dort was governed by human views and designs, and its chief care was, that the party of Barneveldt should not be supported by the remonstrants, nor prevail over the opposite faction. Away with such Synods, and such synodical decrees."‡

Thus we see how Episcopacy came to be laid aside in Holland. The civil power was opposed to it, and the members of the different Synods yielded to the necessity of their situation:—"Since the civil government has made our desires impracticable, we hope that God will be merciful to us."§

* 3 Brandt, p. 283.

† Ibid. p. 303.

‡ Ibid. p. 309. It would be easy to multiply testimonies on this subject; but the reader, who wishes for full information, is referred to the third volume of Brandt's History, already mentioned.

§ Before taking leave of the Church of Holland, permit me to introduce to you the testimony of its most illustrious ornament—the immortal Hugo Grotius. "Episcopacy had its beginning in the apos-

The people of Geneva would most willingly have embraced Episcopacy, if they could have procured it without submitting to papal authority. Of this the following fact will furnish abundant proof. The Duke of Savoy, while besieging the city of Geneva, sent an ambassador, with promises of favour and protection to the inhabitants, upon the condition of their forsaking the reformed religion, restoring the images, turning out the ministers, and receiving again their Bishop. What was the reply? That they would willingly receive their Bishop if he would remember his name and place, and do the work of a Bishop, according to the word of God; as for the rest, they were to obey God rather than men, and would never, as long as they remembered that they were free and consecrated to God alone, set up any thing tending to superstition.* Accordingly, we have seen Bishop Hall expressly declaring, that the Genevans would most readily have submitted to their Bishop, if he would have consented to a reformation; that their opposition was not to his office, but to the corrupt doctrine which he espoused:

tological times. This is testified by the catalogues of Bishops left us by Ireneus, Eusebius, Socrates, Theodoret, and others, who all begin from the apostolical age. But to depart from the faith of such writers, and so agreeable to one another in their assertions, in an historical matter, is the part only of an irreverent and obstinate mind. It is as much as if you should deny that to be true, which all the Roman histories deliver, that the consular authority began upon the driving out of the Tarquins." *De Imperio summarum Potestatum apud Brett.*

* Durell's View, &c. p. 160.

all which, Bishop Hall adds, is so notorious, that no man, who has either brain or forehead, will deny it.

If, instead of stigmatizing Dr. Durell as ignorant and disingenuous, you had carefully read his valuable work, you would have found that the Bishop of Geneva was not expelled by the Protestants, but by the Papists themselves, before the Reformation had been established in the city. It was a *political*, not a *religious* struggle, that obliged him to fly; the whole town and senate continuing addicted to popery for two years after his departure. So much was this the case, that the Senate, during the absence of the Bishop, passed a decree *for the preservation of the old religion*, in which all *profession and countenance of the Lutheran doctrine* were strictly prohibited. When the Bishop withdrew for the last time, many professors of the reformed religion were driven out of the city; and the translated Bibles, whether in French or Dutch, were ordered to be committed to the flames.*

* See Dr. Durell's View of the Government and Public Worship of God in the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, p. 151 to 161.

It is a common error to suppose that the Reformers of Geneva excited a popular tumult, by which the Bishop was expelled both from his civil and ecclesiastical power; whereas the fact is, as Dr. Durell completely proves, that the expulsion in question was the work of the Papists; that the Reformation commenced during the absence of the Bishop; and that the circumstance of the Reformers proceeding without Episcopacy was thus the result of necessity, not of choice. What more decisive evidence of this could be given than the express declaration of their readiness to receive their Bishop, upon the single condition of his embracing the reformed doctrine! In truth, Episcopacy was never *deliberately* and *voluntarily* laid aside by any body

In short—the whole Christian world was Episcopal until the time of the Reformation. “We require you,” says the profoundly learned Hooker, “to find out but one Church, upon the face of the whole earth, that hath been ordered by your discipline, or hath not been ordered by ours, that is to say, by Episcopal regiment, since the time that the blessed Apostles were here conversant.” How conclusive is this? And shall we be told, in the face of such a fact, that ministerial parity is the doctrine of Scripture, and of the primitive Church? What! a doctrine never acted upon until the sixteenth century, and acted upon then on the express ground of *necessity*?* Yes, I repeat it, the Reformers, wherever a free choice existed, adopted the Episcopal constitution of the ministry; and when they departed from this constitution, they invariably pleaded the necessity of

of men except the English and Scotch Presbyterians. Even the first Puritans, indeed, entertained no scruples with respect to the *lawfulness of Episcopal government*; † it was not until after some years of furious contention that it came to be denounced as a wicked and anti-Christian hierarchy.

* The only examples of Christian Societies, Presbyterially constituted, which you attempt to produce, previously to the 16th century, are those of the Waldenses, and of the Bohemian brethren. But here Mosheim is directly against you. ‡ In fact, the evidence of the Episcopal constitution of the Churches of the Waldenses, and of the Bohemian brethren is clear and decisive; at all events, the case is a disputed one. But Dr. Bowden has fully examined this subject, and with his usual ability: I shall, therefore, barely refer the reader to what he has said. See *Bowden's Letters to Miller*, vol. ii. p. 77—81. vol. iii. p. 331—347.

† Robertson's *America*, vol. iv. p. 259, 260.

‡ Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. iii. p. 122.

the case as their excuse. In England, where the Reformation was conducted with marked deliberation, Episcopacy was retained as an apostolic institution, and placed at the very foundation of the established Church: three distinct offices of ordination were composed for the distinct orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and these distinct orders were expressly declared to be of divine authority. In Denmark and Sweden the civil government was decidedly favourable to the Reformation: accordingly, in those countries the Church was reformed upon Episcopal principles. The Lutheran Churches of Germany, not able, as they supposed and declared, to procure the Episcopal constitution of the ministry, retained, nevertheless, the forms of Episcopal government; the Superintendents of those Churches exercising all the powers of Bishops, and wanting nothing to make them real Bishops but a regular consecration. Luther and Melancthon excused their departure from Episcopacy on the ground of necessity alone; they repeatedly expressed the most earnest wish to have Bishops in their Churches—"I would to God," says Melancthon, "it lay in me to restore the government of Bishops."* "If it were lawful for us to lay aside Bishops, yet surely it were not expedient. Luther was ever of this opinion."† Calvin, in the early part of his career, declared his perfect readiness to submit

* Apol. Aug. Con. p. 305.

† Melanct. Camerarius, Hist. Con. August. p. 389.

The Church of Scotland was originally reformed upon a principle

to an Episcopacy like that of the Church of England, and pronounced all who would refuse to submit to it as deserving of being anathematized. Nay, he wrote to Edward VI. solemnly offering to receive Bishops; and in his comment on Titus i. 5, published so late as the year 1549, he expressly disclaimed the doctrine of *ministerial parity* as contrary to Scripture. The Protestant Church of France, we have seen, was perfectly ready to reform under the authority of Bishops. When the Bishop of Troyes embraced the true faith, the Protestants of the district immediately received him as their Diocesan, and continued to obey him as such until he was expelled by the civil government. Cardinal Castilion, and Sangelasius acted also in the same way, and endured the same persecution. It was owing to Papal fraud and violence that the Church of France was not reformed upon primitive principles. We have seen, also, that the most influential divines of the Church of Holland pleaded the difficulty of their situation in excuse for their departure from Episcopacy. When Bishop Carleton maintained the divine right of Diocesan Episcopacy before the Synod of Dort, Bogerman, the celebrated President of that Synod, emphatically re-

of imparity. Superintendents were established with Episcopal power, and wanting nothing but consecration to make them Bishops. Thus matters continued from 1560 to 1580, when, partly by fraud and partly by violence, Presbyterianism was introduced. This whole subject is fully examined by Dr. Bowden, in the third volume of his Letters, to which the reader is referred—p. 352—364.

plied—"Domine, nos non sumus adeo felices"—
 "My Lord, we are not so happy." Even in the
 reformation at Geneva, Episcopacy was not ranked
 among the corruptions of Popery; the people ex-
 pressly engaged in their negotiations with the
 Duke of Savoy to submit to the authority of their
 Bishop if he would impose upon them no super-
 stitious observances.

The truth, briefly, would seem to be, that the
 Reformers were universally disposed, in the first
 instance, to adopt the Episcopal constitution of
 the Priesthood, and were prevented from doing
 so by the difficulty of procuring Bishops; a diffi-
 culty which was in a great measure created by
 the artful policy of the Papal court. Supposing
 themselves reduced to the alternative of giving
 up the cause of Reformation, or of proceeding
 independently of the Episcopal power, they pre-
 ferred the latter; declaring, at the same time, their
 readiness to receive Bishops, acknowledging their
 authority to be primitive and apostolic,* and ex-

* What a striking confession is that of the celebrated David Blondel, who was particularly employed by the *Assembly of Divines* to plead the Presbyterian cause! He concluded his *Apologia pro Hieronymi sententia* thus:—"By all that we have said to assert the rights of the Presbytery, we do not intend to invalidate *the ancient and apostolical constitution of Episcopal pre-eminence*. But we believe that wheresoever it is established conformable to the ancient Canons, it must be carefully preserved; and wheresoever by some heat of contention or otherwise, it hath been put down or violated, it ought to be reverently restored." "But that book having been written at the earnest request of the *Assembly of Divines* at Westminster, and of the *Scots* especially, who had their agents at Paris to strengthen their party, by misinforming the Protestants of France, and winning them to their side. When these agents saw the conclusion of Mr. Blondel's manuscript, they

causing the departure from such authority on the ground of necessity alone. This, probably, was the first stage of the business. But, having acted upon the system of Presbyterial ordination, the natural principles of the human mind began to operate in the Reformers; disposing them to view with a favourable eye all such arguments as might give countenance to the course which they had taken. At length they were inclined to consider Episcopacy as a venerable and ancient institution, very conducive to order and discipline, but as resting on no other foundation than that of human appointment. This was the second stage of the progress. And here some of the Reformers continued; whilst others finally proceeded so far as to declare ministerial parity to be the scriptural and primitive institution.

Such is the natural effect of irregular example. Let us beware how we innovate upon divine institutions! It will seldom, if ever, fail to lead us into the depths of error and of folly. If Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin had been Bishops when they entered upon their glorious career, the Protestant Churches would have been preserved from that lamentable division which has mingled the inestimable blessings of the Reformation with so much of strife and of bitterness.

expostulated with him very loud, for maring all the good he had done in his book, and never left importuning him, till they had prevailed upon him to strike out that conclusion.' This piece of intelligence was given to Dr. du Moulin by Archbishop Usher, Anno 1651. *Chandler's Appeal Defended*, p. 241.

LETTER VIII.

CALVINISM.



SIR,

I Proceed to notice that part of your work which treats on the subject of Calvinism.

From the manner in which you speak, your readers will draw the conclusion that, in what I have said on this point, I have transgressed every rule of decorum. I am not afraid of being condemned by any of your candid parishoners who will take the trouble of reading all those parts of my Letters in which the peculiarities of Calvinism are mentioned. It is true, I have spoken freely and strongly of what I conceive to be a most erroneous and pernicious scheme of doctrine; but I have indulged in no personal reflections. Far otherwise! Let me refer you to the following passage from the thirtieth page of my Letters—"While I speak thus strongly of the peculiar tenets of Calvinism, I can say, with perfect truth, that for many, who ardently embrace them, I entertain the sincerest respect and veneration." Now, while we thus liberally give credit to the supporters of a doctrine, if we may not strongly condemn, and even reprobate, the doctrine itself, there must be an end of all manly discussion. You, certainly, will admit that the Papal Church has been adorned by men of eminent learning and piety. The modern his-

tory of Christianity can produce few names more truly venerable than those of Massilon, Fenelon, and Pascal. But, surely, you feel yourself at liberty to speak of the Romish doctrines in terms of deep abhorrence. Well, I sincerely think that the *peculiarities* of the Calvinistic scheme are not less repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel, and not less marked with absurdity and horror, than the grossest errors or the foulest corruptions of the Papacy; and, while I make no attack upon the personal characters of Calvinists, much more when I speak of them with the utmost respect, in thus strongly condemning their opinions, I transgress not, in the smallest degree, the rules of lawful controversy. The principle which will justify you in marking the Romish system of doctrine as replete with nonsense, idolatry, and blasphemy, will more than bear me out in the strongest epithets which I have permitted myself to apply to the scheme of your great ecclesiastical master.*

Besides, is it not strange that you should complain of the liberty which I give myself in reference to the system of Calvinistic divinity, when you take such high ground in its favour, and pronounce upon the opinions of those who dissent

* I beg to be particularly understood here as speaking of genuine unmixed Calvinism; such as it appears in the Institutes of Calvin, and in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Its peculiarities are, *absolute, unconditional election and reprobation, partial redemption, irresistible grace, and final perseverance*. This system, even the editors of the Christian Observer, it will be shown, speak of in terms of strong condemnation.

from it, in terms so extremely magisterial? You represent the consequences which flow from the rejection of Calvinism as to the last degree *shocking* and *absurd*. You declare the doctrine of your opponents to be “*inconsistent with itself, dishonourable to God, and comfortless to man:*” You brand it as “a gloomy system of possibilities and per-adventures, nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God.”* In what part of my Letters have I indulged in equal freedom of expression? Still, I find no fault with this portion of your work. I am the advocate of frank discussion. And had you abstained, on all occasions, from *personal attack*, I should have been very far from applying to you that severity of language, which, however painful it was to me to employ it, I considered as imperiously called for by the rules of truth and justice.

Again—Have I given so much as the slightest hint that there can be no salvation for those who embrace the Calvinistic doctrine? God forbid that such a sentiment should ever enter into my heart! And yet, in that part of your work in which it appears to be your object to set forth the utmost extent of your charitable ideas, you go no further than to admit the possibility of salvation to those who reject the Calvinistic doctrine in *words*;† thus consigning all who reject it not merely in *words*, but in *substance*, to inevitable perdition. After this, you will permit me to express my astonish-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 338, 339.

† Ibid. p. 340.

ment that you should suffer yourself to say a single word as to the freedom of expression in which I have indulged on the subject before us.

You assert, in the most positive terms, that the doctrines of Calvinism are the doctrines of the Church of England. If this be so, it must follow that the great body of the Episcopal clergy of the United States are traitors to the sacred cause which they have expressly pledged themselves to maintain. This, indeed, is a charge which Calvinists omit no opportunity of bringing against them. It is of the utmost importance to ascertain how far it is founded in truth. Let me solicit the attention of candid Presbyterians to a very brief investigation of the subject.

We must, in the first place, ascertain precisely what *Calvinism* is.

This is the more necessary from the pains which have been taken to hide the true features of the system from the public view. So abhorrent are the *distinguishing* principles of Calvinism from the best feelings of our nature, and so contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, and to common sense, that its advocates seem afraid to set it forth in its naked simplicity. It is only in some disguised form that they can hope to give it currency. Accordingly, they dwell upon the corruption of man, and upon the fundamental doctrines of the Cross, in a way evidently calculated to lead the public to suppose that they form the line of distinction between Calvinists and other professing Christians. This is extremely uncandid and unjust.

The distinguishing doctrines of the Cross have nothing to do with the *peculiarities* of Calvinism. Until the fourth century, these peculiarities were utterly unknown; being introduced, in the first instance, by St. Austin, who was very far, however, from carrying matters to the same extreme with the adventurous Reformer of Geneva.*

Were I called upon to point out that fundamental principle, which may be considered as comprising the sum and substance of Christianity, and as being essential to its very existence, I should fix, without one moment's hesitation, upon the great doctrine of redemption from sin and death by the blood of a crucified Saviour. This doctrine is not less characteristic of the Old Testament than of the New. The great difference, indeed, between the two Testaments, lies in this; that the first directs the eye of the faithful to a Saviour, who, in the fulness of time, is to appear in the flesh; while the last describes a Saviour who has actually appeared in the flesh, and has actually offered up, in his own proper person, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. Under both Testaments, man is described as in a state of captivity to sin and death. Under both, he is described as ransomed by the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.

So far is it from being true, that Calvinists are

* The later works of St. Austin, in fact, contain opinions and arguments which are absolutely inconsistent with the system of Calvin. This is shown by Dr. Laurence in his Bampton Letters.

distinguished from other professing Christians by their attachment to this great doctrine, that they are to be known, emphatically, by the limitation which they give to the doctrine, in confining the efficacy of the blood of Christ to a few elected favourites of an arbitrary sovereign. It is not by their adherence to the genuine doctrines of the Cross, but by the corruptions which they endeavour to graft on those doctrines, that the faithful historian must describe them.

Let the system in question be now fairly stated, and compared with the public formularies of the Church of England.

Our first parents, in transgressing the law of God, brought *actual* guilt, not only upon themselves, but upon their posterity. The human race was summed up in Adam. His sin was imputed to his descendants, so as to become the *proper* and *personal* sin of each one of them, by the positive decree of God. Thus, all men, the moment they enter the world, are, *strictly speaking*, sinners; have actual guilt upon their heads; for which they are bound over to the wrath of God, and justly made subject to death, with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

Out of this condemned mass of mankind, thus doomed, for the sin of Adam, to eternal wo, from the moment of their birth, it has pleased God to select a certain portion by an absolute and irresistible decree; such decree fixing the precise number, and ascertaining the very individuals that are to be saved. For this elect part of the human

race alone did the Saviour die; to it alone is effectual grace given; which *irresistibly* and *infallibly* converts the soul to God. Conversion is *wholly a divine work*;—man is *absolutely passive* therein. And, finally, the elect, being thus brought to God by the operation of irresistible grace, cannot permanently fall away, but will certainly persevere to the end, and be saved.

The reprobates remain in that condemned state in which they came into the world. No Saviour is provided for them; no effectual grace is ever given to them. The conversion of the soul to God being *entirely* the result of special grace, and this grace not being vouchsafed to the reprobate, it follows that their conversion is a thing impossible. In short, they come into the world under an absolute necessity of perishing.

Listen to the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith!

“ Our first parents being the root of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was imputed to all their posterity.” “ Every sin, both original and actual, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and so made subject to death, with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal.”* “ By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.† “ These angels and men, thus predesti-

* Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. vi. sect. 3, 6

† Ibid. chap. iii. sect. 3.

nated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.”* “Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, *without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto.*”† “None are redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the *elect only.*”‡ “Effectual calling is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein.”§ “They whom God hath accepted in his beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election.”|| “The rest of mankind, God was pleased, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to *ordain* them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”¶

* Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sect. 4.

† Ibid. chap. iii. sect. 5.

‡ Ibid. chap. iii. sect. 6.

§ Ibid. chap. x. sect. 2.

|| Ibid. chap. xvii. sect. 1, 2.

¶ Ibid. chap. iii. sect. 7.

Listen to the words of the man from whom the system in question has derived its name.

“ God not only foresaw that Adam would fall, but also *ordained that he should.*”* “ All men are not created in like estate ; but some are foreordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation.”† “ God of his will and pleasure so ordains, that amongst some men, some should be so born as to be devoted from the womb to certain death, who, by their destruction, might glorify his name.” “ Whom, therefore, he hath created unto the shame of life, and destruction of death, that they should be instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity, that they may come to their end ; at one time he deprives them of the power of hearing his word ; at another, he the more blinds and stupifies them by the preaching of it.”‡ “ Behold God calls to them (the reprobates) that they may be more deaf : He kindles a light, that they may be more blind : He brings his doctrine to them, that they may be more confounded ; and applies the remedy to them, but that they may not be healed.”§ “ The reprobates would be thought excusable in sinning, because they cannot avoid the necessity of sinning ; especially since such necessity is cast upon them by the ordination of God. But we deny that they are thence rightly excused.”|| The difference between the *elect* and the *reprobate*,

* Institutes, lib. iii. chap. 4. Also Calvin de Predes. p. 607..

† Institutes, lib. iii. chap. 31.

‡ Ibid. lib. iii. chap. 23.

§ Ibid. lib. iii. chap. 24.

|| Ibid. lib. iii.

Calvin resolves solely into the arbitrary will of God.*

We have thus shown, from the most authentic evidence, what Calvinism really is.

We will now set down, in a few brief propositions, the principles in which Calvinists and anti-Calvinists agree, and in which they differ; and then test the leading tenets of Calvinism by the standards of the Church of England.

1. They unite in the great doctrine of redemption from sin and death by the blood of a crucified Saviour. They regard the death of Christ as a real, propitiatory sacrifice for sin; enabling God, in consistency with the essential perfections of his nature, to receive transgressors to mercy. They believe that Christ not only taught the efficacy of repentance and faith, but that he actually imparted to them whatever efficacy they possess, by his death and sufferings; that he not only informed sinners of the manner in which salvation is to be obtained, but that he absolutely purchased this salvation for them by his meritorious passion.

Thus, in the great and fundamental doctrine of satisfaction for sin by the cross of Christ, Calvinists and anti-Calvinists unite; and it is this doctrine that principally distinguishes them from all those professors of Christianity who deny the divinity and atonement of our blessed Lord.

2. They agree that the human race has inherited from its parents a corrupt and depraved nature.

* Institutes, lib. iii. chap. 23

3. They agree that man “cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God;”^{*} that the assistance of the Holy Spirit is necessary to begin, to carry on, and to perfect, the work of sanctification. And thus they are opposed to the corrupt doctrine of Pelagius, which gives to man the power of working out his salvation by his own *unassisted* efforts.

The divinity and atonement of Christ, the corruption of man, and the necessity of supernatural influence to his conversion and sanctification, are doctrines, then, which are common to the two classes of persons of whom we are speaking. These are the great and fundamental truths of Christianity; they are the truths which make the Gospel, emphatically, a *system of grace*. But Calvinists are not content with these simple doctrines of Scripture. Actuated by a prying and curious spirit, they labour to be wise above what is written; they boldly attempt to fathom the unrevealed counsels of the Godhead.

All the leading truths of the Gospel Calvinists debase, by mingling with them their own inventions. Thus they corrupt the doctrine of the atonement, by limiting it to a few arbitrarily elected favourites, in opposition to the plain and constant language of Scripture, which extends it to the whole human race. The doctrine of the fall and consequent depravity of man they corrupt by

* Article X. of “Free Will.”

asserting that he is wholly averse from all good, and wholly inclined to all evil; thus making him to be a perfect fiend. And the doctrine of the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the mind they equally corrupt by representing that influence as absolutely irresistible; thus destroying at once that free agency which alone can constitute us moral and accountable beings.

But we will now put down, in brief propositions, and in opposite columns, the points which distinguish Calvinists and anti-Calvinists from one another.

Calvinistic doctrine.

Anti-Calvinistic doctrine.

1. The human race was summed up in Adam; being in his loins, it virtually assented to his act of disobedience. Thus his guilt is imputed to all his posterity. It follows that all men, the moment they enter the world, are, strictly speaking, sinners; having actual guilt upon their heads, as much as Adam had upon his violation of the divine command. And it would be perfectly consistent

1. The doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity is contrary both to Scripture, and to common sense. It is utterly impossible that the *proper* and *personal* guilt of one man should become the *proper* and *personal* guilt of another. We inherit a corrupt nature from our first parents, but we inherit no *actual* guilt from them. When men enter the world they are perfectly free from posi-

with both the justice and the mercy of God, to consign infants, in consequence of the sin of Adam, which is their sin by imputation, to eternal perdition.*

tive sin, which, indeed, they can commit only when they become capable of distinguishing right from wrong. God will never condemn us for the sin of our first parents. We shall be called to answer only for our own actions. It would not be consistent with the justice of God to consign infants to eternal misery for the sin of Adam.

* The doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity may well be considered as the basis of the Calvinistic scheme; indeed, it seems to be necessary, as a ground work for the decree of unconditional election and reprobation. And yet it was not taught by Calvin, but was added by his followers, who perceived that it was wanting to render the system complete. The foundation of what now passes under the name of Calvinism was laid by St. Augustine, in the fifth century; from which period the doctrine of an arbitrary predestination has existed, in a greater or less degree, in the Church of Rome. Calvin carried the system further than St. Augustine, and made it more complete and consistent. Still it was not brought to the state in which it now is, resting on the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity as its fundamental principle, until some time after Calvin's death. The system is now worked up into a consistent whole—a system not less artificial nor less distant from the simplicity of scriptural truth, than the Romish doctrine of the merit of works, by which, immediately before the reformation, the great doctrine of redemption through Christ was superseded and lost. The creed of the schoolmen, and the Calvinistic creed of partial redemption and irresistible grace, may be considered as the opposite extremes, between which lies the scriptural doctrine of redemption through the merits of Christ.

Dr. Laurence, in his Bampton Lectures, proves, by quotations from the works of Calvin, that he denied the doctrine of imputation. See note 13, on Sermon III.

2. Out of the human race, thus justly exposed, by the guilt of its parents, to eternal wo, it pleased God to select a certain portion by an eternal decree; such decree fixing the precise number, and ascertaining the very individuals to be saved. This decree is altogether arbitrary and absolute; being totally independent of, and unconnected with, any "foresight of faith or works, or any other thing, in the creature, as conditions or causes moving thereunto."

The rest of mankind are, in the same arbitrary and unconditional way, reprobated; that is, they are doomed, or decreed, or predestinated, from all eternity, to perdition.

2. The doctrine of *absolute, unconditional, election and reprobation* is totally unfounded in Scripture. Election is a word which often occurs in the sacred writings; but it marks the appointment of nations or bodies of men to spiritual privileges; not the eternal predestination of one set of persons to happiness, and of another to misery. Even admitting that the words *election* and *predestination*, as used in Scripture, are properly applicable to individual persons, still, it is not an *absolute* and *unconditional election* or *predestination* that is set forth, but an *election* or *predestination* founded on the divine foreknowledge of the use or abuse which individuals would make of the means of grace.

The eternal decrees

of the divine mind constitute a subject which we are wholly unable to fathom. Our business is to attend to the revealed will of God; being well assured that his *secret* and his *revealed* will cannot possibly be inconsistent. And as he expressly calls upon all to come unto him, and declares it to be his will that none should be lost, we may rest satisfied that there is no eternal, unconditional decree consigning the bulk of mankind to inevitable perdition. To suppose such a decree, is to ascribe to God a secret will in direct opposition to his revealed word.

3. For this elect portion of the human race alone did the Saviour die. The reprobate have nothing to do with him. He made no atonement for their sins. They are

3. Our blessed Saviour died, not merely for the elect, but for all mankind. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of

as utterly destitute of all interest in his blood as if it had never been shed.

the whole world." "He gave himself a ransom for all." "He tasted death for every man."

By the atonement of Christ all men are brought into a salvable state; in other words, salvation is rendered possible to all; it is placed within the reach of all. Every individual, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which is denied to none who ask for it, may work out his own salvation. We are all equally interested in the blood of Christ—that is, the blood of Christ was so far shed for all, as to extend equally to all the possibility of salvation. All are called;—they alone, who refuse to come, are rejected; and none labour under any impossibility of coming. The Holy Spirit is so far given to all, as to enable all to repent and be

4. The elect are, in due time, effectually called; that is, they are irresistibly converted to God. Such conversion is wholly a divine work; man being absolutely passive therein. And the elect, being thus converted, in the first instance, by irresistible grace, are, afterwards, held by the mighty power of God. It is absolutely impossible for them to fall away from a state of grace, and perish. They will infallibly persevere to the end, and be saved.

saved. Thus it is that Christ died for the sins of the whole world.

4. The doctrine of *irresistible grace* has no foundation in Scripture. God deals with us as free agents. It is no part of his system to compel us either to believe his word, or to obey his law. He exhibits sufficient evidence for the one, and proposes adequate motives for the other; leaving us free to believe or disbelieve in the first case, and to obey or disobey in the last. Man, therefore, is not *absolutely passive* in conversion. In short, conversion and sanctification are partly a *divine work*, and partly a *human work*. Something is left for us to do. We are not impelled by irresistible grace as matter is impelled by physical force. Of ourselves we can do no-

5. To the reprobate salvation is impossible. As no atoning blood was ever shed for them, so no effectual grace is ever given to them.

Left to ourselves, we inevitably perish. The reprobate are left to themselves. That assistance of the Spirit, without which we cannot repent and live, is absolutely withheld from them. In short, they are doomed from all eternity to perdition. And God, so far from giving them the means of salvation, absolutely inclines them to evil, and fits and prepares them, as vessels of wrath, for the display of his glorious justice, in the torments of never ending despair.

6. Infants, as well as

thing. Through Christ strengthening us we can do all things.

5. As Christ died for all men, so sufficient grace is given to all men. In other words, the influences of the Holy Spirit are so far given to all, as to enable all to work out their salvation. Irresistible grace is conferred on none;—sufficient grace is denied to none. For all God gave his Son; to all he sends his Spirit; and the sinner is never finally rejected until he rejects his God.

6. All persons dying

adults, are divided into the two classes of elect and reprobate. The former are saved; the latter perish.

7. "They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved." The heathen world will be *indiscriminately* lost.

in infancy are received to the mercy of God.

7. Salvation is possible to the heathen. They will be judged, not by the law of the Gospel, of which they are totally ignorant, but by the particular law under which they may have been placed. Still, salvation is, in all cases, and under all circumstances, through the blood of Christ.

Let us now very briefly compare some of the cardinal principles of Calvinism with the Articles and other Standards of the Church of England.

We will begin with the fundamental doctrine of IMPUTATION.

The Westminster Confession of Faith positively declares that the sin of our first parents is imputed to their posterity; that it brings *guilt* upon them; that it binds them over to the wrath of God, and makes them justly subject to eternal death.*

In what part of the Standards of our Church is this doctrine to be found?

* Chapter VII.

The ninth Article defines original sin to be “the fault and corruption of the nature of every man whereby he is very far gone from original righteousness.” Does the Article say, in the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that the sin of our first parents is *imputed to their posterity*, that *it brings guilt upon them*, and *binds them over to the wrath of God*? By no means. The Article declares, simply, that we derive from our first parents a fallen and corrupt nature, in professed opposition to the Pelagian idea, that we come into the world in a state as pure as was that of Adam before his fall.—But the Article goes on—“And, therefore, in every person born into this world *it* deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” The word *it* here refers to the corrupt nature of man. This corrupt nature, then, is said to deserve God’s wrath and damnation; in other words, to be offensive in his pure and holy sight. The term *damnation*, at the time the Articles were composed, signified, simply, condemnation, disapprobation, displeasure. The ninth Article, then, merely asserts that we inherit from our first parents a nature positively corrupt, and that this corrupt nature is offensive to God: it by no means asserts that man, in consequence of the corrupt nature which he brings into the world, deserves, or will incur eternal damnation; which is the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith.*

* If the posterity of Adam, being in his loins, assented to his act of disobedience, and thus sinned in him, or if the original transgres-

In order to understand the Article in question, we must refer to the Popish errors against which

sion of Adam is imputed to his offspring, so as to bring guilt upon them; it must follow that we are bound to repent of the disobedience in question. The conclusion is inevitable. Now, can any thing be more absurd than the idea of calling upon men to repent of an act committed before they were born? Is not the bare statement of such a proposition enough to cover the whole doctrine with ridicule? Transubstantiation itself is not quite so preposterous.

The constant language of Scripture is, that we shall be judged by the deeds done in the body;—not a word is said of our responsibility for the sin of Adam. The thing, indeed, is absolutely incredible and impossible in its own nature, and, therefore, could never be admitted to be the genuine doctrine of Scripture, even if passages could be produced, in which it might seem to be contained. We must have recourse to a figurative interpretation, where it is necessary to preserve us from absurdity. What can be more explicit than the language, *This is my body—this is my blood?* But are we to believe that the bread is flesh, and the wine blood, in opposition to the irresistible conviction of our senses, that they are not blood and flesh, but wine and bread? Surely not.—*This is my representative body—This is my representative blood.* And when Scripture says, “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” are we to believe that the posterity of Adam assented to his act of disobedience, and thus actually sinned in him, so as to become positively guilty before God? What, is there no way of construing the passage so as to prevent it from being at variance with the immediate and irresistible dictates of the human mind? Guilt can be brought upon us only by acts of omission or of commission to which we expressly or impliedly assent. It is just as great a violation of the established laws of our rational nature, to say that we are guilty, in reference to the sin of our first parents, as to say that two and two make five, or that the whole is superior to the sum of its parts.

How, then, are we to understand the passage—“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners?” It points to that curse of death which the sin of Adam brought upon his posterity; they were made subject to death, the penalty of sin. That this is the true sense, is evident from the context; and such was the interpretation put upon the passage by the Christian Fathers.

The view taken of the subject of original sin, by the Reformer Zuinglius, is peculiarly just and happy—“Sin is, properly, transgression of a law; and where there is no law, there is no transgression.

it was designed to guard. At the period of the Reformation, a very artificial system of divinity prevailed in the Church of Rome; the fruit of the metaphysical disquisitions of the schoolmen. They maintained, among other things, that the soul comes pure and immaculate into existence; the corruption induced by the fall being confined entirely to the body. Original sin is the loss of original righteousness. Now, the schoolmen regarded original righteousness as forming no part of man's nature in his state of innocence, but merely as an adventitious ornament, of which he might be deprived without forfeiting his integrity. Hence they considered fallen man as the object of divine displeasure, not from any thing in him positively offensive; but simply from the loss of an acceptable quality. The doctrine of the depravity of our nature was, in this way, completely superseded; and, on the basis of the unimpaired purity and energy of the soul, was erected that system of merit, according to which man was represented as able by his own natural strength to deserve the grace of God, and then

Our great ancestor sinned; but which of us meddled with the forbidden fruit? There is then no denying that original sin, as it exists in us, the descendants of Adam, is *not properly sin*. It is a *disease*; it is a *condition*. It may be called sin, but it is not so in *strictness of speech*. Thus a perfidious enemy, when taken in war, may *deserve* to be made a slave. His children also become slaves, but the fault was in the father. The children are not to blame, yet they suffer for the sin of their father; and if you choose to denominate their state of slavery sin, because by sin they were brought into that state, I shall not object: It is, however, in this sense, that we are by nature the children of wrath." See *Milner's Church History*, vol. v. p. 577.

by the aid of such grace to deserve eternal life. Thus the atonement of Christ was rendered superfluous, and man became in reality his own saviour.

In opposition to all this, the English Reformers, treading in the steps of their Lutheran predecessors, maintained that original sin is the loss, not merely of an adventitious ornament, but of the primitive innocence and rectitude of our nature; in consequence of which we are inclined to evil. Accordingly, they held that our nature is positively corrupt and offensive in the sight of God; but they did not go on and declare that this corrupt nature, with which we are born, brings actual guilt upon us, and thereby justly subjects us to the sentence of perdition.

By adverting, in this way, to the errors which prevailed at the period of the Reformation, we are enabled clearly to understand the language of the ninth Article of the Church of England.*

The soul of man, notwithstanding the fall, continues pure and unvitiated; the loss of original righteousness being the loss not of a connatural quality of the mind, but merely of an unessential ornament.

Thus spoke the schoolmen.—

With a distinct reference to this grossly erroneous system, the English Reformers declared the nature of man to be vitiated in *soul* not less

* See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, where this subject is fully investigated and explained.

than in *body*; to be positively corrupt, and therefore offensive to a Being of infinite purity.

But this is widely different from the Calvinistic doctrine of the imputation of the sin of our first parents to their posterity, so as to render them actually guilty before God, and deserving, apart from all positive transgression, of eternal punishment. There is not a trace of this doctrine in the formularies of the Church of England; indeed, it was not taught even by Calvin himself, but was invented by his followers, long after his death, with the view of supplying a palpable deficiency in his theological scheme.

In the fundamental point, therefore, of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity, the Articles of the Church of England, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is one of the great standards of Calvinistic divinity, are clearly at variance.*

With the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity is naturally connected that of an *arbitrary* predestination of one part of the

* It may be well to mention here that the Calvinists, in the year 1643, when they were triumphant in England, set about revising and altering the Articles, for the purpose, to use the language of Neal, "making them more express and determinate in favour of Calvinism."† The article of Original Sin they altered thus—"Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but (*together with his first sin imputed*) it is the fault, &c."

This shows that our Articles, even in the opinion of Calvinists themselves, do not teach the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity.

† History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 48, edition 1754.

human race to eternal happiness, and of another to eternal misery. We are told that we come into the world under the burden of positive guilt; for which, independently of all personal transgression, it would be just in God to consign us to perdition. The way is thus cleared for the decree of God electing some individuals, and reprobating others. This decree is entirely absolute; being "without any foresight of faith or good works, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving thereunto."* Now, in what part of the formularies of the Church of England is such language to be found? The Liturgy not only says no such thing, but holds an opposite language, and breathes an opposite spirit in every page. There is not a trace of the doctrine in the Homilies. But the seventeenth Article, entitled, "of Predestination and Election," is always triumphantly produced by the Calvinist as decisive evidence. Well, here are the words *predestination* and *election*; of course the Church of England is Calvinistic. In this very superficial way do most of those proceed who are continually reproaching us with a departure from the standards of our faith. No one denies that the words, *election*, *predestination*, are to be found in Scripture; but the Calvinist is bound to prove, first, that these words, as used in Scripture, and in the seventeenth Article of our Church, refer to the *future and eternal state of individuals* :

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sect. 5.

and, secondly, that the predestination of individuals to life or death is *entirely independent of all personal qualifications*; being resolvable solely into the absolute sovereignty of God.

Let us admit, for a moment, that predestination is to be taken, not in a *collective*, but an *individual* sense;—still, the question arises, is it conditional, or is it absolute? Calvin thus answers —“ All are not created in like estate, but to some eternal life, to others eternal death is foreappointed.”* “ But those whom he appointeth to damnation, to them, we say, by his just and irreprehensible, but also incomprehensible judgment, the entry of life is blocked up.”† “ Therefore if we cannot assign a reason why he should confer mercy on those that are his, but because thus it pleaseth him; neither, indeed, shall we have any other cause in rejecting of others, than his own will.”‡ Not less positive is the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith. “ By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.” “ Their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” “ They are chosen without any foresight of faith or good works, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving thereunto.” “ The rest of mankind God was pleased, for the glory of his

* Institutes, lib. iii. chap. 21, sect. 5. † Ibid. chap. 21, sect. 7.

‡ Ibid. chap. 22, sect. 11.

sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath.”*

Thus God unconditionally saves some, and destroys others, by an eternal decree. Having decreed to save, he decrees to sanctify.† Arbitrary will and irresistible power are the only features which appear. Effectual calling, or conversion from sin to holiness is *entirely* a divine work; the creature being absolutely *passive* therein.‡ None but the elect are effectually called; and the elect cannot possibly perish, being preserved by the infallible decree of God.§ Thus, by irresistible power, the sinner is at once converted, sanctified, and finally saved. The amount of the whole matter is simply this—God decreed to form a number of machines, and to endow them with the capacity of enjoying pleasure, and suffering pain—he decreed to prepare some for the one state, and some for the other—the former he forces into Heaven, the latter he thrusts into Hell; arbitrary will discriminating, and resistless power executing.

* Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sect. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

† “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ.” *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Confession of Faith, chap. x. sect. 1.*

‡ “This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether PASSIVE therein.” *Ibid. chap. x. sect. 2.*

§ “This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election.” *Ibid. chap. xvii. sect. 2.*

Very different is the language of those who hold the doctrine of a *conditional* predestination. They connect the decree of God with his prescience; supposing him to determine to bless where he foresees faith and obedience; to destroy where he foresees unbelief and impenitence. Thus God, according to this view of the subject, decrees to create a number of free agents, and to deal with them according to the moral and responsible nature which he gives them. He places before them good and evil; with the assistance of his Holy Spirit, which is *sufficiently* given to all, they have the power of choosing the one and rejecting the other:—the obedient are saved; the disobedient perish. Here all is beneficent and lovely; the rewards which are bestowed in the one case, and the punishments which are inflicted in the other, being consistent alike with the attributes of justice and of mercy. Such is the difference between an *arbitrary* and a *conditional* predestination. Now the seventeenth Article is couched in general terms; the predestination which it sets forth is not declared to be *absolute*; nay, we are expressly required to “receive God’s promises in such wise as they are generally set forth to us in holy Scripture.” Will any one deny that the promise of future happiness is suspended on the condition of our obedience to the law of God? Will the impenitent be saved? Is not penitence, then, a condition of salvation? The predestination of God must be consistent with his promises; the latter being conditional, the former must be conditional

also. Besides, the Articles of our Church must be understood in a sense which is consistent with her Liturgy; and the Liturgy, it is well known, preaches conditional salvation from beginning to end.

In addition to all this, it is to be observed that the seventeenth Article is totally silent on the subject of reprobation; of course the doctrine of an eternal decree of reprobation forms no part of the faith of our Church. Now, your great master, Calvin, expressly tells us that election, without reprobation, cannot stand.*

But, in fact, the words, *predestination, election*, as used in the seventeenth Article, are to be taken in a *collective*, not in an *individual* sense.† The venerable Reformers of the Church of England did not intend to lay down the doctrine of an eternal decree of God fixing the future condition of

* Institutes, lib. iii. cap. 23, sect. 1.

† *Election, purpose, foreappointment, predestinated*, never relate, either in the Old or New Testament, to the future state of individuals; but are always applicable to collective bodies. This Whitby has proved beyond the possibility of dispute. The Jews are constantly denominated the elect people; and in the New Testament the term is used in a general way to signify Christians, persons converted to the faith of the Gospel. The Apostles address large bodies of Christians, and style them the elect. The doctrine of absolute decrees, fixing the future and eternal state of individuals, was violently opposed when originally advanced by St. Augustine, and the author charged with heresy. When Calvin revived the doctrine, it met with the most determined resistance, and was not established, without a severe struggle, even in his own territory of Geneva. From the very period of its origin, it has not failed, at times, to perplex, disturb, and even convulse the Church. But the great body of Christians have always firmly believed in the doctrine of universal redemption, and the doctrines connected with it; and, of course, have been anti-Calvinists.

individuals, but simply to give a general description of the scheme of redemption and salvation through the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to avoid being struck with the difference between the language of the Article, relative to God's election, and that employed by Calvin; the former appearing to refer it to a collective body, while the latter expressly applies it to individual persons.*

Calvin declares that the unconditional predestination of some individuals to eternal life, is necessarily connected with the unconditional reprobation of others. And, indeed, this is obviously the case. Now, the seventeenth Article says not a word of any decree of reprobation. If, then, it had been the design of the Article to declare the doctrine of a predestination of individuals to eternal life, the corresponding and necessarily connected doctrine of reprobation would have been expressly introduced. This is a further very probable circumstance to show, that the predestination spoken of in the Article relates to the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ; for, in this view of predestination, it has no connexion whatever with the Calvinistic tenet of reprobation.

* The divine decree, according to Calvin, is "de unoquoque homine; † while the English Reformers refer it to those "whom God hath chosen in Christ out of mankind." Melancthon holds the same language with the Church of England; considering the decree of God as having for its object a Church collected from among the human race.

† Institutes, lib. iii. chap. 1, sect. 5.

We shall be confirmed in this view of the subject if we direct our attention for a moment to the baptismal service of the Church of England. In that service God is expressly represented as favourably receiving all who are brought to him in baptism; it is declared, in so many words, that he admits them into the number of his children. Now, as the Church of England must be supposed to speak a *consistent* language in her different standards, we can be at no loss to discover the sense in which the words, *election*, *predestination*, are intended to be used by her. It is evident, from the baptismal service, that she considers them as referring to a collective body, and as marking the designation of that body to spiritual privileges in this world. All baptized persons are taken into covenant with God, and thus elected.

In the view of the Church of England, then, the doctrine of election is connected with the ordinance of baptism; and the baptismal service represents God as the common and impartial Father of all, electing us as Christians, and finally rejecting those only who forfeit the privileges of their election, by failing to perform its conditions.

Thus, interpreting the seventeenth Article by the baptismal service, we perceive that the predestination spoken of in the former, does not relate to the future state of individuals, but marks the eternal purpose of God to place fallen man under a new dispensation of mercy through Christ, and the election of a Church out of the world as the depository of his covenant and his grace. It is, at all

events, most certain that the Church of England rejects the idea of an arbitrary* selection of individuals as the objects of divine favour; that she regards God as mercifully embracing all who are brought to him in baptism; † withdrawing, nevertheless, from them his favour if they violate their baptismal engagements;—it not being sufficient that we be made in baptism the children of God by adoption unless we be daily renewed by his Holy Spirit, and so be rendered meet, by sanctification of heart and holiness of life, to be received, through the merits of Christ, into the Kingdom of Glory.

But the limits of this work forbid me to enlarge. ‡

* The Editor of the *Christian's Magazine* undertakes to prove, by a minute comparison of passages from the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Articles of the Church of England, that they hold the same language relative to predestination. But he leaves out that section of the Confession of Faith in which predestination is declared to be *absolute*; the very section to which, more than to any other, those who deny the alleged coincidence of the Westminster Confession with the Articles of the Church of England, on the point in question, are in the practice of appealing. Surely this is uncandid in the extreme.

† In the rubric after the office of "Public Baptism of Infants" in the Church of England, it is declared to be "certain by God's word that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are saved." How totally inconsistent is this with the Calvinistic doctrine of an unconditional appointment of some adults and infants to eternal life, and of others to eternal death, by a secret decree!

Let it not be supposed, however, that the Church of England denies salvation to infants that die without baptism. God forbid! She has reference, in the rubric in question, to the *covenanted* mercy of God, and is declaring what she considers as *positively revealed*. She is silent on the subject of unbaptized infants, because she supposes Scripture to be silent. She leaves such infants, therefore, to God's free but uncovenanted mercy.

‡ Persons who wish to see the Church of England completely vindicated from the charge of Calvinism, are referred to the writings of Bull,

With the doctrine of unconditional election by an eternal decree, is naturally connected that of *partial redemption*. Accordingly, it is a fundamental tenet of Calvinism, that Jesus Christ died only for the *elect*. Let it suffice to appeal to the Westminster Confession of Faith—"Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only."* This spirit pervades the whole work—It is for the *elect* that Christ purchases *reconciliation*; † to them alone are the *benefits of redemption communicated*. ‡

Now mark the emphatic language of our public formularies! "The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for *all the sins of the whole world*, both original and actual."§ "Both in the Old and New

Waterland, Winchester, Tucker, Kipling, Hey, Daubeny, Pearson; and particularly to two late works, Dr. Laurence's Bampton Lectures, and Bishop White's "Comparison of the Controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians, with the Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church." The production of Bishop White consists of four parts, viz. A Comparison of the Calvinistic and Arminian Controversy; 1st, with the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans; 2d, with the rest of Holy Scripture; 3d, with the Faith of the Primitive Church; 4th, with the Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The two first parts have been published, and the last part is now publishing in the Churchman's Magazine. We hope the learned author will soon give the entire work to the world in a separate volume. It is, certainly, a most able and original performance.

The question, relative to the Calvinism of our Articles, is discussed with great perspicuity, in a Sermon delivered at the Consecration of Trinity Church, Newark, in the year 1810, by Doctor, now Bishop Hobart. We cannot but embrace the opportunity of recommending this Sermon to all who wish to see the question completely settled in a few pages.

* Chap. iii. sect. 6.

† Chap. viii. sect. 5.

‡ Chap. viii. sect. 6.

§ Article xxxi.

Testament, everlasting life is offered to *mankind* by Christ.* In the Catechism, Jesus Christ is expressly declared to have “redeemed *all mankind* ;” in the Communion Service he is styled “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the *whole world*.”

It would be impossible to find language more directly at war with the *cardinal principle* of Calvinism.

The doctrines of unconditional election and partial redemption, naturally draw after them the doctrine of irresistible grace. Accordingly, the Westminster Confession of Faith declares “effectual calling,” or conversion from sin to holiness, to be entirely a divine work ; man being “*altogether passive* therein.”† The call is vouchsafed only to the elect, who are determined to that which is good, and effectually drawn to Jesus Christ by Almighty power.‡ The sinner is not only *converted*, but *preserved* by irresistible grace : “He can neither totally nor finally fall away, but shall certainly persevere to the end, and be eternally saved.”§

Is such the doctrine of our Church ? God forbid ! The creature is no where said to be passive in conversion ; grace is no where said to be irresistible ;—on the contrary, the co-operation of man with the influences of the Spirit, is expressly set forth. God is represented as “working *with us*.”||

The Calvinistic doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is entirely unknown to the

* Article vii.

† Chap. x. sect. 2.

‡ Chap. x. sect. 1.

§ Chap. xvii. sect. 1.

|| Article x.

Church of England. "After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we *may* arise again, and amend our lives."* How very different is this from the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith! The elect *cannot* finally fall away—they *shall* certainly persevere, and be eternally saved. To say that we *may* arise, is to admit that we *may not* arise;—it is a sort of language that could not possibly have been used by the advocates of the doctrine of final perseverance.†

The doctrine of total depravity naturally goes along with that of personal election and irresistible grace. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, man is, accordingly, described as "*wholly*

* Article xvi.

† There is a passage in the Burial Service which shows very clearly that the doctrine of final perseverance is not held by the Church of England: "Suffer us not, *at our last hour*, for any pains of death to fall from thee."—The pretence that this passage alludes to a possible fall from a *fictitious faith* is, certainly, unworthy of an answer.

It would be easy to trace the sentiment, contained in the passage just cited, through the whole History of the English Reformation. In the Bishops' Book, for example, put out in the reign of Henry VIII. the following sentence occurs—"Keep us from the enticements of the Devil, that he, by no suggestions, bring us from the right faith, neither cause us to fall into desperation, now, nor *on the point of death*." p. 91. In the King's Book, published also in the reign of Henry, the same idea is presented:—"In the sacraments instituted by Christ we may constantly believe the works of God in them to our present comfort, and application of his grace and favour, with assurance also, that he will not fail us if we *fall not from him*."‡ There is an admission in Cranmer's Catechism, of the possibility of perishing in the *hour of affliction and death*. p. 210. See *Laurence's Bampton Lectures*, p. 445, 446.

I need not say how opposite all this is to the doctrine of the infallible perseverance of the saints.

‡ Article of Faith.

defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body ;”* as “altogether averse from that which is good ;”† as “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and *wholly* inclined to all evil.”‡

There is no such language as this in the standards of the Church of England ;—on the contrary, she must be considered as expressly disclaiming, in her ninth Article, the doctrine of total depravity ; for in that article she describes fallen man as “*very far*,” not as *wholly* “gone from original righteousness.”§

* Chap. vi. 2.

† Chap. ix. 3.

‡ Chap. vi. 4.

§ The tendency of the human mind to pass from one extreme to another, strikingly appears in reference to the subject of original sin. The Pelagians maintained that man comes into the world with a nature as pure as that of Adam before his fall, and that he is, therefore, capable, by his own *unassisted* powers, of working out his salvation. The Romish schoolmen represented the corruption of our nature, induced by the fall, as a mere bodily taint ; the soul only losing an adventitious ornament, which it might lose without prejudice to its native powers. In consequence of this, they held that the mere natural man, without any divine assistance, is capable of preparing himself for grace, and thus of meriting it ; not so, indeed, as to lay God under a strict obligation of justice to bestow it, but at least so far as to render it fit and proper that it should be bestowed, and that God could not withhold it consistently with his attributes. The schoolmen went on to assert, that the mere natural man, having prepared himself for grace so as infallibly to receive it, can then attain, by the assistance of the grace thus secured to him by his own unaided efforts, to the higher merit of condignity ; which *entitles* him to the joys of Heaven. Thus did the scholastics completely put out of their system the doctrine of salvation by the sole merits of Christ, and of sanctification by the Holy Spirit ; making man, in reality, his own sanctifier, and his own saviour. This was, perhaps, the worst error of the Romish Church ; poisoning the Christian doctrine and practice, at once, in their very fountain ; not only superseding the vital principle of the Gospel scheme of salvation, but laying the foundation of that infamous traffic in in-

What now shall we think of your very peremptory assertion?—"The Articles of the Church of

dulgences, by which such ridicule and shame were brought upon the Christian name.

It is not to be wondered at, that some of the Reformers, in their abhorrence of a doctrine so pernicious and detestable, should pass to the contrary extreme. Calvin set up the doctrine of *total depravity*; alleging that the divine image, in which man was created, was *utterly* defaced by the fall; that he is now *wholly* averse from all good, and *wholly* inclined to all evil. Thus, according to Calvin, the human race became, in consequence of the fall, an *unmingled* mass of corruption; and the entire change of the sinner from a state of total depravity to a state of sanctification and favour before God, is the result, simply and exclusively, of *irresistible* grace; man being absolutely passive from the beginning to the end of the process.

It would be easy to multiply passages to this effect from the writings of Calvin; but it cannot be necessary. I will content myself with introducing one or two sentences in which the doctrine of human co-operation is indignantly rejected, and the irresistibility of the divine election unequivocally set forth—"Duo autem errores hic cavendi sunt: quia nonnulli co-operarium Deo faciunt hominem, ut suffragio suo ratam electionem faciat: ita secundum eos voluntas hominis superior est Dei consilio."* "An assertion," says Mr. Mant, "which runs counter to the whole tenor of the Bible; annulling its commands and exhortations; its promises and threats; all its commendations of the good, and all its judgments on the wicked."†

In the third chapter of his second book, Calvin not only asserts the doctrine of irresistible grace, but accompanies the assertion with a censure of the language held on the subject by all the Christian writers that flourished before the time of Austin. He condemns, particularly, the declaration of Chrysostom, that when God draws us, it is with our consenting will—"Illud toties a Chrysostomo repetitum, repudiari necesse est, quem trahit, volentem trahit."

Calvin represents some infants as carrying with them their damnation from their mothers' womb; and, as to adults, he scruples not to say that all but the elect are uninterruptedly inclined to all manner of wickedness, and would be always positively engaged in the perpetration of horrible crimes, if God did not, through the influence of some *selfish* motive, restrain them.—"The Lord cures those diseases (meaning vicious propensities) in his elect. In others, with a bridle thrown over, he restrains them, only lest they should boil over; so far forth

* Institutes, lib. iii. cap. 21, sect. 3.

† Bampton Lectures, p. 273.

England are undoubtedly Calvinistic—this is proved by the bare inspection of them.”*

Is it proved by a bare inspection of the thirty-

as he sees it to be expedient for the conservation of all things. Hence some are restrained by shame; some by fear of the laws. Thus God, by his providence, bridles the perversity of nature, but does not cleanse within.”†

Here, now, we have the two extremes—the system of Pelagius and the Romish schoolmen, on the one side—and that of John Calvin on the other.

It is impossible, on this subject, too much to admire the moderation and wisdom of the Reformers of the Church of England. The Pelagian error they entirely avoided, by declaring original sin to be the fault or corruption of our nature; that we are born into the world with it; and that from this state of corruption we are incapable of delivering ourselves by our own unassisted efforts. In the same way they guarded against the Romish doctrine of merit; maintaining that the services of man are all imperfect; that after his best performances, he is an unprofitable servant, and can never set up any claim of right, in reference either to grace or salvation; and that he must be content to receive pardon and eternal life, not as a reward due to him, but as the free gift of God’s mercy, through the great atonement. The corruption induced by the fall, the English Reformers, in opposition to the schoolmen, held to be no innocuous quality, but a real taint, extending not merely to the body, but to the soul; weakening and perverting, though not *totally depraving* its different faculties and affections. They stopped short of the doctrine of Calvin, that human nature, in consequence of the fall, became an entire mass of corruption and damnation, and was thus doomed, with the exception of an elect number, to be converted by irresistible grace, to inevitable perdition; maintaining that man is very far, not *totally gone* from original righteousness; that he is not passive in conversion, but co-operates with the Holy Spirit in every part of the religious life; and that God, instead of converting an elect member by an exertion of omnipotent strength, imparts so much assistance to every man, as to enable every man to lay hold on eternal life.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 330.

† Institutes, book ii. chap. 3, sect. 3. The passage is here given as rendered by Bishop White, in his examination of “the Controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians;”—a work not more remarkable for the Christian spirit in which it is written, than for the depth and acuteness with which every part of the subject is discussed. See *Churchman’s Magazine*, v. viii. p. 34.

first Article, that Christ died only for the elect? “None are redeemed by Christ but the *elect only*.”* “The offering of Christ is a perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for *all* the sins of the *whole world*, both original and actual.”† Not one of the peculiarities of Calvinism is to be found in the formularies of our Church. Do you meet there with the doctrine of total depravity? “Man is *very far*,” not totally “gone from original righteousness.” Is it asserted that the saints cannot possibly fall from grace? “We *may* fall from grace, and we *may* rise again.” Is grace ever declared to be irresistible, or the creature ever represented as passive in conversion? The tenth Article expressly speaks of the grace of God as *working with us*;—of course we are not passive.‡ Besides, in

* Westminster Confession of Faith.

† Article xxxi.

‡ It has been observed that the Articles of the Church of England frequently cannot be correctly understood without referring to those errors of the Church of Rome, to which they were intended to be opposed. This remark will particularly apply to the tenth Article, entitled “of Free Will.” “The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore, we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will”

This Article, even when strictly construed, goes no further than to assert the great principle, that man cannot act, in any part of the religious life, independently of the Spirit of God; it by no means represents him as the passive instrument, at any period, of irresistible grace. Such is the fair interpretation of the words, considered in themselves; but when we recollect the Romish error of *congruous merit*, we see, with clearness, the object which the English Reformers had in view. The schoolmen contended that man, by the exercise of his *native and unassisted powers*, can prepare himself for grace; performing works pleasant and acceptable to God, and so meriting grace

the prayers, we implore the *continual help*, not the *irresistible influence* of the Holy Spirit. How different is this from the Calvinistic doctrine,

at his hands. Upon this doctrine the English Reformers intended to put a decided negative. "Man cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength." "We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing (going before) us." The scholastics made man his own sanctifier. By his natural strength, according to them, he can merit grace, so that God cannot, consistently with his attributes, withhold it; and then, with the help of the grace thus infallibly secured to him by his own unaided powers, he can fit himself for Heaven. The English Reformers went back to the pure doctrine of Scripture, and of the primitive Church; representing the religious life, in every part, as the joint work of man and of the Holy Spirit; in equal opposition to the creed of the schoolmen, who derogated from the agency of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and to that of the Calvinists, who ascribed to him the *sole* agency, on the other.

There is, in the article under consideration, a distinction of grace into *preventing* and *co-operating*. "We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ *preventing* us, that we may have a good will, and *working with us* when we have that good will." The article declares that we cannot turn to God without the grace of God by Christ preventing us; in other words, the assistance of the Holy Spirit must precede the act, and contribute to it. It is not said that the act is the sole and undivided work of the Spirit; the opposite of this, indeed, is necessarily implied by the whole language of the article. We cannot turn to God without the grace of Christ;—of course, with that grace we can turn to him. This, surely, supposes man to exert his own powers, and not to be the mere passive subject of a foreign influence. "And working with us when we have that good will." The grace of God by Christ, not only assists in giving us a good will, but must continue afterwards to co-operate with us.

Now, this whole distinction of preventing and co-operating grace, was decidedly rejected by Calvin;* and as the distinction is made not only in the Articles of the Church of England, but also in her Liturgy, we see how little ground there is for the supposition, that Cranmer and his fellow labourers proposed Calvin as their guide in the work of Reformation.

* See Institutes, lib. ii. cap. 2.

that in conversion man is absolutely passive ; and that even after conversion, his perseverance in grace depends, not upon his own will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, and the irresistible power of God!* Where is it asserted in our standards, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers, or that the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity? There is not a trace of either of these doctrines in our Articles, our Homilies, or our Prayers. The terrible decree of reprobation, which forms so prominent a feature in the writings of Calvin, and in the Westminster Confession of Faith, is altogether unknown to our Church ; and the predestination of which the seventeenth Article treats, is not declared to be arbitrary ;—nay, the last clause, instructing us to receive God's promises as they are generally set forth in Holy Scripture, obliges us to consider predestination, if it must be limited to an individual sense, as founded on prescience ; a principle totally and unequivocally disclaimed by Calvin, and by all those societies which have adopted his ideas. But, in truth, the seventeenth Article declares the eternal purpose of God, to place fallen man under a dispensation of mercy through a Redeemer ; and marks the election of a body of men to spiritual privileges, not that of individuals to eternal life.

I repeat it, not one of the peculiarities of Calvinism is sanctioned by the formularies of our

* Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. xvii. sect. 1, 2.

Church; so far from it, they are all, either expressly or impliedly, disclaimed.

You proceed, with great positiveness, to assert, that the Reformers, who drew up the Articles of the Church of England, were known to entertain Calvinistic opinions.* Now, of the pages which you give to the subject, there is but a single sentence that professes to state the sentiments of the Reformers; the remainder being entirely taken up in detailing circumstances of a subordinate nature. How very like to the course which you pursued in the attempt to prove the English Reformers Presbyterians; when you deliberately passed by the decisive and authentic evidence, and perplexed your people with a variety of collateral and extrinsic matter! Not a single passage have you produced from the writings of the Reformers; although they left behind them works which speak, on the point in question, a very unequivocal language.

The limits, which I have prescribed to myself, will not permit me to enter fully into this subject: I hope to be able, in a few pages, however, to present evidence which will convince every dispassionate reader, that you have done great injustice to the venerable Reformers of the Church of England.

The Reformation in England was a progressive work; it commenced under Henry VIII. and was

* Continuation of Letters, p. 330.

completed in the reign of his successor, Edward VI. Then came the fiery persecution under Mary, when Popery was again introduced; but in the re-settlement, under Elizabeth, the Articles drawn up by Cranmer and Ridley,* were adopted without any alterations, as far as Calvinism is concerned, that are at all material.† If, then, private opinion is to be brought in illustration of the sense of the Articles, it is evident that we are to appeal to the sentiments of the Reformers under Edward, by whom the Articles were originally digested and prepared. This course, however, you studiously decline, and present us with a number of facts of a very posterior date. Permit me to lead you for a few moments to the true subject of discussion. Did the original Reformers of the Church of England, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, entertain those peculiar tenets which constitute what is now termed the system of Calvinism? The negative of this question may be

* Cranmer, it would seem, drew up the Articles, but with the advice and assistance of Ridley. *Fox's Martyrology*, p. 1317, 1704.

† In the seventeenth Article, the following alterations were made—"Whom he hath chosen [in Christ] out of mankind." "They are made sons of [God by] adoption." "They are made like the image of the [his] only begotten [Son] Jesus Christ." The words in brackets were added in the re-settlement, under Elizabeth. The last clause, as drawn up under Edward, ran thus—"Furthermore, [though the decrees of predestination be unknown to us, yet] we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture." At the re-settlement, under Elizabeth, the words in brackets were omitted. All these alterations are entirely immaterial; they appear to have been dictated by a wish to keep, on this mysterious subject, as near as possible to the very letter of Scripture. See *Winchester on the seventeenth Article*, p. 18, 19, 20.

established by a force of evidence which no candid mind can resist.

1. If the English Reformers were Calvinists, would they have drawn up such a set of Articles? What! men believing that Christ died to redeem the *elect only*, expressly assert that his death was a “perfect redemption for *all* the sins of the *whole world*?” What! Calvinists draw up Articles in which their fundamental tenet of reprobation is wholly omitted, and in which predestination is not applied to *individual destiny*; or, if so applied, is not declared to be independent of all foresight of the qualifications possessed by the creature? What! Calvinists fail to set forth their darling doctrines of the imputation of Adam’s guilt to his posterity, of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to believers, or of the infallible perseverance of the saints? What! Calvinists tell us that man is not *totally depraved* by nature, “but only very far gone from original righteousness;” that the Holy Spirit *works with us*, and is our *continual help*, not acting irresistibly upon the mind, and effectually drawing us by Almighty power? Calvinists draw up a set of Articles in which not one of their peculiar principles is asserted, and in which some of those principles are expressly disclaimed?

2. Look again at the two books of Homilies, published in the reign of Edward VI. and of Elizabeth, and expressly designed to form the faith both of the clergy and the people! Surely, if Calvinists were the authors of these books, we-

may expect to find in them the great principles of Calvinistic divinity. But, "not one of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism is mentioned in either of the two books of Homilies. The word predestination does not occur from the beginning to the end of the Homilies. The word election occurs only once, and then it is not used in the Calvinistic sense. The word reprobation does not occur at all. Nothing is said of absolute decrees, partial redemption, perseverance, or irresistible grace."*

Would Calvin have drawn up a set of discourses, in order to form the faith of clergy and people, and have left the great principles of his system undefended, and even unnoticed? Would the Westminster Divines? No—If the English Reformers had been Calvinists, they would have filled the Homilies with unconditional election, partial redemption, irresistible grace, and final perseverance. What! Calvinists frame a set of discourses for the purpose of inculcating the true scriptural doctrine, and entirely omit those cardinal principles without which "the whole plan of salvation is nothing better than a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; nearly, if not quite as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God."†

But still further—The Homilies are in many places as decidedly anti-Calvinistic as language can make them. I will detain you with only a few passages on redemption; the universality of

* Bishop of Lincoln's Charge to his Clergy, in 1803.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 339.

which is thus unequivocally declared—"So well pleased is the Father, Almighty God, with Christ his Son, that for his sake he favoured us, and will deny us nothing. So pleasant and acceptable was this sacrifice of his Son's death, which he so evidently and innocently suffered, that we should take it for the only and full amends for the sins of the *whole world*.* "This deliverance or redemption was not partial, intended only for a few, but general and universal for *all mankind*." "The promise and covenant of God made unto Abraham and his posterity, was to deliver *mankind* from the bitter curse of the law." "The promised Messiah was to make perfect satisfaction by his death for the sins of *all people*."† "Now, he gave us not an angel, but his Son. But to whom did he give him? He gave him to the *whole world*; that is to say, to *Adam and all that should come after him*."‡

You speak in the highest terms of the Reformers of the Church of England; but their conduct in prescribing such books of Homilies amounted, if your view of Scripture be correct, to little less than apostacy from the faith.

3. But let us proceed to the evidence which is to be derived on this subject from the private writings of the English Reformers.

See the strong language which Cranmer uses in his answer to Gardiner! "By his own oblation he satisfied the Father for *all men's sins*, and

* Homily for Good Friday. † Homily for the Nativity. ‡ Homily of the Passion.

reconciled *mankind* into his grace and favour.”
 “And as he, dying once, was offered for *all*, so, as much as pertained to him, he took *all men’s sins* unto himself.”* “What ought to be more certain and known to all Christian people, than that Christ died once, and but once, for the redemption of *the world*.”†

The following passage from the book, entitled, “Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man,” will show us the earliest opinions of Cranmer on the subject under consideration. “Although our Saviour Christe hath offered hymselfe upon the crosse, a sufficient redemption and satisfaction for the synnes of *all the world*, and hath made hymselfe an open way and entre unto God the Father for *all mankind*, yet none shall have the effect of the benefyte of our Saviour Christe, and enjoye everlasting salvation by him, but they that take such ways to atteyn the same, as he hath taught and appointed by his holy word.”‡ In these sentiments the venerable Primate persevered to the end of his course—“Christe made a sacrifice and oblation upon the crosse, which was a full redemption and propitiation for the synnes of *the whole world*.”§ And in his final prayer at the stake, he thus expresses himself—“O God the Son, thou wast not made man, this great mystery was not wrought for few or small offences, nor

* Answer to Gardiner, p. 372.

† Ibid. p. 393.

‡ Winchester on the seventeenth Article, p. 35.

§ Cranmer on the Sacrament. Preface, London, 1550. See Winchester on the seventeenth Article, p. 33.

thou didst not give thy Son unto death, O God the Father, for our little and small synnes only, but for *all* the greatest synnes of the *world*.”*

Bishop Ridley, who, after Cranmer, had most influence in reforming and settling the Church of England, uses, in the preface to his disputation at Oxford, a little before his martyrdom, the following unequivocal language—“ Ex epistola ad Hebræos patit unicum esse oblationem et unicum vere vivificum sacrificium, oblatum in ara crucis, qui fuit, est et erit in perpetuum propitiatio pro peccatis totius mundi.”†

Bishops Hooper and Latimer were next in influence to Cranmer and Ridley in the English Reformation. Mark the following strong language of Bishop Hooper, in the preface to his Declaration of the Ten Commandments! “ As far extendeth the virtue and strength of God’s promise to save men, as the rigour and justice of the law for sin to damn men; for as by the sin and offence of one man, death was extended, and made common unto all men unto condemnation, as St. Paul saith, (Rom. v.) so by the justice of one is derived life *unto all men* unto justification.” “ Cain was no more excluded, till he excluded himself, than Abel; Saul than David; Judas than Peter; Esau than Jacob.”

The language of the venerable Latimer is not less decisive. “ The promises of Christ our Saviour are *general*: wherefore then should any man

* Winchester on the seventeenth Article, p. 39. † Ibid. p. 39.

despair, or shut himself out from the promises of Christ, which be *general*, and pertain to the *whole world*. Christ shed as much blood for Judas as he did for Peter: Peter believed it, and therefore was saved. Judas did not believe, and therefore he was condemned; the fault being in him only, and in nobody else.”*

I have thus presented you with a few passages from the writings of the Reformers of the Church of England, which speak a decidedly anti-Calvinistic language. It would be easy to quote from them much more extensively, but it cannot be necessary to do so; beside that it would not be consistent with the limits of this work. I have confined myself, too, to the single point of the universality of redemption; although passages equally express might have been produced on other points of the controversy.†

* Sermon on the third Sunday after Epiphany.

† Permit me to trespass here one moment longer on your patience in a brief comparison of the sentiments of Hooper and Latimer, with those of Calvin and Gomarus on the subject of the irresistibility of grace.

Calvin severely censures St. Chrysostom for saying that God draws us with a consenting will.—“*Quem trahit, volentem trahit, quo insinuat Dominum porrecta tantum manu expectare an suo auxilio juvari nobis adlubescat.*”‡ Gomarus expressly puts the question “whether the grace of God be given in an irresistible manner; that is to say, with such an efficacious operation, that the will of him who is to be regenerated, hath not the power to make resistance?” To which he answers—“I believe and profess it to be so.”||

How different is the language of Bishop Hooper! “Many understand these words—*no man cometh to me, except my Father draw him*—

‡ Institutes, lib. ii. cap. 3.

|| See Heylin's *Quinquarticular History*, part ii. chap. 10, sect. 5.

The attempts to make Calvinists of the English Reformers, derive all their plausibility from verbal ambiguities. These Reformers sometimes use the words, *elect*, *predestinate*;—of course they were Calvinists. The question between Calvinists and anti-Calvinists, let it be repeated, is not whether the sacred writings speak of election and predestination, but whether the election and predestination, of which they speak, are to be understood in an *individual* or a *collective* sense; and if they are to be taken in an individual sense, whether they are, or are not represented as founded on prescience. To draw the conclusion, therefore, that the English Reformers were Calvinists, because they occasionally used the words in question, is simply taking for granted the point in dispute; but the passages, which I have quoted from these Reformers, are so precise and unequivocal as to place the subject of their opinions beyond the reach of controversy. It is not possible to imagine language more decidedly anti-

in a wrong sense, as if God required no more in a reasonable man, than in a dead post, and mark not the words which follow—*Every man that heareth, and learneth of my Father, cometh unto me*—God draweth with his word and the Holy Ghost, but man's duty is to hear and learn; that is to say, to receive the grace offered, consent to the promise, and not to impugn the God that calleth."* The language of the venerable Latimer is equally strong—"God's salvation is sufficient to save all mankind. But we refuse the same, and will not take it when 'tis offered unto us." "Such men are the cause of their own damnation, for God would have them saved, but they refuse it like Judas the traitor, whom Christ would have had to be saved, but he refused his salvation."†

* Heylin's *Quinquarticular History*, part ii. chap. 10, sect. 8.

† *Ibid.*

Calvinistic than that just produced from the writings of Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer.*

* See the strong language used in the preface to the edition of the Book of Homilies which was published in the year 1562, the very year in which the Articles, as they now stand, were formally ratified! The design of the publication is declared to be "that all the people may learn how to invoke and call upon the name of God, and know what duty they owe both to God and man, so that they may pray, believe, and work according to knowledge, while they shall live here, and after this life be with him, that with his blood HATH BOUGHT US ALL."

In the year 1572, ten years after the ratification of the Articles, Archbishop Parker published an edition of the Bishop's Bible, in the preface to which the Archbishop thus writes—"To all belongeth it to be called unto eternal life—no man, woman, or child, is excluded from this salvation. For he that hath care of all, accepteth no man's person: his will is that all men should be saved."

This language is, surely, utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of the unconditional election of some individuals, and the unconditional reprobation of others, by an eternal decree of God.

In reply to this, it has been said that the notes to Archbishop Parker's edition of the Bible are Calvinistic; if so, the work must be very inconsistent with itself. But let us examine the case which has been adduced as evidence of the Calvinistic complexion of the notes in question, and which is, no doubt, one of the strongest that could be selected for the purpose. "Have I any desire that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God?"† *Note.* "He speaketh this to commend God's mercie to poor sinners, who rather is ready to pardon than to punish, as his long suffering declareth. Albeit, God in his eternal counsel appointed the death and damnation of the reprobate, yet the end of his counsel was not their death only, but chiefly his own glory." Is this a declaration that God, by an unconditional decree, having no reference to faith or works, or any other thing in the creature, elected some men to life, and consigned others to death; converting and sanctifying the former by irresistible grace, and withholding from the latter those influences of the Spirit without which they must necessarily perish? By no means—It amounts simply to a declaration that God determined, from all eternity, to inflict the punishment of everlasting death upon the wicked. The words import no more; and we are never to put a construction upon the language of an author, if it

† Ezekiel xviii. 23.

4. I proceed to mention a fact, which shows most conclusively that the Church of England was very far from intending, in her Articles, to establish the doctrines of Calvinism.

Early in the reign of Edward VI. the paraphrase of Erasmus was ordered to be kept in every parish for the general instruction of the people. Now, the opinions of Erasmus on the subject of *free will* and of *absolute decrees* are perfectly well known; on these points he wrote professedly against Luther. If the Reformers of the Church of England had been Calvinists, would they have selected a decidedly anti-Calvinistic paraphrase of the Gospel for the general instruction of the people? It is clear, from the circumstance in question, that the English Reformers, in the early part of Edward's reign, were not in the least degree tinctured with the peculiar tenets of Calvin. Their opinions, on these points, indeed, appear to have been quite uniform. Nothing can be more decisive than the language of the work, entitled, "Necessary Erudition for any Christian Man," published in the reign of Henry VIII.; shortly after the decease of Henry, the general use of the Homilies was enjoined, and the paraphrase of Erasmus set up in the parish churches;—so that from the early

can possibly be avoided, which will make him contradict himself. The extract from the preface to Archbishop Parker's edition of the Bible can never be reconciled with the doctrine of absolute unconditional election and reprobation; while the note on Ezekiel by no means asserts that doctrine, but merely sets forth God's eternal purpose to punish those who resist the repeated calls to repentance, by persevering in their sins

period of the Reformation to the regular settlement of the Church under Edward VI. nothing like the confined ideas of Calvin on the subject of election, predestination, free will, prevailed among the English Reformers.

5. This is the proper place for mentioning another important circumstance to show that the Reformers of the Church of England were at all times free from any thing like a Calvinistic tendency. I allude to the extremely pressing invitations which were repeatedly given to Melancthon, in the reigns both of Henry and of Edward, to settle in England. At the very time the Articles were preparing, the Theological Professorship of Cambridge was kept open for his acceptance. Now it is well known that Melancthon opposed the Calvinistic tenets with the greatest vehemence. He openly branded Calvin as the *Zeno* of the age, and gave to his speculations the title of "stoical necessity."* From a copy of the Articles of concord between the Churches of Zurich and Geneva, he indignantly expunged the Article de electione; of which Calvin bitterly complained. Now, if the Reformers of the Church of England had been Calvinists, would they have been so solicitous for the presence of the great opposer of their favourite doctrines? Surely they would have been disposed to seek the aid of Calvin, not that of his distinguished antagonist.†

* Melanct. Epist. lib. iv. ep. 796, p. 923. See Brandt, vol. ii. p. 314. See also Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 418, &c.

† Luther and Melancthon, in the early part of their lives, were de-

6. The English Reformers were far from following implicitly any human guide. They examined the sacred writings with the most profound and deliberate attention; in the interpretation of which, they had great reference to the faith of the primitive Church, as ascertained by the testimony of antiquity. They drank not at a distant point of the stream, but ascended to the fountain itself. As far, however, as they respected or followed any modern authority, the Lutheran Church of Germany was their guide. There was a very intimate intercourse between Melancthon and Cranmer; they had the greatest respect and affection for each other. Cranmer had formed an extensive acquaintance in Germany when he visited the continent on the subject of Henry's divorce; he had, too, married a niece of one of the Lutheran Reformers.

But we have much more decisive evidence of the Lutheran prepossessions of the chief conductor of the English Reformation. He translated a Lutheran Catechism, which he dedicated to the King, and recommended as a manual for forming

cided fatalists; they inculcated the doctrine of an infallible necessity. But they soon became more wise. The doctrine in question was renounced by them so early as the year 1527, before the Confession of Augsburg, which is constructed upon very different principles. Melancthon expunged the doctrine from his celebrated work, the "*Loci Theologici*," and inserted the opposite doctrine of contingency in its place. In a letter to Cranmer, he speaks of the horrid speculations which had prevailed in Germany concerning a stoical fate, and entreats the Archbishop to guard against a similar evil. He branded the doctrine, indeed, as alike pernicious to morals, and dishonourable to God. See *Laurence's Bampton Lectures. Note 21 to Sermon 2.*

the principles of the rising generation. All the publications in the reign of Henry, indeed, were of a decidedly Lutheran complexion; and when the Articles were drawn up and authoritatively settled, shortly after the accession of Edward to the throne, the most copious assistance was derived from the Confession of Augsburg, the admirable production of Melancthon's pen. The first and second of the English Articles are copied, almost word for word, from the first and second of the Articles of Augsburg; the ninth, sixteenth, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, thirty-first, and thirty-fourth Articles, are also evidently derived from the same source. When the Church was re-settled, in the reign of Elizabeth, the principal additions and elucidations, excepting on the subject of the Eucharist, were taken from the Lutheran Confession of Wirtemberg.* At the time of the adoption of the Articles under Edward, Calvin and Calvinism had attracted very little notice; indeed, Calvin was principally indebted for his celebrity to the dispute on predestination, in which his first tract did not appear until the year 1552;—the very year in which the Articles of the Church of England were agreed to in Convocation.†

Of the small comparative space which Calvin occupied, at this time, in the public eye, a most

* The reader who wishes to pursue this subject is referred, particularly, to the first and second Sermons of Dr. Laurence, with the notes annexed to them. The different Articles, above mentioned, are there minutely compared with the passages of the Augsburg and Wirtemberg Confessions, from which they were derived.

† See Strype's Life of Cranmer, p. 272.

decisive proof may be derived from the work of Fox, the celebrated Martyrologist. Fox was a zealous Calvinist ; and yet, in the accounts which he gives of the Martyrs who suffered during the persecution of Mary, we find them in no instance accused of the heresy of Calvin, but invariably of that of Luther or Zuingle. Fox, too, dwells at much length upon the merits and writings of Luther and Zuingle, while Calvin is passed without particular notice.

Calvin made an offer of his assistance to Cramer in the great work of reforming the Church of England. But what was the result ? The Archbishop knew the man, and declined the offer.* And we find Calvin expressly complaining, in a letter to some of those who fled from the persecution of Mary, of the little attention that had been given to his counsels. “ But I speak in vain to them which perchance esteem me not so well, as they will vouchsafe to admit the counsel that cometh from such an author.” †

7. Conclusive evidence that the Articles of the Church of England are not Calvinistic is to be derived from the conduct of the Calvinists themselves. The case of the Lambeth Articles, which you have been so imprudent as to cite, goes directly to this point. Undoubtedly, at the time the Lambeth Articles were drawn up, Calvinism prevailed, to a considerable extent, among the Clergy of the Church of England, and particularly in the Uni-

* Heylin's History of the Reformation, p. 65.

† Winchester on the seventeenth Article, p. 41, 42.

versity of Cambridge. The divines of this University, by whom the Lambeth Articles were composed, being Calvinists, were dissatisfied with the Standards of the Church of England. If they believed the Articles of the Church of England to be Calvinistic, why did they wish to make any change? But what was the issue? The Lambeth Articles, so far from receiving the sanction of the Church of England, were ordered to be suppressed; so great was the dissatisfaction excited, that the divines concerned in drawing them up, were threatened with a premunire; and so complete was the suppression, that not a copy was to be met with for a considerable period afterwards.*

Now, what does this case of the Lambeth Articles prove? It proves, first, that the divines of Cambridge, who drew them up, were Calvinists; secondly, that they regarded the thirty-nine Articles as not Calvinistic; and, thirdly, the rejection and suppression of the Lambeth Articles, prove completely that the Church of England was neither believed nor intended, by those in authority, to rest upon a Calvinistic foundation.

Upon the accession of James I. to the throne, the Lambeth Articles were again attempted to be introduced. This was at the celebrated con-

* Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 644, 645. The Lambeth Articles gave great offence not only at court, but in the university also. The Calvinists, it is true, appear to have had the ascendancy in Cambridge at this period; but there was a strong party in opposition to them; at the head of which was the celebrated Dr. Baroe, Margaret Professor of Divinity.

ference at Hampton Court. Dr. John Reynolds, the spokesman of the Calvinists, moved his Majesty "that the nine assertions orthodoxal," as he termed them, "concluded upon at Lambeth, might be inserted into the book of Articles." Reynolds also moved that the words "yet neither totally nor finally" should immediately follow the clause of the sixteenth Article—"after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace."* Both these propositions failed.† The history of the conference in question, proves, first, that the Calvinists, at that time, were dissatisfied with the thirty-nine Articles, as not sufficiently Calvinistic; and, secondly, that there was no disposition on the part of the Church of England to admit alterations that should give her a Calvinistic complexion.

But what was the conduct of the Calvinists when they got into power? They immediately set about a Reformation "of the errors and imperfections of the Church, as well in matter of doctrine as discipline." The first fifteen Articles were revised by "the Assembly of Divines," "with a design," in the language of Neal, "to render their sense more express and determinate in favour of Calvinism."‡ And what alterations did

* See the account of the Hampton Court Conference, in Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 672 to 684. See also Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 181—184.

† They were opposed by the commissioners who attended on the part of the Church; consisting of the Archbishop of Canterbury, eight Bishops, seven Deans, and two Doctors.

‡ History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 48, edit. of 1754.

the Assembly of Divines introduce? The ninth Article, on original sin, they amended thus—“Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk, but (*together with his first sin imputed*) it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is propagated from Adam, whereby man is (*wholly deprived of**) original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined (*only*) to evil—yet the Apostle doth confess that concupiscence and lust (*is truly and properly sin.*)”†

Here was an attempt to introduce into the ninth Article the doctrines of total depravity, and of the imputation of the guilt of our first parents to their posterity; and the attempt involves a confession that those doctrines are not taught by the Article in its present form.

The tenth Article, upon free will, was altered thus—“We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, (*and working so effectually in us, as that it determineth our will to that which is good,*) and working with us when we have that good will.”

Do the Articles of our Church teach the doctrine of irresistible grace? We have here a fair acknowledgment that they do not, from the Calvinists themselves.

* “Very far gone from,” are the words of the Article.

† The words of the Article are, “hath of itself the nature of sin.”

In the eleventh Article, upon justification, the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers, was introduced by an insertion of the following clause—" *his whole obedience and satisfaction being by God imputed unto us.*" So that, by the admission of Calvinists themselves, our Articles are not less free from the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, than from that of the imputation of Adam's guilt.

"That the Assembly of Divines," to use the words of Dr. Laurence, "proceeded no further in their labours than to the review of the fifteenth Article, might be owing to a persuasion of the attempt being hopeless, from the incorrigibility of the ancient creed; or perhaps to a prospect, which then began to open rapidly upon the Puritanical cause, not merely of reforming the Church, but altogether of subverting it."*

Of the pages in which you profess to prove that the Reformers of the Church of England were Calvinists, but a single sentence bears upon the original Reformers under Edward, by whom the Articles were drawn up, and the Church was organized.† This sentence contains a palpable mis-

* Bampton Lectures, p. 185.

The General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country adopted the Articles of the Church of England by an unanimous vote; and yet there was not a single Calvinist in the body.

† The Articles drawn up under Edward, it has been already mentioned, were not altered in any thing at all material, as far as Calvinism is concerned, upon the re-settlement of the Church in the reign of Elizabeth.

statement; and of the remainder of your book, which relates to the sentiments of the Reformers and other Clergy of the Church of England, it is not going too far to say that there is not a line which is free from error.

But let us descend to particulars.

“The illustrious Reformer and Martyr, Bradford, a short time before he suffered, wrote and published a decidedly *Calvinistic* work on *election* and *predestination*, which he sent to Archbishop *Cranmer*, and to Bishops *Ridley* and *Latimer*, who all gave it their approbation.”*

This is the whole of what you say relative to the opinions of the original Reformers.

Let us see how far it corresponds with the fact.

Bradford complained that his treatise on Predestination had not received the sanction of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer; to which Bishop Ridley replied—“Where you say, *that if your request had been heard, things (you thinke) had been in better case than they be*: know you that concerning the matter you meane, I have, in Latin, drawne out the places of the Scriptures, and upon the same have noted what I can for the time. Syr, in those matters I am so fearful, that I dare not speak farther, yea almost none otherwise than the very texte dothe (as it were) lead me by the hand.”†

The fact, therefore, turns out to be in direct opposition to your statement. Bradford’s treatise

* Continuation of Letters, p. 331.

† Martyr’s Letters, p. 64.

was condemned by Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, as carrying the point of predestination further than Scripture will warrant.*

In consequence of the disapprobation thus expressed by Ridley, Bradford suppressed his treatise—"Hitherto I have not suffered any cotype of the treatise above specified to go abroad, because I would suppress all occasions so farre as myghte be of any breach of love."† This shows conclusively that the treatise had not been sanctioned by the holy Martyrs to whom it was sent; for if their sanction had been afforded, its author would undoubtedly have given it all possible circulation.

From the circumstances of this case, it clearly appears that the seventeenth Article was not understood by the Reformers who composed it in a Calvinistic sense. If the Article had been framed upon the principles of Calvin, Cranmer and Ridley could not possibly have refused their sanction to the treatise of Bradford; and Bradford would not have failed to urge the Article as a conclusive reason for the approbation which he requested at their hands.‡

* This is evidently implied in the words of Ridley's Letter—"Where you say, that if your request had been heard, things had been in better case than they be." The Bishops, then, had not given their sanction to Bradford's Treatise. They considered him as indulging in speculation on a subject, with respect to which, man can safely go no further than the plain letter of Scripture will carry him. How wise is the remark of Ridley! What contention and scandal have not the rash speculations of Calvin and his followers, on a subject far beyond the reach of our limited faculties, given rise to in the Christian world!

† Martyr's Letters, p. 473.

‡ The whole of the transaction in question accords exactly with the view which has been presented of the seventeenth Article, as intended

But further, Bradford was not a thorough Calvinist; for, in the treatise of which we are speaking, he asserts the doctrine of universal redemption;* and in his "Meditations on the Lord's Prayer," he represents the sins of the reprobate as the cause of their reprobation.†

You do not give with accuracy the statement of the historian Strype, relative to the transaction between Bradford, and the Bishops Ridley, Cranmer, and Latimer.

The passage of Strype is in the following words—"Upon this occasion Ridley wrote a treatise of God's election and predestination. And Bradford wrote another upon the same subject, and sent it to those three fathers in Oxford for their approbation; *and theirs being obtained*, the rest of the eminent divines, in and about London, *were ready* to sign it also."‡ Strype does not say that the London divines *actually* signed the treatise—they were only *ready* to sign. And the clause "theirs being obtained, the divines in and about London were *ready* to sign also," amounts simply to this—that the divines of London were ready to sign Bradford's treatise in case it should receive the approbation of Ridley, Cranmer, and Latimer.

to declare God's eternal purpose to deal with fallen man in mercy through a Redeemer; and his election of a Church out of the world as the depository of his covenant and his grace. So far Scripture may fairly be said, on this subject, to "lead us by the hand." All beyond is human speculation.

* See Winchester on the seventeenth Article, p. 71.

† See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 458, 459.

‡ Memorials of Cranmer, p. 350.

Now it does not appear that the London divines ever signed the treatise in question; if they had actually signed it, Strype would have said so:—the obvious conclusion, therefore, from Strype's own account is, that Bradford's treatise never received the approbation of the Bishops. This interpretation, too, and this alone, makes Strype consistent with the letters of the Martyrs; which are, in fact, the only authentic evidence on the subject.*

* Bradford, in the letter which he wrote to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, says—"the prisoners hereabouts have sene it and rede it, (his treatise on God's election) and as therein they agree with me: so they are ready and will be to signifie it *as they shall see you give them example.*"† On this passage Strype grounds his declaration, "their consent being obtained, the rest of the eminent divines in and about London were ready to sign also." It is evident, therefore, as well from the authority on which Strype makes his statement, as from his mode of expression, that he did not mean to assert that Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer gave their sanction to Bradford's treatise; but merely that the prisoners were ready to sign it in case it should meet with the approbation of those Prelates. Now compare this with the decided language which you employ—"The illustrious Reformer and Martyr, Bradford, wrote and published a decidedly Calvinistic work on election and predestination, which he sent to Archbishop Cranmer, and to Bishops Ridley and Latimer, who all gave it their approbation; after which it received the approbation of the eminent ministers in and about London."‡

Your statement is erroneous in all its parts. Bradford's treatise was condemned instead of being sanctioned by Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer; in consequence of which it was never signed by the other Clergy, but was quickly suppressed by its author himself.

Strype's account of the disputes between the Protestants who were confined in prison during the reign of Queen Mary, is far from impartial; being founded entirely on the testimony of the predestinarian party. The whole matter is fully explained in Dr. Laurence's Bampton

† Martyr's Letters, p. 358.

‡ For all this you quote Strype's Life of Cranmer, p. 350, as your authority.

“The convocation which drew up the thirty-nine Articles, reviewed, corrected, formally approved, and ordered to be published, as it now stands, the celebrated Catechism of Dr. Nowell. This Catechism is acknowledged, by the worst enemies of Calvin, to be decidedly Calvinistic.”*

Let me refer you, on this subject, to the excellent Life of Nowell, lately published by Ralph Churton, and particularly recommended by the Quarterly Review† for the minute and laborious attention which the author appears to have paid to original authorities—“He studiously avoids the absolute, and, as Calvin himself calls it, ‘horrible decree,’ by which it is said that God, without any regard to faith and obedience, has elected some to life, and doomed others to perdition; and that Christ died, not for the whole world, but for the elect only. In contradistinction, or rather in contradiction to these uncharitable and shocking tenets, he teaches expressly, that ‘God the Son hath redeemed the whole race of mankind.’‡ He gives *præscientia* as an equivalent and purer term for *prædestinatio*; he says that ‘those who are steadfast, stable, and constant in faith, they are

Lectures, from a manuscript now existing in the Bodleian library. It would appear, by this manuscript, that the charge of Pelagianism brought against the anti-predestinarians was a calumny, and that they were anxious to adhere strictly to the doctrine of the Church, as settled in the reformation under King Edward. Strype had, doubtless, never seen the manuscript in question; but was obliged to derive his information altogether from exparte statements.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 320, 331.

† Vol. iii. p. 112.

‡ “Deum filium qui me, et universum genus humanum redemit.” Smallest Catechism.

elected and appointed, and (as we term it) predestinated to happiness,' (making election the consequent, not the antecedent or cause, of belief and obedience;) and plainly supposes, with the Apostle, that 'the weak brother may perish, for whom Christ died.'**

"By the confession of Heylin himself, an implacable enemy of Calvin, the great body of the Bishops and other clergy of the Church of England were doctrinal Calvinists, for more than half a century after the Articles were formed."† This is a total misrepresentation. It would take several pages fully to explain those parts of Heylin on which the above passage of your Letters is grounded—I shall content myself, therefore, with referring the reader to Daubeny's *Vindiciæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*,‡ where he will find that Heylin's design was to contradict the very position which Overton, from whom you have borrowed on the occasion, had cited him to establish.

The British delegates to the Synod of Dort undoubtedly held some of the Calvinistic opinions; but they strenuously opposed others. Attend to

* Churton's Life of Nowell, p. 375, 376.

The following passage is contained in a Sermon preached by Nowell in the year 1566:—"It shall be more tolerable for them (Tyre, &c.) in the day of judgment, than for this *people, which is the elect of God.*" This proves, first, that Nowell used the word *elect* not in an *individual*, but in a *collective* sense: and, secondly, that he believed it possible for the elect to perish § Is this the language of Calvinism?

† Continuation of Letters, p. 332, 333.

‡ Page 122—127.

§ Churton's Life of Nowell, p. 130.

the following propositions offered to the Synod by those venerable men!—"God, having compassion on the sinful race of men, sent his own Son, who gave himself a ransom for the sins of the whole world." "As, according to the evangelical promise, salvation is offered to *all men*; the administration of God's grace in the Church is such as is sufficient to convince all impenitent and incredulous men, that they have perished, and forfeited the benefits offered to them, through their own *voluntary* fault."

In the writings of the venerable Bishop Hall, to whom you more than once allude, the doctrines of partial redemption and irresistible grace are expressly disclaimed.*

You represent the great Hooker as a Calvinist. But, among the unsound doctrines which the Calvinist, Travers, charged Hooker with preaching, are the following:—"Predestination is not of the *absolute* will of God, but *conditional*." "The doings of the wicked are not of the will of God *positive*, but only *permissive*." "The reprobates are not rejected, but for the *evil works* which God did *foresee* they would commit."†

Will you still claim Hooker as a Calvinist?‡

* A more particular notice will be taken of the opinions of Bishop Hall in the concluding letter of this work.

† See the Life of Mr. Richard Hooker, prefixed to his works, vol. i. p. 67, Oxford edit. 1793.

‡ It was not until the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth that Calvinism became powerful in the Church of England. For this we have the explicit testimony of Strype—"Calvin, the great foreign Reformer, his way of explaining the divine decrees of predestination was not entertained by many learned men in the university of Cambridge.

But even Overton, and the Editors of the *Christian Observer*, from whom you have derived so much on this subject, expressly declare—"Nothing is further from our purpose than to infer that the precise theological system of John Calvin, in all its parts, and to its full extent, was intended to be established in the thirty-nine Articles to the exclusion of every milder sentiment. *To say the least*, our established forms do not teach directly several doctrines which are contained in Calvin's *Institutions*. They do not, with his work, affirm that the fall of Adam was the effect of a divine decree. They do not use the language it does, respecting the extent of Christ's redemption. They are silent concerning absolute reprobation, which is here taught expressly."*

Again—"If Calvinism be nothing less than a precise conformity with the peculiar system of Calvin, it would be difficult to find any person who contends for the Calvinism of our Articles.

But it *now* (1595) about the latter times of the Queen's reign, prevailed strongly there, having the countenance of some of the chief heads."† Strype adds, that even the Calvinists themselves did not maintain that the Articles were necessarily to be understood in a Calvinistic sense. This, indeed, is very evident, from the repeated attempts to add the Lambeth Articles to the Standards of the Church of England, and from the Calvinists proceeding, when they got into power, to introduce material alterations, so as to make the Articles conformable to their ideas. Speaking of the period in question, Dr. Waterland observes—"Calvinism appears to have prevailed at Cambridge beyond what it had formerly done. The seeds had been sown by Cartwright, while he was Margaret Professor there, and the learned Whitacre very much promoted their growth." *Case of Arian Subscription*, p. 45.

* *Christian Observer*, vol. ii. p. 430.

† *Life of Whitgift*, p. 435.

Mr. Overton expressly denies such an agreement between the doctrine of our Church, and the creed of Geneva.”*

Take these passages in connexion with the following, and it will be difficult to find a stronger condemnation of the system of Calvin, and, of course, of the Westminster Confession of Faith, than that passed upon it, at least by necessary implication, in the *Christian Observer*. “We take this occasion of stating our wish to have it unequivocally understood, that when the *Christian Observer* expresses its opinion, that the Calvinistic system is consistent with the Articles and other public standards of the Church of England, and by no means liable to those heavy charges of heterodoxy and immorality which some of our contemporaries prefer against it, we mean to speak of that system of doctrine which pervades and animates the writings of Bishop Hall.”† Thus the Editors of the *Christian Observer*, after repeatedly telling us that they do not embrace the precise system of Calvin, and that it would be difficult to find a person who contends for the full conformity of the Articles of the Church of England to that system, do not scruple to say, that when they represent Calvinism as by “no means liable to the heavy charges of heterodoxy and immorality,” they refer, not to the creed of Calvin as contained in his *Institutes*, but to that moderate system of doctrine of which Bishop Hall is the

* *Christian Observer*, vol. i. p. 597.

† *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 484, 485.

advocate. So that they not only disclaim the system of Calvin and of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but even all attempt to defend it from the heavy charges of heterodoxy and immorality which are brought against it in the works of Daubeny, Kipling, and other contemporary writers.

It is, therefore, doing great injustice to the Editors of the Christian Observer to represent them as the disciples of Calvin; indeed, the number of such disciples in the Church of England is extremely small.*

You mean by Calvinism, doubtless, the system of doctrine taught in the works of Calvin, and in the Westminster Confession of Faith; which is the Confession of the particular religious society to which you belong. If you do not, it is incumbent upon you to tell us precisely what you do mean by it; otherwise, all your observations on this subject must be quite unintelligible.

The account which you give of the influence of Calvin with the Reformers of the Church of England, is not supported by the authorities which you cite.

For example, you say, referring to Strype for proof, that "the services of Calvin were expressly and warmly solicited by Archbishop Cranmer;"

* Dr. Hawker and Sir Richard Hill are real followers of Calvin; but there are very few persons of their stamp in the Church of England. I take this opportunity of observing once more, that when I speak in strong terms of reprobation of the system of Calvinism, I have reference to the Institutes of Calvin, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the writings of such men as Dr. Hawker and Sir Richard Hill.

and "that the Archbishop constantly consulted him, on all the leading questions connected with the Reformation."* Now Strype is very far from bearing you out in these assertions. It appears from Strype that there had been a long and particular intimacy between Melancthon and Cranmer; and we know that many of the Articles of the Church of England, as drawn up by Cranmer, were copied almost literally from the Augsburg Confession, of which Melancthon was the author. But there is no evidence of intimacy between Calvin and Cranmer. Strype informs us that Cranmer, having it in view to draw up a system of faith in which the whole Protestant world might unite, wrote to the most influential Reformers on the Continent—among the rest, to Bullinger, Calvin, and Melancthon—requesting their approbation and support. Some correspondence appears to have taken place at this time between Cranmer and Calvin, in which Calvin, amid many complimentary expressions, took the liberty of gently reproving the Archbishop for too slow a progress in the work of reformation. Strype represents this censure as injudicious and unfounded; but observes, that Cranmer, being of a very mild temper, took no exception at the rebuke, but continued his esteem for the writer. Strype also states that Cranmer bestowed much approbation upon a particular letter of Calvin to the King, the design of which was to encourage

* Continuation of Letters, p. 312, 313.

and excite the royal youth in the cause of religion.* Such is the amount of what Strype says. The reader will judge how far it supports you in the assertion, “that the services of Calvin were expressly and warmly solicited by Archbishop Cranmer,” and that “the Archbishop constantly consulted him on all the leading questions connected with the Reformation.”†

Before leaving this part of our subject, it may be well to take a little notice of the arguments by which you attempt to defend the system of Calvin, and to repel its assailants.

It is curious to observe the manner in which you set out on this point—“But you will, perhaps, ask, are there no *difficulties* to be encountered in embracing that system of evangelical truth, which is usually styled *Calvinism*? It ought not to be disguised that there *are* in this system real difficulties, which, probably, no human wisdom will ever be able to solve. But are the difficulties which belong to the system of *Arminianism*, either *fewer* in number, or *less* in magnitude? Instead of this, they are more numerous, and more serious; more contradictory to reason, more inconsistent with the character of God, and more di-

* Strype's Memorials of Cranmer, p. 407—413.

† The preceding view of the opinions of the Reformers is necessarily brief. In the concluding letter of this work, which will be devoted to an examination of certain charges and statements contained in your life of the Rev. Dr. Rogers, the opinions in question will be somewhat further inquired into.

rectly opposed both to the letter and the spirit of his word.”*

Here you appear to admit that the Calvinistic and Arminian systems are both incapable of being reconciled with either reason or Scripture. But you embrace the Calvinistic system, it would seem, as the least erroneous of the two. Thus a doctrine may be “inconsistent with the character of God, and opposed both to the letter and the Spirit of his word,” and still be worthy of all acceptance. No other construction can possibly be put upon your language; and yet I cannot bring myself to believe that such is the idea which you intended to convey. The passage, then, may serve as a specimen of the confusion of thought and of expression, which is so characteristic of your book.

But let us proceed.

“It is easy and popular to object, that *Calvinism* has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion; that if we are *elected*, there is no *need* of exertion, and if *not* elected, it will be in *vain*. But this objection lies with quite as much force against the *Arminian* hypothesis. Dr. *Bowden*, and Mr. *How*, and all *Arminians*, though they reject the doctrine of *election*, explicitly grant that, while *some* will, in fact, be saved, *others* will, in fact, as certainly perish. Now it is perfectly plain that this position is just as liable to the abuse above stated, as the *Calvinistic* doc-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 335.

trine. For a man may say, 'I shall either be saved, or I shall not. If I am to be saved, no anxiety about it is necessary; and if I am to perish, all anxiety about it will be useless.' Would these gentlemen consider this objection as a valid one against their creed? I presume not. But it has no more validity against *ours*."*

There is a very marked difference between the Calvinistic and anti-Calvinistic systems in this particular.

Anti-Calvinists believe that Christ died for all men, and that *effectual*† grace is given to all; they consider the passion of our Saviour as placing sal-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 336.

† When Calvinists speak of *effectual* grace, they mean *irresistible* grace;—anti-Calvinists mean by it *sufficient* grace; that is, such a portion of divine aid as will secure to us eternal life, provided we yield a sincere and zealous co-operation. But, according to the Calvinistic system, the whole work of conversion and sanctification is effected by the power of God. He decreed, from eternity, to save an elect number; and this elect number he decreed to convert and sanctify. It is completely, therefore, a mechanical process; the elect being created simply to be saved, and the reprobate simply to be damned. Salvation is forced upon the former; damnation upon the latter:—the former cannot possibly avoid going to Heaven; the latter are equally unable to avoid going to Hell. Calvin expressly declares, not only that the reprobate are doomed from all eternity to perdition, but that God actually fits them for it; blinding their understandings, and hardening their hearts. "Whom, therefore, he hath created unto the shame of life and destruction of death, that they should be instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity, that they may come to their end; at one time he deprives them of the power of hearing his word; at another, he the more blinds and stupifies them by the preaching of it. Behold! God calls to them but for the purpose of their being made more deaf; he sets his light before them, but in order that they may be rendered more blind; he holds forth doctrine to them, but that they may be rendered more stupid by it; he applies a remedy to them; but not that

vation within the reach of every individual;—so that, in their view of the subject, man is the fa-

they may be healed.* “They (the reprobate) cannot avoid the necessity of sinning; such necessity is cast upon them by the ordination of God.”†

Gomarus did not hesitate to declare, in the Synod of Dort, that God predestinates man to death, and to sin as the only way to death.

“Gomarus, who saw that his iron was in the fire, began to tell us that Episcopius had falsified the tenet of reprobation; that no man taught that God absolutely decreed to cast man away without sin; but as he did decree the end, so he did the means; that is, as he predestinated man to death, so he predestinated him to sin, the only way to death: and so he mended the question, as tinkers mend kettles, and made it worse than it was before.” *Hales’s Letters from Dort. G. R.* p. 435.

Zanchius asserts that “the reprobate are bound by the ordinance of God under the necessity of sinning;” Beza, that “God hath predestinated, not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it, whomsoever he saw meet;” Perkins, that “God hath most justly decreed even the wicked works of the wicked;” Knox, that “the wicked are not only left by God’s suffering, but are compelled to sin by his power;” Piscator, that “God so absolutely and efficaciously determines the will of every man, that he cannot do more good than he really does, nor omit more evil than he really omits.”‡

Here is Calvinism—pure, unadulterated Calvinism, as set forth by its founder, and his most distinguished companions and followers. Truly, the Romish doctrine of merit was bad enough; but Calvinism is worse:—the former made man his own sanctifier, but the latter represents God as creating intelligent beings in order first to fit them for perdition, and then to plunge them into it. How lamentable it is that the human mind should so frequently pass from one extreme to another! And how deeply are we indebted, under God, to the wisdom and moderation of the illustrious Reformers of the Church of England!

* Institutes, book iii. chap. 24.

† Ibid. book iii.

‡ For the passages quoted from Knox and Perkins, see Heylin’s *Quinquagintal History*, part ii. chap. 16, part iii. chap. 20; and for those from Zanchius, Beza, and Piscator, see *Mant’s Bampton Lectures*, p. 194, 195, 196. Not having convenient access to the originals, I quote from Heylin and Mant, who give the titles of the books, the pages, and indeed the very passages in which the gloxious sentiments are advanced.

bricator of his own destiny; such destiny depending upon the *use* or *abuse* of the means of grace. The wicked perish, not because no Saviour is provided for them, and no effectual grace is ever vouchsafed to them; but because they neglect to profit by the grace which they receive, and refuse to lay hold on eternal life purchased for them by the atoning sacrifice of the cross. This system, it is easy to see, presents the strongest motives to spiritual zeal and diligence that can possibly be brought to act upon the human mind. Upon ourselves it depends whether we shall be eternally happy, or eternally miserable. A Saviour is provided for us, and the Holy Spirit is ever ready to afford us all necessary assistance. There is no absolute decree of God to shut us out of Heaven.

But, according to the Calvinistic system, salvation depends upon the *eternal* and *unconditional decree* of God. The whole human race is divided into the two great classes of elect and reprobate, the former of whom will infallibly be saved, and the latter infallibly perish. The elect, for example, are, in due time, *effectually* called; that is, they are seized and converted by irresistible grace. Conversion is WHOLLY a DIVINE work; man is absolutely passive therein. The reprobate, on the other hand, are never effectually called; they cannot possibly turn unto God; they must infallibly perish; an arbitrary unconditional decree shuts them out of Heaven.

With a man who believes all this there can be no possible motive for exertion.

The Calvinist will naturally argue thus:—

My salvation or condemnation is *immutably* and *eternally* fixed by God himself. It is in vain for me to strive and pray. If I am one of the elect, God, in his good time, will EFFECTUALLY call me. My conversion, if it ever take place, will be produced by IRRESISTIBLE grace; I shall be ALTOGETHER PASSIVE;—the work will be WHOLLY a divine work.* All effort in me, therefore, to turn from sin to holiness, must be both vain and impious;—vain, because conversion is an affair in which man is entirely passive; impious, inasmuch as it would be an attempt to effect, by my own efforts, what I know is effected EXCLUSIVELY by divine power. Thus, the primary operation of the principle in question, is to produce stupid ease and indifference. There is nothing left to rouse the

* Calvinists, in consistency with the positive language of the Westminster Standards, represent conversion as the work of God alone. They tell us, in so many words, that man is absolutely PASSIVE in the change. The principle will be found, in all its strictness, in the Christian's Magazine. "All these doctrines may be summed up in that one grand, fundamental, essential truth, of a *radical, total* change of heart by the *almighty* power of the Holy Ghost. In this change, the principles of spiritual life are implanted in the sinner, so that he arises from his death of sin, and walks before God in *newness of life*. *The change itself is wrought by God*—the sinner is the MERE RECIPIENT."† Here the whole work of conversion and sanctification is represented as performed by the almighty power of the Holy Ghost. The individual himself does not co-operate, in the slightest degree, in the change which he undergoes. He is a mere passive recipient of irresistible grace; and is just as much, therefore, an inert lump of matter, as any piece of mechanism framed by the hand of man, and constantly kept in motion by the application of physical force.

† Christian's Magazine, vol. ii. p. 63.

human mind into action. But the moment you admit that sufficient grace is given to all to enable them to turn to God, and that conversion is a work in which the agency of man must co-operate with divine grace, you present the subject in a point of light calculated to touch the most anxious and most powerful feelings of the soul. Man has something to do; it rests with himself to improve the grace vouchsafed, by turning unto God, and thus securing eternal life; or to abuse it by persevering in wickedness, and thus sealing his perdition.

Thus, while the Calvinist may suppose that his conversion has not yet taken place, the genuine principles of this system will lead him to wait, with perfect tranquillity, until God's time shall arrive. His own efforts, he knows, can neither hasten nor retard a period fixed by an eternal and immutable decree;—nay, as he is to be *wholly passive* in the change, any effort to turn from sin to holiness would not only be absurd, but could be regarded in no other light than that of an attempt to alter what God has unchangeably ordained, and to effect, by his own co-operation, what is produced **EXCLUSIVELY** by the irresistible power of the Holy Ghost. The man has no more concern in his conversion than a block of marble has in its transformation into an elegant statue. The marble undergoes a change; the man undergoes a change. The marble is altogether passive; the man is altogether passive. The marble is changed solely by the operation of human hands;

the man is changed solely by the operation of the divine power. What difference is there, then, between the man and the marble? To talk of a genuine Calvinist, who really acts upon his principles, being solicitous as to his conversion, or striving to forsake his evil ways, is just as ridiculous as to talk of a block of marble striving to be changed into a finished production of art. What can be more truly absurd than the idea of a man, who knows he must be absolutely passive in an operation, labouring to accomplish that operation by his own active power!

I repeat it, then, a *consistent* Calvinist, who supposes that his conversion has not yet taken place, will give himself no trouble about the matter, but wait as patiently for the transforming power of the Holy Ghost as a block of marble will wait for that human operation which is to strip it of its rudeness, and invest it with artificial beauty.

Further—Let us suppose a Calvinist, at some unusually serious moment, to imagine that the period of his conversion has actually arrived. He will argue thus:—I am one of the elect; it is absolutely impossible, therefore, that I should perish:—God has chosen me from all eternity by an unconditional decree, and no human act can possibly frustrate his decision in my favour.

Do you inform him that no one without holiness can see the Lord? His answer is ready—The decree of God is absolute and infallible: Christ hath expressly declared that not one of the elect

shall ever be plucked out of his hand; if I fall into gross sin, God will surely restore me;—in fact, the elect cannot finally be otherwise than holy.

Thus does this wretched system of doctrine destroy all the motives to spiritual diligence. A Calvinist, who supposes that *he has not yet been converted*, will, of course, wait patiently for the arrival of the appointed time; knowing that conversion is a business in which he must be altogether passive: a Calvinist, who supposes that *he has been actually converted*, will feel confident of salvation; it being the leading doctrine of his creed that the elect can never perish:*—So that

* Neal, in his History of the Puritans, informs us that Oliver Cromwell, when he was on his death bed, asked Dr. Goodwin, *whether a man could fall from grace?* Upon receiving an answer in the negative, Cromwell replied, “Then I am safe, for I am sure I was once in a state of grace.”

When the injurious tendency of their system is urged upon Calvinists, they frequently defend themselves by saying that the decree of God to save, according to their doctrine, is always accompanied with a decree to sanctify; so that the only evidence which a man can have that he is one of the elect, must be derived from the holiness of his heart and life. This answer, it must be admitted, is not without a degree of force. The qualification of the doctrine of election in this way, certainly tends to guard against its evil effects: Still, however, the operation of the doctrine cannot be otherwise than pernicious. How apt is self-love to blind the understanding! There is no point on which men are so prone to deceive themselves as that of their spiritual condition. Let it be received as an unquestionable truth, that the human race is divided into the two great classes of elect and reprobate, by an eternal decree, *founded on no foresight of the qualifications of the creature, but entirely arbitrary*, and men of warm imaginations and forward tempers, if they at any time take a religious turn, will seldom fail to imagine themselves within the decree of election; while persons of a different cast of character will be no less apt to think themselves of the number of the reprobate, and, therefore, without hope. Men of a certain temperament,

indolence in the first instance, and security in the last, are the genuine fruits of the system.

very easily persuade themselves that they are religious, while the worst passions rankle in their hearts, and even while open violations of the law of God disgrace their lives. The supposed decree of election sets the imagination at work; and this, under the stimulating influence of self-love, will almost always lead the individual to a favourable conclusion on the subject of his spiritual state.

But see how even the modern teachers of Calvinism can talk!

“Every idea of moral goodness, as a *qualification* for obtaining pardon, mercy, and peace from God, is done away.” “No demerit on the part of believers can arise to defeat the operation of God’s grace.”† “The present life is not a life of probation and trial.”‡ “All that the Father giveth. Not one, or two, or ten thousand: but ALL. And they *shall* come. What, if they do such and such duties? Not a word of the kind. What, if they perform such obligations? Not a syllable like it. It is an *absolute* promise of the Lord Jesus, founded in his own *absolute* power. Here are neither *ifs* nor *buts*. No conditions nor terms. They *shall* come: and if they themselves will not, the Lord will make them *willing* in the day of his power”§

“As it was not any loveliness in elect persons which moved God to love them at first, so neither shall their unlovely backslidings deprive them of it.”||

“Suppose a believer to be taken away in his sin, and hath not time to repent of it, there was that in him that would have repented, and God reckons of a man according to that he would do.” “Though a believer be black as hell, polluted with guilt, defiled with sin, yet in Christ he is all fair without a spot; free from sin, as viewed by God in Christ, fully reconciled to God, and standing without trespasses before him.”¶

“God did not barely suffer, but positively intended and decreed them, (the reprobate) to continue in their natural blindness and hardness of heart.” “He does not only negatively withhold from the wicked his grace, which alone can restrain them from evil; but occasionally, in the course of his providence, he puts them into circumstances of temptation, such as shall cause the persons so tempted actually to turn aside from the path of duty to commit sin.” “The sen-

* Hawker’s Prop to Despair, p. 11.

† Hawker’s Zion’s Pilgrim, p. 60.

‡ Hawker’s Zion’s Pilgrim, p. 160.

§ Hawker’s Prop to Despair, p. 15, 16.

|| Coles on God’s Sovereignty, edited by Romaine, p. 294.

¶ Mason’s Spiritual Treasury, edited and recommended by Romaine, p. 141 and 206.

The anti-Calvinistic system, on the other hand, represents the whole process of sanctification as

tence of God, which rejects the reprobates, is so fixed and immutable, that it is impossible they should be saved, though they have performed all the works of the saints: and, therefore, it is not true, that those who perish through their own fault, might have been saved through grace, if they had not ceased labouring for saving grace."

"The salvation of every one of the elect is certain, and can by no means be prevented."*

"David stood as completely justified in the everlasting righteousness of Christ at the time when he caused Uriah to be murdered, and was committing adultery with his wife, as he was in any part of his life. For all the sins of the *elect*, be they more, or be they less, be they past, present, or to come, were for ever done away. So that every one of these elect stand spotless in the sight of God."†

"If Christ has fulfilled the whole law, and borne the curse, then all debts and claims against his people, be they more or be they less, be they small or be they great, be they before or be they after conversion, are for ever and for ever cancelled. All trespasses are forgiven them. They are justified from all things. They already have everlasting life."‡

"Though I believe that David's sin displeased the Lord, must I therefore believe that David's person was under the curse of the law? Surely no. Like Ephraim, he was still a pleasant child: though he went on frowardly, he did not lose the character of the man after God's own heart."§ "No faults or backslidings in God's children can ever bring them again under condemnation, because the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death."||

Such, after all, is the true, unsophisticated conclusion from the doctrine of *absolute* decrees. It is proper, nevertheless, to state, that many persons who call themselves Calvinists would be far from sanctioning the language contained in the preceding extracts. Viewing it, however, as nothing more than a fair exposition of the consequences which result from the Calvinistic theory, we cannot but regard the persons just alluded to as shrinking from the horrors of their own system.

Such, too, is the weakness of our nature, that we sometimes meet with men of real piety, whose principles nevertheless lead directly and

* Toplady on Predestination, p. 53. See also "The Result of false Principles, or Error convicted by its own Evidence, extracted from the original of Dr. Womach, sometime Lord Bishop of St. David's." Edit. 1790, p. 78.

† Mr. R. Hill.

‡ Quoted from Sir Richard Hill, in Fletcher's Third Check to Antinomianism, p. 82.

§ Ibid. p. 72.

|| Ibid. p. 80.

the *joint work* of man, and of the Holy Spirit. God does not act irresistibly upon the human mind; his influence is exerted in a way which requires our own co-operation; and unless we sincerely and zealously co-operate, we must perish. The anti-Calvinist, then, can never, consistently with his principles, sit down and indolently wait until his heart shall be changed by the *almighty power* of the Holy Ghost: and, when he may have reason to suppose that his heart has undergone a real change, he cannot flatter himself with the idea that his salvation is absolutely secure; for the doctrine of the infallible perseverance of the saints he rejects as equally unscriptural and absurd.

But, if the tendency of the Calvinistic system be such as I have described it, how happens it that many of its professors are scrupulously diligent in the use of the means of grace? The answer is easy. Calvinism has often produced all

strongly to the grossest licentiousness of practice. To use the words of a late excellent writer—"Some minds indeed there may be, and such unquestionably there are, of superior quality, whose love of God is too devout, and their piety too ardent, to suffer them to use their tenets as a license for carelessness or immorality; and who remain, as Tully testified of the disciples of Epicurus, virtuous in spite of their principles."* But what must be the effect of the language in question upon the minds of the generality of men! Calvinism will ultimately lead, through a deplorable bigotry, to a licentious scepticism. If Christianity were never exhibited in any other than a Calvinistic shape, the whole Christian world would, sooner or later, become infidel.

* Mant in his Bampton Lectures; to which the reader is referred for the passages cited in the above note, p. 134 to 144.

the practical effects which have been mentioned; and these effects would always flow from it, were there not, happily, a strong counteracting principle in the constitution of the human mind. The Calvinistic doctrines are repugnant to common sense. They contradict the irresistible feelings of our nature.

The Calvinist believes that the elect are *individually* ascertained by an eternal and immutable decree of God; that their conversion is effected, at the ordained moment, by *irresistible* grace; and that this grace will *infallibly* preserve them from perishing. In all this system man is evidently an inert being; he does nothing toward his conversion, or toward his eventual perseverance; the whole is the sovereign and unconditional work of God. But, while the force of prejudice leads the Calvinist, in speculation, to one conclusion; the unconquerable dictates of nature lead him, in practice, to another. He is conscious of a power over his conduct. He feels that he was intended for an active being. He is prompted by the very constitution of his nature, as well as by the positive commands of Scripture, to use the means of grace.

Thus the baneful tendency of the system in question is, in a degree, corrected and controlled by the structure of the human mind.*

* Calvinists do not, generally speaking, openly deny the liberty of man; indeed, they will admit him to be a free agent; but the admission turns out, sooner or later, to be merely verbal. A free agent, who is absolutely passive in conversion, and whose perseverance in grace

Whenever men are so unfortunate as to embrace a doctrine which is contrary to common sense,

depends solely upon the immutability of the decree of election! A free agent, who is determined to that which is good, and effectually drawn to Jesus Christ, by almighty power! A free agent, who is the subject of irresistible grace! Of what value is a liberty thus fettered? What would you think of a man who should so load you with chains that you could not move a muscle of your body, and then tell you to rise and walk? If, in our conversion from sin to holiness, we are absolutely passive, and if our perseverance in the ways of righteousness depends altogether upon the divine decree, where is our freedom of choice, or of action? But many distinguished Calvinists positively deny *liberty of choice*; the only liberty which they admit lies in the power of acting *according to choice*. Thus our choice is determined by necessity: in other words, we have no choice. Now, if the determination of the will be out of our power, the act consequent upon such determination must be so too. The determination of the will is the first part of the act, and that upon which its moral character wholly depends. But, according to the theory in question, the *determination* of the will does not depend upon ourselves, but upon something not under our control. Then the *act* does not depend upon ourselves, but upon a foreign cause. We deliberate whether we shall perform a particular action—we finally determine to perform it—the performance follows. Now, constituted as we are, the power of determination is the power of performance; the author of the determination is of course the author of the action. There can be no control over the action, where there is none over the determination. *A* determines to kill *B*; he has no power to determine to do it, or to determine not to do it; he cannot possibly avoid the determination to commit murder. In what then consists his liberty? Why, simply in the power to carry the determination into effect. The liberty of *A*, in this case, therefore, lies simply in a physical power to kill *B*; and it is precisely the liberty which a musket ball possesses. The ball flies upon the pulling of the trigger; and *A* strikes *B* with a deadly weapon upon his will being determined to do so. The ball has just as much control over the trigger, as *A* has over the determination to kill *B*; and the killing of *B* is not less certainly the result of the determination of *A* to kill him, than the flying of the ball is the result of the pulling of the trigger.

Thus, this liberty, not of *choosing*, but of *acting according to choice*, is not a power to act, but simply a capacity to be acted upon.

The advocates of the doctrine which denies to man all power over the *determinations* of his will, assert that the very supposition of such a

their practice must always more or less contradict their theory. Berkeley and Hume denied the existence of a material world;—still they acted like other people; taking for granted, in the general course of their conduct, the very fact which they laboured so strenuously in speculation to disprove. Just so it is with the Calvinist. He will insist that man is absolutely passive in conversion; and that, after conversion, he cannot permanently fall from grace; being preserved by the almighty and irresistible power of the Holy Ghost. Still he acts, commonly, as if his salvation depended, in some degree, upon *his own efforts*. He uses the means of grace—he strives and prays. But what can be the meaning of this, if we are, in the first instance, converted by irresistible grace, and then infallibly preserved by omnipotent power? Thus it is that the demoralizing tendency of Calvinism is, in a degree, corrected by its very absurdity.

Your remaining observations, under this head, I must notice more briefly.

power involves an absurdity and a contradiction. A power over the determinations of the will, say they, is a power to will a thing if we will; so that every determination must necessarily imply a prior determination, thus running on to infinity; which is absurd. But this is nothing more than a play upon words. The determination of my will is an effect which must have a cause: either I am the cause, or some other being is the cause. The one proposition is just as conceivable, and just as free from contradiction and absurdity as the other.

Again, it has been said, nothing is in our power but what depends upon the will; of course the will itself cannot be in our power. But if we have power over what depends upon the will, we must have power over the will itself; otherwise we may have power over the *end*, and not over the *necessary means*; which is a contradiction.

“Another objection is equally common and popular. It is said, if none but the *elect* will be saved, how can God be considered as *sincere* in making the offers of mercy to *all*? The *Arminian* is just as much bound to answer this question as the *Calvinist*. He grants that all men will not, in fact, be saved; he grants, moreover, that God foreknew this from eternity; and that he not only foreknew the *general fact*; but also the *particular persons* who will, and who will not, partake of salvation. How, then, we may ask the *Arminian*, is God sincere, on *his* plan, in urging and entreating all to accept of mercy?”*

The Calvinists tell us that God, by an eternal and unconditional decree, hath ordained one part of the human race to happiness, and the rest to misery; that no Saviour is provided for the latter, and that no effectual grace is given to them. It is absolutely impossible for them, then, to repent, and be saved. The impossibility, too, arises from the decree of God;† for he brings

* Continuation of Letters, p. 336, 337.

† The doctrine, that we come into the world under the burden of actual guilt, for which it would be perfectly just in God instantly to consign us to eternal despair, is as diabolical as it is absurd. It is the express doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that infants are divided into elect and reprobate, and that the latter, in consequence of the sin of Adam, which is made their sin by imputation, indiscriminately perish. Such is the horrible principle which Calvinists have invented as a necessary basis for that arbitrary decree which sends some unconditionally to Heaven, and others unconditionally to Hell. Common sense tells us that infants can have contracted no positive guilt. It is evidently impossible that the sin of one man should become the proper and personal sin of another. The disobedience of Adam could no more be made to bring positive guilt upon his posterity,

them into the world with a corrupt nature, and withholds from them that assistance without which they must inevitably perish. In short, he invites them to partake of eternal life, and yet has doomed them, by an *unconditional decree*, to eternal death. Is not this the very essence both of falsehood and of cruelty? But, upon the anti-Calvinistic system, a Saviour is provided for all men, and effectual grace is vouchsafed to all. The way to Heaven is not barred up by an unconditional decree. God not only *invites* but *enables* all to come to him. He does not pass an immutable and irresistible decree that certain individuals shall perish, and then call upon those very individuals to defeat the omnipotence of his power, and live. Upon the anti-Calvinistic system, all is consistent; all is full of mercy and truth. None perish but they who obstinately refuse to be saved; and none refuse to be saved because God withholds from them the efficacious assistance of his Spirit. Whereas, Calvin represents the Divine Being as decreeing the damnation of the reprobate, as blinding their understandings and hardening their hearts, to fit them for their doom, at the very time that he is addressing to them the most importunate calls of mercy.

The anti-Calvinist admits that God foreknows all things. But is there no difference between foreknowing that men will abuse the means of

than a thing could be made to be and not to be at the same time. In both of these cases a contradiction is necessarily involved; they are of course no objects of power.

grace, and ordaining that they shall abuse them; between foreknowing that they will perish, and ordaining that they shall perish? God exists without reference to time and space; he filleth immensity, and inhabiteth eternity; past and future have no meaning when applied to him. Any difficulty, therefore, which may exist in reconciling the prescience of God with the free agency of man, arises from our limited view of things in reasoning from human to divine power.* But if,

* There has been great dispute on the question whether it be possible that free actions should be foreseen. If the question be determined in the negative, it will follow either that the Deity does not foresee his own actions, or that he is not a free agent. But we know that God is both a free, and an omniscient being; it follows, irresistibly, that free actions are capable of being foreseen.

Are we able to give any reason for supposing that a contingent event may not be foreseen, but that we cannot exactly understand *how* it can be foreseen? This is a reason, however, which supposes human power to be upon a level with divine. Can we exactly understand or conceive how God knows the secrets of all hearts? And shall we draw the conclusion that he does not know them? Can we form any clear conception how God created the universe without materials out of which to create it? No—And this very circumstance led the ancient philosophers, universally, to the doctrine of the eternity of matter.

God foresees all events, and as we cannot conceive or understand how contingent events should be foreseen, it follows that all events are necessary.

God formed the universe, and as we cannot conceive or understand how he could form it without materials out of which to form it, it follows that such materials had existed from eternity.

Such, when properly analyzed, is the philosophy of the ancient speculations relative to the eternity of matter, and of the modern speculations about the consistency of freedom with prescience.

The ancient philosophers found no difficulty in admitting that God might create the universe if furnished with materials. Man has a power similar to this—He can erect a house if you give him the materials for the purpose; and he therefore readily conceives that the Deity may, in the same way, have created the universe. It is only the exercise of a

as the Calvinists tell us, God has eternally and unchangeably ordained every thing that comes to

power similar in kind to that of the exercise of which he is conscious in himself. But having no power of positive creation, he can form no clear conception of the exercise of such a power, and so is prone to regard an act of positive creation as impossible.

In the same way, we readily admit that God may foresee necessary events, inasmuch as we are able to calculate exactly events that are to be brought about by mechanical operation; but having no faculty by which we can, with absolute certainty, penetrate contingent events, we find it difficult to conceive of such a faculty in any being, and so are apt to draw the conclusion, that prescience and contingency cannot exist together.

If, then, we are to conclude that all events happen in the way of necessity, because we cannot conceive how contingent events should be foreseen, we must equally conclude that God formed the universe out of pre-existing materials, because we cannot conceive how he should have formed it without them. The fallacy, in each case, lies in measuring divine by human power; in making our capacity of conceiving or understanding how a thing is to be done, the test of its possibility with God; a mode of reasoning which would plunge us at once into atheism, indeed into universal scepticism. The phenomena of the material world are facts which we are capable of ascertaining and classing by attentive observation; but how these phenomena are produced we know not. We know that they are produced by an efficient cause; but the manner in which this efficient cause produces them, is a mystery which we have no faculties that will enable us to penetrate. How does the grass grow in the field? How does the acorn spring into the oak, or the boy into the man? We have nothing to do here but confess our ignorance. And the remark will hold with respect to all the physical phenomena which fall under our observation. In the same way, we are conscious that we hear, see, remember, reason; but how we perform these operations we are utterly ignorant. So that if we make our capacity distinctly to conceive or understand how an operation is performed, the criterion of its possibility, we lay down a principle which must lead us to deny the reality of all the phenomena both of the physical and the mental world; a degree of scepticism never reached even by the chief of sceptics, Mr. Hume. He denied the existence of matter and of mind, but still admitted the reality of those ideas and impressions which are the objects of consciousness.

God foresees the future free actions of man—God formed the universe out of nothing. There is no palpable contradiction in these pro-

pass, it is a complete contradiction to talk of free agency. The two things are utterly inconsistent. If God has ordained, by an *irresistible* decree, that certain individuals shall commit certain sins, and perish, no choice is left to those individuals. They must commit the sins—they must perish. To deny this conclusion, is to give to man the power of defeating the omnipotence of God;—to admit the conclusion, is to renounce the doctrine of free agency altogether.

Upon the anti-Calvinistic system, then, I repeat it, God may well be supposed to urge his creatures to turn unto him and live. He has put salvation within their reach. But the Calvinistic

positions which leads the human mind immediately to reject them as impossible and absurd. The whole is *superior* to the sum of its parts—A thing may be and not be at the same time. Here we see absurdity at once; we find it absolutely impossible to yield our belief. But with respect to the propositions—God foresees the free actions of man—God formed the universe out of nothing—the whole of our difficulty is that of conceiving or understanding how the operations which they ascribe to the Deity are performed; and we find difficulty in this, simply because we never perform such operations ourselves. If we were destitute of the faculty of memory, we should find it equally difficult to conceive how God should be able to remember the past. We can no more tell, indeed, *how* God remembers the past, than *how* he foresees the future; but being perfectly familiar with the act of remembrance, there seems no mystery about it; we are led to think we understand perfectly *how* it is performed; while the infallible foresight of future contingences, being an act of mind of which we have no experience, we are apt, at first view, to be staggered and perplexed with it as a thing impossible. But, upon reflection, we perceive that the whole difficulty is resolvable into our own ignorance; that this ignorance, in fact, extends equally to the mode in which those mental operations are performed with which we are perfectly familiar; and that we really deceive ourselves when we suppose that we know more about the one than the other.

system can never be reconciled with that inviolable sincerity which is essential to the Divine nature. Upon this system, as has been already observed, God *ordains* a certain portion of the human race from all eternity to perdition. Unless an atonement be made for our sins, and effectual grace be afforded to us, we must perish. For the sins of the reprobate no atonement is made; to them no effectual aid of the Divine Spirit is given. From the moment of their birth, therefore, to the moment of their death, they labour under an absolute impossibility of turning unto God;—and this in consequence of his eternal and unconditional decree which dooms them to perdition.

“ Again, it has been frequently asked, ‘ If none but the *elect* will be saved, is not God a partial master, and a *respector of persons*?’ But it may be quite as plausibly and confidently asked, ‘ How can we reconcile it with the impartiality and the benevolence of God to *save* only a part of mankind?’ If salvation be his work, then, why does he not save all? Why does he make a distinction? And if it be *not* his work, then men *save themselves*. Will even Mr. *How*, with all his inveteracy against *Calvinism*, go this length? ”*

The Calvinistic system undoubtedly makes God a partial master, and a respector of persons. How? The whole human race, in consequence of the transgression of Adam, is in a fallen state. We are all sinners. We all stand in equal need of

* Continuation of Letters, p. 337.

mercy. Of the mass of mankind, thus situated, God selects, it is said, a certain portion, for whom he provides a Saviour, and whom he converts and sanctifies by *irresistible grace*;—the rest he ordains to perdition. The distinction made between the elect and the reprobate, is altogether independent of virtue in the one, or vice in the other. It is not founded, to use the language of the Westminster Confession, on foresight of faith or works, or any other thing in the creature, as the moving cause; but is to be resolved solely into the sovereign pleasure of God. Now, surely, to represent God as distinguishing, *unconditionally*, between those who stand on precisely the same ground, is to make him a respecter of persons.

“How can we reconcile it with the impartiality and the benevolence of God, to save only a part of mankind?”

Your question amounts simply to this—How can we reconcile it with the divine attributes to create a moral and responsible being? A free agent being created, it follows, as a matter of course, that the promised blessings will be bestowed on the obedient, and that the threatened punishment will be inflicted upon the disobedient. So far is it from being inconsistent with the divine impartiality, to save the good, and to condemn the wicked, that it is in this very thing that the essence of impartiality consists.

“If salvation be his work, then, why does he not save all? Why does he make a distinction? And if it be not his work, then men save them-

selves. Will even Mr. How, with all his inveteracy against Calvinism, go this length?"

Here salvation is evidently represented as the *sole* and *undivided* work of God:—of course, man is a complete machine; and the scriptural exhortation, "work out your own salvation," ought never to have been addressed to him. Thus the Calvinist, talk as much as he may about free agency, never fails, in one way or other, to come back to the doctrine of the absolute passiveness of man, and the irresistibility of divine grace.

The scriptural view of this subject is as plain as words can make it. Salvation is the work of God—It is the work of man himself. The whole merit of *redemption* belongs to Christ;—our blessed Saviour fulfilled the law, and satisfied the claims of justice. In this point of view, salvation is the work of God alone. Besides, the influences of the Holy Spirit are absolutely necessary to our conversion and sanctification; of ourselves we can do nothing. Here again our salvation is effected by the divine agency. But God deals with us as moral and responsible beings. The influences of his Spirit incline and persuade, but do not compel us to turn unto him; of course we have an *active concern* in the business of our conversion and sanctification. Thus salvation is, in one sense, the work of God; in another, the work of man himself. God provides a Saviour for all, and dispenses sufficient grace to all; but while God works in us both to will and to do, it remains with us, by co-operating with the gra-

scious influences of his Spirit, to work out our own salvation. So that, in a proper sense, men do save themselves; and, it is perfectly plain, that if there be no sense in which men contribute to their own salvation, they must be absolute machines.

“ If I could bring myself to believe that the infinite and eternal God has laid no plan in the kingdom of his grace, but has left all to be decided by chance or accident.”*

How does it follow from the anti-Calvinistic system, that God has laid no plan in the kingdom of his grace? According to this system, Christ died for all men, and dispenses sufficient grace to all; according to the Calvinistic system, he died for the elect, and bestows effectual grace upon them alone. In each case, the idea of a plan is presented. If the doctrine, that Christ died for a part of mankind, supposes the Divine Being to act upon an established system, surely the doctrine that the atonement extends to the whole human race, equally supposes it. The only difference between the two cases, is, that the one presents the Deity to us as an impartial and merciful parent; the other, as an arbitrary and capricious tyrant.

“ Left all to be decided by chance or accident.”

Man is active in his conversion from sin to holiness; the Holy Spirit inclines and persuades, but does not force the will;—Christ died for the whole

* Continuation of Letters, p. 337.

world. Then, says the Calvinist, every thing is thrown to chance and accident. It is all chance and accident, unless man be perfectly passive in conversion; unless the Holy Spirit acts irresistibly upon the will; and unless the death of Christ be of partial efficacy: That is, all is chance and accident unless man be a machine; for it is a manifest contradiction to talk of the moral agency of a being, who is altogether *passive* in his conversion from sin to holiness, or to ascribe freedom to the human mind while under the operation of an *irresistible* power. Accordingly, Calvinists, as I have before observed, scruple not to deny to man all control over the determinations of his will. And if we have no control over our determinations, we can have none over the conduct which is consequent upon those determinations. He who is master of our volitions, is master of our actions.*

“ If I could believe that the purposes of Jeho-

* *A power not of choosing, but of acting according to choice.* A man who can compel me to *choose* to do a thing which I have the physical power of doing, can compel me to *do* the thing. I will to stretch out my arm—the arm is immediately stretched out. My power here, it is said, is not that of willing to stretch out my arm, or not to stretch it out, but simply of stretching it out after the determination has been produced by some other cause. But is not this plainly absurd? Where the requisite physical power exists, the determination to perform a particular act, is as invariably followed by the act, as snow is dissolved by heat, or any other natural effect follows its cause. This power of acting according to choice, is just the power which a clock possesses. Some efficient being determines to wind it up, and when wound up, it goes until it runs down; then it must be wound up again. So after some efficient being has made us will to do a thing, we go on until the thing is done; and then the being must will for us again.

vah, instead of being eternal, are all formed in time; and instead of being immutable, are all liable to be altered by the changing will of his creatures."*

Why may it not as well be the eternal and immutable purpose of God to give his Son a ransom for the sins of the *whole* world, as for the sins of a *part*? to *incline* and *persuade*, as to *force* the human mind?—in short, to make man a free agent, and to treat him as such, as to construct him, and deal with him upon mechanical principles?

The very idea of a free agent, in the system of an *omnipotent* being, seems to confound and baffle all the faculties of your mind. Every event, you appear to think, must be fixed by *unconditional* appointment, and accomplished by *irresistible* power. Surely, Sir, a system formed upon such principles, can be none other than a system of fatalism. The amount of the whole matter, therefore, is, that you cannot imagine how a creature, endowed with the moral power of free choice, should find its way into the work of an *eternal* and *immutable* Being. And, indeed, the whole difficulty in which Calvinists involve themselves upon this subject, arises from metaphysical speculation upon a topic which is too large for the grasp of the human faculties. We have nothing to do with the secret decrees of the Divine Council. So far as revelation speaks of the decrees of God, we may safely go; beyond that it is our duty to be

* Continuation of Letters, p. 337.

silent, and adore. And, surely, every one who reads the Bible, without prejudice, will admit that it constantly represents man as capable of either co-operating with, or of resisting the Spirit; and that it invariably holds out general promises of mercy, suspended upon particular conditions.

“ If I could suppose that after all the Redeemer has done and suffered, the work of *redemption* cannot be completed, unless perishing mortals choose to lend their arms to its aid.”*

Here, surely, you are arguing without an antagonist. It cannot be necessary to inform you that anti-Calvinists ascribe the whole work of *redemption* to Jesus Christ. Human nature, in consequence of the transgression of Adam, had sunk into captivity to sin and death. Out of this state it was *redeemed* by the meritorious passion of Christ. Man had nothing to do with redeeming himself; if he could have redeemed himself, the interposition of a Mediator would have been unnecessary.

“ If I could admit the idea that God has done nothing more than decree, in general, to save all who may happen to believe; without any *determination*, or, which is the same thing, without any *certainty*, whether *few*, or *many*, or *none*, would be thus blessed.”

The principle upon which this argument turns, is, that God can foresee nothing but what he may have decreed to accomplish by an exertion of his

* Continuation of Letters, p. 338.

omnipotent power. You thus take for granted the very point in dispute. Having already said a good deal on this subject, I shall not here enlarge. Prove to us that God cannot foretell how a free agent will exercise his power of choice; in other words, that freedom of choice and prescience are inconsistent with each other, before you proceed to draw conclusions from the principle. I would barely repeat to you, that if the principle be true, it must inevitably follow, that God does not foresee his own future actions, or that those actions are necessary. It is not sufficient, in your view, that God should determine to save those who believe and obey. He must first determine unconditionally to save some, and reprobate others; and then he must determine to convert and sanctify the former by irresistible grace, and to leave the others under that inevitable necessity of perishing, in which they enter the world;—or, to use the language of Calvin, he must blind their understandings, harden their hearts, and lay them under a necessity of sinning, in order that they may be fitted for their doom.

But I forbear to follow you through the few remaining objections which you urge against the anti-Calvinistic doctrine; indeed, the answer to those objections has been anticipated in the observations already made.

LETTER IX.

**PARTICULAR COMPARISON OF DR. MILLER
WITH THE STANDARDS OF HIS RELIGIOUS
SOCIETY, AND WITH HIMSELF.**

SIR,

THE most important part of my reply to your Letters, you have thought it proper to pass without a word of notice. I allude to the part in which your four general presumptions are considered, and in which you are shown to be at variance, on the subject of the *visible* Church, with the sacred writings, with the standards of your religious society, and with yourself. In reference to all these points, you content yourself with saying that your opponent does not understand the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. If I have misinterpreted the standards of your society, you should have pointed out the misinterpretation. This would have been at once to put me to shame. It cannot, therefore, be very difficult to conjecture the true cause of the concise mode of reply which you have preferred on the occasion.

I entered into a long and particular statement to show that your principles are destructive of the very existence of a visible Church, and that they militate directly with the express and repeated declarations of your public formularies, not less than with the constant tenor of holy writ. To

vindicate yourself from charges of so very serious a nature, it might well have been supposed, would be your first object. The laws of controversy gave you but a single alternative. You were absolutely bound either to defend your doctrine, or to confess your error.

It will now be my purpose to bring you to a strict comparison with the standards of your religious society, and with yourself. Particular instances of contradiction have been already pointed out; but I will now, craving the indulgence of the reader for the repetition which it may involve, endeavour to collect the most important heads of your inconsistency into one view.

And, in the first place, you shall be compared with those public standards which you have subscribed, and to which you are under the most sacred obligations to conform.

I. "Presbyterians, (I speak now of *all* that I have ever known or heard of, particularly the most rigid among them) Presbyterians, I say, believe, that according to the tenor of the *Covenant of Grace*, salvation is *promised*, that is, secured by *covenant engagement*, to all who sincerely repent of sin, and unfeignedly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course they consider all who bear this character, to *whatever* external Church they may belong, or even if they bear no relation to *any* visible Church, as *in covenant* with God."*

"I repeat it, then, the doctrine of all Calvinistic

* Continuation of Letters, p. 58.

Presbyterians is, that every one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and maintains a holy life, whatever may be the mistakes into which he may fall, or the prejudices against particular parts of evangelical truth and order which he may entertain; whatever the disadvantages under which he may labour, with respect to his ecclesiastical connexions; or even if he were placed in circumstances in which he never saw a place of public worship, a minister of the Gospel, or a Church officer of any kind, in his life; that every such person is *in covenant* with God.*

“The *sincere piety*, and of course the *covenant title to Heaven*.”†

Now, Sir, let all this be tested by the language of your public standards.

“A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ *in his Church*, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are WITHIN THE COVENANT OF GRACE, the benefits of his mediation, and to distinguish them from THOSE THAT ARE WITHOUT.”‡

“Baptism is not to be administered to any that are *out of the visible Church*, AND SO STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANT OF PROMISE, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him.”§

To the same purpose speaks your Confession of Faith. “The visible Church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is NO ORDINARY POSSI-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 59.

‡ Larger Catechism, question 162.

† Ibid. p. 62.

§ Ibid. question 166.

BILITY OF SALVATION.”* By *ordinary* possibility of salvation, is here evidently meant *covenanted* possibility; otherwise it must follow that the covenanted way of salvation is not the ordinary way; which will scarcely be pretended. Besides, in one of the passages of Scripture, referred to in support of this section of your Confession of Faith, the members of the visible Church are spoken of as being in covenant with God.† *Ordinary* possibility, then, is only another name for *covenanted* possibility. And this, it will be observed, only makes your Confession of Faith speak the same language with the other standards of your society.

You tell us that salvation is *secured by covenant engagement* to all who believe and repent, even supposing them never so much as to have seen a Church officer in their lives. *Your standards* tell us that a man may have repentance and faith, and still be a stranger to the covenant of promise; and that after he may have satisfied the governors of the Church of his faith, and of the sincerity of his purposes of obedience, it remains to put him within the covenant by administering to him the ordinance of baptism.

According to the *Presbyterian Confession of Faith*, a covenant supposes a visible transaction, in which it is signed and sealed. According to *you*, it is a simple affair of the mind, without any external

* Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2.

† “ And I will establish my covenant between me and thee; and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant.” Gen. xvii. 7.

ceremony, in which it is either published or confirmed.

The *Confession of Faith* declares that the visible Church is the *only medium* through which a covenanted title to salvation is to be obtained. You declare that such covenanted title depends, not at all upon visible Church membership, but simply upon the state of the mind and heart.

If it had been your express purpose to contradict the religious articles of your society, I see not how you could have done it in a manner more precise or unequivocal.

II. "Wherever the unfeigned love of our divine Saviour, a humble reliance on his atoning sacrifice, and a corresponding holiness of life, pervade any denomination of Christians, we acknowledge them to be a true Church."*

"It is certainly contrary to the genius of the Gospel dispensation, to place forms of outward order among those things which are essential to the very existence of the Church."†

Thus it appears that the Church may exist without either ministry or ordinances; that she is independent of every thing external; in short, that nothing is essential to her existence but the possession of particular internal qualifications.

How does this correspond with your public standards?

1. The ministry, according to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, is essential to the very existence of the Church.

* Letters, p. 344.

† Ibid. p. 14.

“ Unto this Catholic visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world.”*

“ The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of Heaven are committed, by virtue of which they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”†

Here, then, you are again irreconcilably at variance with your religious articles. According to *them*, the Church cannot possibly exist without a ministry, which is matter of external order. According to *you*, the existence of the Church is independent of every thing external.

2. “ There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord; neither of which may be dispensed by any but a minister of the word, *lawfully ordained.*”‡

Ordination, then, is absolutely necessary to the conveyance of the sacerdotal office. Thus, the ministry being essential to the Church, and out-

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxvii. sect. 4.

† Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 3.

‡ Ibid. chap. xxx. sect. 1, 2.

ward ordination being essential to the ministry, it follows that outward ordination is the basis on which the Church visible must rest. Such is the doctrine of your *public standards*. But *you* assure us that it is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel dispensation, to make the existence of the Church depend upon outward forms. If your idea, therefore, be correct, that part of your Confession of Faith, which asserts the necessity of external ordination to the ministry, and of course to the Church, is liable to the charge of setting forth erroneous doctrine; indeed of being repugnant to the very genius of Christianity.

3. Still further—Your standards not only make outward ordination essential to the ministry, but they make the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery essential to outward ordination; thus placing Presbyterianial ordination at the very foundation of the Church. For example, in your form of Church government, the power of ordination is declared to be vested in a Presbytery; the act of ordination is declared to be the act of a Presbytery;—and all this is rested on the ground of Apostolic example.*

According to the *articles of your society*, Presbyterianial ordination, being essential to the ministry, is essential to the Church. According to *you*, the Church, being made up of internal qualifications, cannot possibly depend for its existence upon any thing external.

* Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, chap. ix. sect. 5. chap. xiv. sect. 12.

4. " Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world."*

The sacraments distinguish those who belong to the world, from those who belong to the Church. But how can this be, if internal qualifications will make men members of the Church, independently of all conformity to outward ordinances?

If such associations as possess the sacraments are Churches, and such associations as lay them aside are not Churches, then the sacraments put a visible difference between the Church and the world; but if religious associations, which discard the sacraments altogether, may be still Churches of Christ, the sacraments cannot be said to put any visible difference between the Church and the world, and, of course, the doctrine of your Confession of Faith is unsound.

The *standards of your society* thus represent the external forms of baptism and the supper, as the *criterion* by which the world and the Church are to be distinguished from one another; whereas *you* declare that the Church may exist without any external forms, and that the true criterion of its existence is the aggregate saintship of a religious association.

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxvii. sect. 1.

5. See the definition which your standards give of a particular Church! “A particular Church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring voluntarily associated together, and *submitting to a certain form of government.*”*

What is the Catholic visible Church but a collection of particular visible Churches? Here, then, the very existence of the visible Church, is made to depend on a system of outward government. But you assert that any collection of individuals, possessing particular internal qualifications, is, simply by virtue of these qualifications, a regular Church; and that to make outward order or government essential to the existence of the Church, is contrary to the very genius of the Christian system.†

III. It is the plain doctrine of your Letters that saintship is the test of Church membership.

“Wherever the unfeigned love of our divine Saviour, an humble reliance on his atoning sacrifice, and a corresponding holiness of life, pervade any denomination of Christians, we hail them as brethren in Christ; we acknowledge them to be a true Church.”‡ All associations are composed of individuals. The qualities, therefore, which make an association a Church, must make an individual of that association a Church member. It follows, according to your account of the matter, that all holy persons are members of the visi-

* Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, chap. i. sect. 4

† Letters, p. 14, 344.

‡ Letters, p. 344.

ble Church of Christ, simply by virtue of their holiness.

But further—Speaking of the visible Church, you say,—“All *real believers* are one body in Christ.”* “Every *believer in Jesus, who is a partaker of the grace of God in truth*, is a member of the true Church, to whatever denomination of Christians he may belong.”†

Let us now turn to the public standards of your society.

“The purest Churches under Heaven are subject both to mixture and error.”‡

It follows that the Church is a society consisting of good and bad members. Besides, the parables of the net, and of the tares, are referred to, in proof of this section of your Confession of

* Letters, p. 20.

† Ibid. p. 24.

It is impossible to escape by saying that these passages refer to the invisible Church. The visible Church is the subject of your whole work. Besides, your object is to prove that Presbyterians are more liberal than Episcopalians, inasmuch as they admit all Christian societies, that possess real piety, to be entitled to be considered as regular visible Churches of Christ; while Episcopalians are unwilling to concede so much. Now, if the invisible Church be the subject referred to, your argument must run thus—Presbyterians are more liberal than Episcopalians, for while the former freely admit that all pious Christians are members of the INVISIBLE Church, the latter do not admit that all pious Christians are members of the VISIBLE Church. But apart from this—the passages, “Every believer in Jesus is a member of the true Church”—“all real believers are one body in Christ”—exactly coincide with the language which you habitually hold on the subject of the *visible Church*—“Wherever the unfeigned love of our divine Saviour, &c. pervade any denomination of Christians, we acknowledge them to be a true Church.” Your doctrine, then, unquestionably, is, that piety, *of itself*, puts us within the pale of the CHURCH VISIBLE.

‡ Confession of Faith, chap. XXV. sect. 5.

Faith; which parables have ever been considered as marking the union of the virtuous with the wicked, in the Church militant.

Again—"Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church."*

Here baptism is made the criterion of Church membership; and you will hardly contend that baptism and saintship always coincide.

Further—"Baptism is not to be administered to any that are *out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise*, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him."†

Thus, a person who wishes to be admitted into the visible Church, is first required to make profession of faith and obedience. The governors of the Church are to be satisfied that he is a *penitent believer*; and even after they are thus satisfied, he is still regarded as an alien from the visible Church, and from the covenant of promise, until he is placed within the one, and becomes interested in the other, by the instrumentality of an external ordinance.

Still further—The "sacraments put a *visible* difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world."‡ Not so, you

* Confession of Faith, chap. xxviii. sect 1.

† Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Larger Catechism, question 166.

‡ Confession of Faith, chap. xxvii. sect. 1.

tell us; for a saint is a member of the Church, simply by virtue of his saintship. The sacraments, then, cannot possibly distinguish the Church from the world, since men may be members of the Church independently of the sacraments.

IV. "Presbyterians understand the Gospel too well to speak of uncovenanted mercy at all." "Fallen creatures know of no mercy but that which is promised or secured by the covenant of grace."*

Now, your Confession of Faith, in confining all *ordinary* or *covenanted* possibility of salvation within the visible Church, obviously admits that salvation may be had out of that Church in an *extraordinary* or *uncovenanted* way. In commenting on this very language of your public standards, you speak of them as "making provision for the exercise of mercy, in ways extraordinary, and therefore unknown to us."† So that by your own admission, in page 44 of your Continuation of Letters, the Presbyterian Confession of Faith recognizes mercy which is uncovenanted; whereas, you expressly tell us, in pages 57 and 58 of the same work, that Presbyterians know of no mercy but such as is secured by covenant. Here, then, you palpably contradict both your religious standards, and yourself.

Again—Your Confession of Faith speaks of "elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." Such persons, plainly, cannot be members of the visible Church; so that, according to the standards of

* Continuation of Letters, p. 57, 58.

† Ibid. p. 44.

your society, there are persons who will infallibly be saved, although, "being out of the visible Church, they are strangers from the covenant of promise."*

According to *you*, there can be no mercy for fallen creatures but in the regular method of covenant engagement.

According to the *standards of your society*, the visible Church is the only medium through which a covenanted title to salvation may be obtained;† but fallen creatures, not members of that Church, and so not possessing any *covenanted* title to salvation, may, nevertheless, in an *extraordinary* or *uncovenanted* way, be admitted to mercy.

I submit it to candid Presbyterians, whether you have not been proved, in points of fundamental importance, to be in direct inconsistency with those public articles which you have subscribed, and to which you are under the most solemn obligations to conform. Let the passages cited from your Letters, and from your religious standards, be fairly compared; and the former must certainly appear a very strange vindication of the latter.

The candid and enlightened advocates of Pres-

* Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Larger Catechism, question 166.

† You fix upon your standards the odious charge of consigning all but the members of the visible Church to inevitable perdition.

There is no mercy but such as is secured by covenant. *Dr. Miller.*

Mercy is secured by covenant only to the members of the visible Church—"Out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise." *Presbyterian Standards.*

Put the two propositions together, and it follows, irresistibly, that none but the members of the visible Church can possibly be saved.

byterial order will never acknowledge you as their defender.

But you are not more at variance with the articles of your society than with yourself.

I. You assert that all pious persons, whether members of the visible Church or not, are, simply by virtue of their piety, in a state of covenant with God.* In this you literally trample, as I have abundantly shown, upon the Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith,† which it is your sacred duty to believe and to defend.

But you also contradict yourself on the subject.

1. The visible Church you entitle “the household of God, to which his gracious promises, and his life-giving Spirit are vouchsafed.”‡

If the visible Church be the *household* of God, it must be in a state of very special relation to him. Will you be so good as to inform us what that relation is? Surely it can be none other than a covenant relation. Now, to say that the visible Church stands in a covenant relation to God, is to say that aliens from that Church do not stand in such relation; for it would be absurd to speak of the Church as particularly connected with God in the way of covenant, if piety be the simple thing which brings

* Continuation of Letters, p. 58, 59, 62.

† “The visible Church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.” *Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2.* “Out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise.” *Larger Catechism, Question 166.*

‡ Letters, p. 342.

men into covenant with him, without reference to the consideration of Church membership.

But it is to the visible Church that "the promises of God, and his life-giving Spirit are vouchsafed" What is the meaning of this? Surely it is your design to represent the visible Church as possessing a peculiar claim to the promises of God, and to his life-giving Spirit. Now, if this peculiar claim be not a covenant claim, will you be so good as to inform us what kind of claim it is?

2. "If the Presbyterian Church is the only real Church on earth, and alone in covenant with Christ the head."*

Here you appear to take it for granted, that the only method of entering into covenant with God, is through the medium of the visible Church. Upon no other construction is it possible to give meaning to the passage. The Presbyterian society being admitted to be the only real Church, you seem to regard it as a natural and necessary consequence, that that society alone is in covenant with God. This being so, it must follow that, in representing piety as the test of a covenanted state, you are quite inconsistent with yourself.

3. You inform us, that if mercy be extended to such as do not belong to the visible Church, it must be in some extraordinary and unknown way.†

Members of the Church are saved in a regular and covenanted way: aliens from the Church are saved, not in a regular and covenanted way, but

* Letters, p. 344.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

in a way extraordinary and unknown. Such is the true interpretation of your language, or it will not admit of interpretation. Now, it will be granted, that none but the pious can be saved. Thus, then, you speak to us of pious persons who are saved in an uncovenanted way; in other words, who are in an uncovenanted state. Still, it is one of your leading positions, that all pious persons, simply by virtue of their piety, are in covenant with God.

4. "If the extravagant doctrine," that Episcopacy is essential to the existence of the visible Church, "be admitted; then no man can be in communion with Christ, unless he is also in communion with the Episcopal Church."* See how you argue! It is only through the medium of the visible Church that communion can be holden with Christ; if, therefore, Episcopacy be essential to the existence of the visible Church, it must follow that none can be in communion with Christ but the sect of Episcopalians. That communion with Christ can be only in the visible Church, is, then, the fundamental principle on which your argument rests. Now, to say that communion with Christ can be only in the visible Church, is equivalent with saying, that to that Church alone all

* Letters, p. 16.

Your four general presumptions are directed against the principle, that Episcopacy is essential to the existence of the visible Church. Speaking of those Episcopalians, against whose exclusive claims you are about to advance your presumptions, you say, "They contend that one form of government for the Church is unalterably fixed by divine appointment; that this form is Episcopal; that it is absolutely *essential* to the *existence* of the Church." Letters, p. 13.

covenanted title to salvation is confined. You must give up, therefore, either your doctrine or your argument. Do not tell us that piety will, of itself, put men in a state of covenanted communion with God, and then proceed to reason upon the principle, that covenanted communion with God can be only in the visible Church.

II. It has been shown, that, in making *saintship* the *criterion of Church membership*, you depart from the habitual language of your public standards. Let us see whether you have the merit of being consistent with yourself on the subject.

You admit that the Church of Christ contains many unworthy individuals, and that we must always expect to find much corruption within her pale.*

How, then, can saintship be her criterion of membership?

Further—You inform us that there are persons, belonging to no visible Church, who are in the sure road to Heaven, and who will, without doubt, be finally saved.† Persons, who are in the sure road to Heaven, and who will, without doubt, be

* Letters, p. 342.

† “Presbyterians consider all who repent and believe, *even if they bear no relation to any visible Church*, as in the sure and certain road to Heaven”‡ Here are penitent believers, in the sure road to Heaven, who are, nevertheless, aliens from the Church of Christ upon earth. What a comment upon your repeated declarations, that all pious persons are members of the Church of Christ, simply by the force of their piety!

saved, must be pious persons. But how is this? Saintship is the test of Church membership; and, still, many bad men belong to the Church, and many saints do not belong to it. All saints are Church members; but many saints are not Church members.

III. "It is contrary to the genius of the Gospel dispensation, to place forms of outward order among those things which are essential to the very existence of the Church."*

Any body of men may be considered as fairly entitled to the name of Church, if they possess a particular sort of *internal* qualifications.†

Such is your doctrine. It has been compared with the language of your public standards. Let it now be compared with the language of other parts of your own Letters.

1. Pray, how are we to understand you when you speak of the Church as the *household* of God?‡ This, surely, presents the idea that it is an outward and visible body. A household cannot possibly be a mere invisible thing. You are the first person, I believe, that ever discovered a *household* made up of internal properties.

2. "None are regularly invested with the ministerial character, or can, with propriety, be recognized in this character, but those who have been set apart to the office, by persons lawfully clothed with the power of ordaining."§

Here, the form of outward ordination is made

* Letters, p. 14.

† Ibid. p. 344.

‡ Ibid. p. 342.

§ Ibid. p. 8.

essential to the whole business of preaching the word, and administering the sacraments of Christ. That which is essential to the whole business of preaching the word, and administering the sacraments of Christ, may fairly be considered as essential to the Church. So that in one page of your Letters we meet with a Church which depends, absolutely, for its existence, on the laying on of hands in clerical ordination; in another page, a Church is presented to us, which is totally independent of outward forms; requiring nothing for its existence but faith and holiness. And, during all this time, it is one and the same community that you are professing to describe.

3. "It is certainly the duty of every man to keep the whole law of God; yet as we do not deny that an individual professor is a real Christian, because we perceive some imperfections in his character; so neither do we deny a Church to be a true Church of Christ, because she is not, *in all respects*, conformed to our ideas of scriptural purity."^{*}

The words, *in all respects*, you have very carefully marked in italics. Now, Sir, how will you make yourself consistent? To say that a religious association, in order to the possession of the Church character, need not be conformed, *in all respects*, to the Presbyterian plan of discipline, is to say, that, *in some respects*, it must be conformed to that plan: so that you first tell us, that the Church

* Letters, p. 344, 345.

may exist without any external form; and then, that a form, *substantially Presbyterian*, is essential to her existence. And, in conformity with this last idea, you refuse the name of Church to the society of Quakers.* You admit the Quakers to be sincere Christians. How happens it, then, that they are not a Church? They have the internal qualifications; but this, which answers very well in one page of your Letters, will not answer at all in another. Ah! the Quaker society is not constructed *sufficiently* upon Presbyterian principles. This is the secret of the whole business.

5. I declare, most sincerely, Sir, that, of all the inconsistent writers I have ever met with, you appear to me to be the most inconsistent. Scarcely two pages of your book can be made to agree; indeed, it is no uncommon thing to meet with radical contradictions in a single sentence.

Take the following as a specimen—

“Wherever the unfeigned love of our Divine Saviour, an humble reliance on his atoning sacrifice, and a corresponding holiness of life, pervade any denomination of Christians, we hail them as brethren in Christ; we acknowledge them to be a true Church; and although we may acknowledge and lament imperfections in their outward government, we consider them as truly in covenant with the King of Zion as ourselves.”†

In the first part of this sentence, we are expressly told that faith and holiness will constitute

* Continuation of Letters, p. 56.

† Letters, p. 344.

any religious assembly a true Church. Afterwards, indeed, the idea of an outward government is presented; and although it is not positively asserted that this government is essential, yet its existence seems to be taken for granted. If the existence of an outward government be taken for granted, it is absurd to talk of a Church made up of individuals possessing invisible qualities. These individuals, beside their faith and holiness, must, it seems, be bound together by external institutions. The government, too, must be of a particular kind. For example, a civil government would, surely, not answer; to say the least, the government must be ecclesiastical; and, by the time we have arrived at the top of your next page, it becomes indispensable to have this ecclesiastical government constructed, *substantially*, upon the Presbyterian model.*

Thus do you literally say and unsay in the very same breath.

In the first clause of a paragraph, every thing shall be as free and liberal as the most ardent latitudinarian can desire—All good Christians are members of the Church—Let us have no invidious distinctions—We are all brethren—But before we arrive at the close of the paragraph, the scene is completely changed; all these fairy ideas vanish;

* “Presbyterian Church government was the primitive model; and it is the duty of every Church to conform to this model. Yet we do not deny a Church to be a true Church of Christ, because she is not, *in all respects*, conformed to our ideas of scriptural purity.” *Letters*, p. 344, 345.

and we find ourselves literally shut up in a Presbyterian conventicle.

IV. One of the objections which you urge against the doctrine of Episcopacy, is, that it does not rest upon EXPRESS WARRANT. And, in speaking upon the subject of express warrant, you use the following language—"I readily grant, that every observance which the great Head of the Church enjoins by express precept, is indispensably binding."*

Thus you openly take the ground that no external observance, or institution, is binding upon Christians, unless it can be shown to be enjoined by an EXPRESS and LITERAL COMMAND of Scripture. Now, you contend that Presbyterian ordination, and Presbyterian Church government, in Church Sessions, Presbyterian Assemblies, and Synodical Assemblies, are of divine and unalterable obligation; while you admit, in so many words, that no express warrant can be produced for either the one or the other.

Here are the proofs. "As the Christian ministry is an office deriving its existence and its authority solely from Jesus Christ, it is obvious that his word is the only rule by which any claims to this office can properly be tried, and the duties and powers of those who bear it, ascertained. Let us, then, examine what the Scriptures say on the point in dispute. And here it is proper to premise, that whoever expects to find any FORMAL

* Letters, p. 14.

or EXPLICIT decisions on this subject, delivered by Christ or his Apostles, will be disappointed.”* Still, in the face of this unequivocal admission, you expressly say that Presbyterian ordination is essential to the ministry, and to the validity of the scriptural ordinances; and that Presbyterian Church government is the primitive form, and binding upon Christians in all places, and throughout all time.†

An express and literal command of Scripture is necessary to render any outward institution binding.‡ Presbyterian Church government does not rest upon any express command of Scripture.§ But Presbyterian Church government is of divine and unalterable obligation.||

Nothing but a very bad cause, Sir, could possibly run you into such gross contradictions.

* Letters, p. 25, 26.

† “None are regularly invested with the ministerial character, or can with propriety be recognized in this character, but those who have been set apart to the office by persons lawfully clothed with the power of ordaining.”^a “It is only so far as *any* succession flows through the line of *Presbyters*, that it is either regular or valid. It is the *laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*, that constitutes a scriptural ordination.”^b

Thus the Presbyterian mode is necessary to outward ordination, and outward ordination is necessary to all ministerial acts.

“Christians, in all ages, are bound to make the Apostolic order of the Church, with respect to the ministry, as well as other points, the model, as far as possible, of all their ecclesiastical arrangements.”^c “The Presbyterian form of Church government is the truly primitive and Apostolic form.”^d So that Christians are under a divine and unalterable obligation to conform to Presbyterian Church order.

‡ Letters, p. 14.

§ Ibid. p. 26.

|| Ibid. p. 70, connected with p. 8.

^a Letters, p. 3.

^b Ibid. p. 457.

^c Ibid. p. 8.

^d Ibid. p. 70.

V. At one time, you speak of outward forms in a very disparaging way; at another, you not only represent them as important, but go so far as to make them essential to the existence of piety. You find fault with your opponents for the stress which they lay upon external order, and yet you lay more stress upon it than any Episcopalian that ever lived.

For example—after admitting that some religious associations, which are not organized *exactly* upon the Presbyterian model, display, nevertheless, an unaffected piety, you use the following language:—"If we undertook to maintain that the Presbyterian Church is the only real Church on earth,* and alone in covenant with Christ the head, such a fact would indeed present a difficulty of no easy solution."†

The principle here recognized, is, simply, that the existence of unaffected piety out of the *visible Church*, if it be not a thing impossible, is, at least, one for which it must be very difficult to account.

* It is quite in vain for you to say that you do not make the Presbyterian Church the only real Church upon earth. The ministry is necessary to the Church; outward ordination is necessary to the ministry; the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery is necessary to outward ordination. Nay, Sir, struggle not—you have no escape:—it is perfectly clear that you and your religious standards make Presbyterianial ordination absolutely necessary to the existence of the Church, and to all covenanted possibility of salvation. If we happen to have Presbyterianial ordination, it is very well; if not, *we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise.*

With what exquisite consistency do complaints of the exclusive claims of others flow from your lips!

† Letters, p. 344.

Now, Sir, how is it possible to attach greater value to external order? So much value has certainly never been attached to it by the advocates of Episcopacy. While they contend that the visible Church is Episcopal; that it is the duty of all men to enter this Church; that her institutions have a greater tendency to promote real piety than institutions not validly administered, even supposing such invalidity to be the result of involuntary error; they, nevertheless, freely admit that unaffected piety may exist among those who, through excusable ignorance or prejudice, are in a state of separation from her; and are very far from regarding the existence of piety without her pale as a phenomenon extremely difficult to be understood.

Thus inconsistent are you with yourself; in one page treating external order as a matter of very little importance; in another, representing it as almost essential to true devotion. And it is perfectly clear that you lay greater stress upon it than those whose pretended predilection for it, furnishes you with so frequent a subject of declamation.

VI. To the doctrine that Episcopacy is essential to the existence of the visible Church, you object, that it places a point of external order upon a par with the essence of religion.*

* "While they (the advocates of Episcopacy) grant that God has left men at liberty to modify every other kind of government according to circumstances, they contend that one form of government for the Church is unalterably fixed by divine appointment; that this form is

Now, this proceeds upon the supposition, that the visible Church and the essence of religion are synonymous; at all events, that they stand upon precisely equal ground. For, surely, the doctrine that Episcopacy is essential to the existence of the visible Church, cannot place Episcopacy upon a par with the essence of religion, unless the visible Church be upon a par with that essence. But the visible Church, its ministry and its ordinances, are all *outward* matters.

External order is not upon a par with the essence of religion. This is the *language* of your objection.

External order is upon a par with the essence of religion. This is the *principle* of your objection.

Thus you ground your argument upon the very doctrine which you bring it to overthrow.

VII. There is a strange and complicated inconsistency in what you say on the subject of uninterrupted succession.

You give us to understand that it is very *doubtful* whether an uninterrupted succession be essential to the ministry;* and still assert in the *most*

Episcopal; that it is absolutely *essential* to the *existence* of the Church; that, of course, wherever it is wanting, there is no Church, no regular ministry, no valid ordinances." "Against these exorbitant claims, there is, prior to all inquiry into their evidence, a strong general presumption for the following reasons: First—It is placing a point of external order upon a par with the *essence* of religion." *Letters*, p. 13, 14.

* "I shall not attempt at present to discuss the question whether uninterrupted succession is *essential* to the Christian ministry. On this question the *most* learned and pious Episcopal divines have been divided in opinion. But without entering into the controversy, I will

positive terms that the ministerial office can be perpetuated only in the way of outward ordination, received through that succession which flows in the line of Presbyters.* But, surely, if it be doubtful whether *succession* be necessary to the ministry, it must be equally doubtful whether *Presbyterial succession* be necessary. How can it be *certain* that a *particular* succession is essential to the conveyance of the sacerdotal office, when it is *doubtful* whether *any* succession be essential to its conveyance?

It is one of the simplest rules of logic, that there be nothing in the conclusion but what is contained in the premises; inasmuch as the conclusion is derived from the premises.

Ordination is essential to the ministry—the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery is, and ever

take for granted that the uninterrupted succession is *essential*; that it is the only channel through which ministers of the present day can have the Apostolic commission transmitted to them.”†

This is evidently the language of doubt and of hesitation.

* “We believe that none are regularly invested with the ministerial character but those who have been set apart to the office by persons lawfully clothed with the power of ordaining.”‡ “The right of ordination, according to Scripture and primitive usage, belongs to Presbyters.” “It is the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery that constitutes a Scriptural ordination.” “It is only so far as any succession flows through the line of Presbyters, that it is either regular or valid.”§

What can be more explicit? Outward ordination is necessary to constitute a minister of Christ. This ordination can be validly performed only by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. The succession by which the sacerdotal office is conveyed from one generation to another, is confined to the Presbyterial line.

† Letters, p. 345, 346.

‡ Ibid. p. 8.

§ Ibid. p. 347

has been essential to ordination;—of course, the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery is and ever has been essential to the ministry. Now, to lose that which is *essential* to the ministry, is to lose the ministry itself; as to lose that which is *essential* to life, is to lose life itself. Thus to lose the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, which is necessary to the ministerial office, is to lose the ministerial office. And what is this but saying that an uninterrupted succession of Presbyterial hands is essential to the ministry?

So that whether we attend to your *express declarations*, or to the obvious *consequences of the positions which you lay down*, we have you in one page *doubting* whether *any* succession be essential to the ministerial office, and, in another, *unequivocally asserting* that the *Presbyterial* line of succession is essential to that office.

Further—“That the succession in this ministry will be kept up in the *same exact manner* in every age, I consider neither Scripture nor common sense as requiring me to believe.”*

If we consult your first Series of Letters, we find that the ministerial office can be bestowed only by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; that it can be conveyed from one generation to another only through the line of Presbyterial succession;—but all this is rejected in your second Series of Letters with contempt; for there we are told, that the idea of an *exact manner* of keeping

* Continuation of Letters, p. 425

up the succession from age to age, is repugnant both to Scripture and common sense.

Still further—After expressly declaring that “it is the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery that constitutes a scriptural ordination,” and that “it is only so far as any succession flows through the line of Presbyters that it is either scriptural or valid,”* you scruple not to use the following very extraordinary language—“I have no hesitation in saying, that if it were to be discovered, that, about two hundred or five hundred years ago, the regular succession of our ordinations had been really interrupted by some ecclesiastical oversight or disorder, I should not consider it as in the least degree affecting either the legitimacy of our present ministry, or the validity of our present ordinances.”†

Can I be blamed for saying that I am absolutely unable to determine what your opinions really are?

Ordaining acts are valid only when performed by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; succession is valid only when it flows through the line of Presbyters;‡ and yet it is entirely immaterial whether this succession has been interrupted or not.

The only scriptural or lawful method of conveying the sacerdotal office, is external ordination, received in the Presbyterial line of succession; and still it is of no kind of consequence whether

* Letters, p. 347.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 425.

‡ Letters, p. 347.

this line of succession has or has not become extinct.*

I might now proceed to institute a strict comparison between the views which you present of the visible Church and its ordinances, and the doctrines which are set forth in the sacred writings; but this has been very much anticipated in the comparison already run between you and the standards of your religious society; for, the points in which you differ, in this respect, from your public formularies, are those in which you differ, also, from the language of Scripture. Without pursuing this part of the subject, therefore, I here relinquish the unpleasant task of pointing out your inconsistencies, and bring the present letter to a conclusion.

* The succession of the ministry will never perish, because God has expressly promised to be with it unto the end of the world. But admit, for the sake of testing a principle, that the succession should be interrupted—How would the priestly office be to be conferred? There would be no person on earth, according to the supposition, possessed of the ordaining power. It follows that the sacerdotal office would perish unless God should be pleased again miraculously to interpose. To call this proposition in question, is to take the ground that man possesses the *intrinsic* power of creating ambassadors of Christ. Suppose we should lose all the copies of the Bible—Could we make another Bible for ourselves? Is it not evident that the Bible would be lost, except so far as it might be accurately retained in the memory, until God should think proper supernaturally to restore it? There is a perfect analogy, in this particular, between the Bible and the Priesthood. An uninterrupted succession of true copies is necessary to the former; an uninterrupted succession of true ordainers is necessary to the latter. If either succession be *really* interrupted, the interruption must be fatal until God shall be pleased to interpose; for man can no more supply the loss of the Priesthood than the loss of the sacred volume. It is not more the prerogative of Christ to reveal his own will, than to constitute his own agents. We have just as much right, surely, to declare his pleasure, as to transact his business,

LETTER X.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SIR,

I Have noticed, I believe, the most important parts of your book which relate to me; but I propose, now, in a miscellaneous way, to remark on some things which could not well have been introduced under any specific head, and to comment, *particularly*, upon various passages of your Letters, to which a *general* attention has already been paid. This last will, doubtless, involve a degree of repetition. I flatter myself, however, that it will be the means of presenting the subject in some new points of light, and of exposing, more minutely, those arts of evasion to which you have had recourse, for the purpose of concealing the true doctrine of your religious standards, as well as of imputing tenets of a peculiarly obnoxious character to your opponents in the present controversy.

In the seventeenth page of your first Series of Letters, you took the liberty of speaking of some late and distinguished writers in Great-Britain, in a way calculated to expose them, and the Church of which they are the advocates, to universal contempt and scorn.

“ Several distinguished writers in Great-Britain, who have lately espoused, with much warmth, the exclusive Episcopal notions under considera-

tion, do not scruple to adopt and avow this inference, at least in substance. They assert that all who are in communion with the Episcopal Church, are in the sure road to salvation. And, accordingly, they turn into ridicule every attempt to distinguish between a *professing* Episcopalian and a *real* Christian. It is scarcely necessary to add that many of the divines of their own Church reject this doctrine with abhorrence, and have publicly pronounced it to be as repugnant to Scripture, as it is dangerous to the souls of men.”*

This is a most cruel misrepresentation.

Every professing Episcopalian must, of necessity, be a saint. All who are in communion with the Episcopal Church will, infallibly, be saved. Such is the construction which nine out of ten of your readers will put upon your language; it is, in fact, the only construction which your language will admit. And, accordingly, you mark the doctrine as of a nature to excite sentiments of deep abhorrence in every virtuous bosom. Indeed, supposing your representation to be correct, I should pronounce the writers in question not *bigots*, but *fools*; not absurd *devotees*, but perfect *madmen*. You here impute to the authors whom you attack, a degree of arrogance and folly which can scarcely be charged upon the most hardy advocates of the Romish Church, in the darkest and most superstitious periods of its history. What defender of the papacy ever went so far as to say that every professing Catholic is, of necessity, a saint; or, which

* Letters, p. 17.

follows as a matter of course, that none who are in communion with the Romish Church can possibly fail of salvation? I am astonished that you should not have seen, in a moment, that the charge under consideration, refutes itself by its very absurdity.

The writers in question go no further than the Presbyterian Confession of Faith; saying, with that Confession, that “there is no covenanted possibility of salvation out of the visible Church.”* On this point, then, not the smallest difference of opinion exists between the individuals to whom you allude, and your own religious society. That the promises of the Gospel are made exclusively to the visible Church, is the common doctrine of both. And you very well know, that the Christian’s Magazine, on which you bestow so high praise, lays down the same principle in the most explicit terms—“All the ordinances are given to the visible Church—all the *promises* are made to it.”†

So far from alleging that the members of the visible Church cannot fail of salvation, the writers in question expressly represent that Church as composed of good and bad individuals, and expressly declare that the membership of the latter will only aggravate their condemnation. So far from saying that every professing Episcopalian is a real Christian, in other words, a saint, they la-

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2. Larger Catechism, questions 162 and 166.

† Christian’s Magazine, vol. i. p. 150.

ment, that too many members of the Episcopal Church, fail to imbibe the spirit of her excellent institutions; thus having a name to live, while, in reality, they are dead.

In my first Series of Letters, I took particular notice of the charge under consideration, and called for your proof. What is your reply? "I have not only not intentionally misrepresented any one, but am also still persuaded that I fell into no *real* error. But, however, this may be, all that I said was advanced on the authority of a respectable divine of the Church of England, now living, who expresses himself in the following words."*

Thus you make a violent attack upon the character of Daubeny; imputing to him opinions the most absurd and detestable, and, when called upon for your proof, you have nothing to furnish but an extract from the work of his professed opponent. This extract, too, gives us no specific passages from the writings of Daubeny; it merely exhibits the distorted constructions of a very un-candid adversary. The works of Daubeny are easily to be procured in this city. Why did you not give us the very passages in which the obnoxious opinions, that you impute to him, are set forth? The fact is, Daubeny not only expresses no such opinions as Overton has thought proper to ascribe to him, but openly and unequivocally disclaims them as equally detestable and absurd.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 67.

“ Even admitting, (what we cannot admit, for we know the contrary,) that the question whether Episcopacy was, in *fact*, the primitive constitution of the Church, were decided in favour of our Episcopal brethren; still another question remains, viz. Is a compliance with that constitution so unalterably and indispensably binding on the Church, that there can be no Church, no ministry, no ordinances, without it? These questions are totally distinct, and never to be confounded. Yet Dr. *Bowden* and Mr. *How* almost uniformly confound them; and seem to think that if the former question be answered in the affirmative, the latter must of course be answered in a similar manner. In a few instances, indeed, they admit the distinction to which I allude, and assert, that their only object is to establish the Apostolical institution of Episcopacy, without undertaking to pronounce on the consequences of rejecting it. But it is evident that, for the most part, they entirely lose sight of this distinction, and write as if the establishment of the fact, that prelacy existed in the primitive Church, must effectually destroy the character of all Churches not found in possession of that form of government. Whether these positions, so totally distinct, are so generally confounded by my opponents for want of clear and distinguishing views, or with design, I presume not to say. But every discerning reader will be on his guard against imposition from either source.”*

* Continuation of Letters, p. 23, 24.

This passage really surprises me. I am sure you would not wilfully misrepresent. You must, then, have read the works to which you allude with very strange eyes. In truth, the whole of what you here say, is without even the shadow of a foundation.

The great object of Dr. Bowden is to prove the Apostolic institution of Episcopacy: he expressly and repeatedly says that it is not his purpose to inquire into the consequences of the doctrine. If Episcopacy be of divine institution, such societies as lay it aside, must be, at all events, in an unsound and imperfect state. Whether in laying it aside they actually lose the Church character, is a question which Dr. Bowden, more than once, tells his readers he does not undertake to discuss. Thus, the two questions, which you represent Dr. Bowden as perpetually confounding, he always separates, and always treats as distinct.

You have strangely misunderstood him.

Nor have you less misunderstood my Letters.

Of the two principles, which you charge me with invariably confounding, I show, by a regular course of argument, that the one follows irresistibly from the other.

Thus—The ministry is essential to the existence of the visible Church; but no man can be a minister of Christ without a regular external commission; and this commission can be bestowed only by virtue of authority from Christ. Now, our blessed Saviour constituted the Apostles, Priests and Governors of his Church; empower-

ing them to regulate its affairs, and to provide for its continuance. The Apostles, acting under the commission, and in conformity to the will of Christ; guided, moreover, by the supernatural influence of the Spirit, established distinct and subordinate grades of ministers; giving to the highest grade the exclusive power of ordaining. Thus, Episcopacy is the divinely instituted method of perpetuating the sacerdotal office.

The sacerdotal office is essential to the existence of the Church; Episcopal ordination is the divinely instituted method of perpetuating the sacerdotal office; therefore Episcopal ordination is essential to the existence of the Church.

We do not rest the obligation of Episcopacy on the ground of its existence in the primitive Church, but on the ground that the Apostles, acting under the commission, and in conformity to the will of Christ, established it as the regular and *permanent* method of conferring the sacerdotal power. Until, then, a change be made by divine authority, Episcopacy and the sacerdotal power cannot be separated; having been connected by Jesus Christ, by him only can their connexion be dissolved.*

* To say that the Apostles, acting agreeably to the commission and to the will of Christ, established Episcopacy, is to say that Christ established it.

Well, the supposition is, that Christ established distinct grades of ministers, and conferred upon the highest grade the exclusive power of ordaining. When a minister of the highest grade, then, ordains, Christ ordains; when a minister of the second grade ordains, it is not Christ that ordains, but man. Thus Episcopal ordination confers the sacerdotal office; Presbyterial ordination does not. If, therefore, the former ordination be laid aside, and the latter be substituted in its place, the

Thus, instead of confounding the principle of the apostolical institution of Episcopacy with that of its necessity to the existence of the Church, I show, by a train of reasoning, that the one leads directly to the other. When a man states two principles distinctly, and makes it his object to prove that the one flows from the other, how absurd is it to charge him with confounding them!

“ These gentlemen, indeed, themselves assert, with the whole body of Episcopal writers, that the Apostles never intended to lay down a model

sacerdotal office must cease to exist; and as there can be no Church without a ministry, the Church must cease to exist also.

Man can no more make a minister of Christ than he can make a Bible. The sacerdotal power can come only from the great Head of the Church; and it can come from him only in the way of his appointment. A person who undertakes to exercise power in the name of another, must show a commission from him, or from some one whom he has authorized to give commissions. Now, if Episcopacy was established by the Apostles, in conformity to the will of Christ, Episcopacy is the method which Christ has appointed to convey his own power; and it must continue until he shall think proper to alter it. If a man should appoint three distinct orders of agents, and give to the first order the exclusive power of appointing other agents, all persons appointed by such order would be his lawful officers; but if the second order of his agents should undertake to appoint inferior agents, the persons so appointed would not be his lawful officers, and could not possibly bind him by their acts. The principle is perfectly clear and simple. Christ possesses the fulness of the sacerdotal authority; of which the power of ordination is a part. He may delegate it or not, as he pleases. He may delegate it to whom he pleases. If he has, according to the supposition, appointed three distinct grades of officers, and given the exclusive power of ordination to the first grade, he has established a particular method of conveying his own power; and his power can be obtained only in that method until he shall think proper to appoint a different method. So that Episcopacy is binding, not because it was the practice of the primitive Church, but because the power of Christ must be derived from Christ, and his power can be obtained only in the way which he has appointed for bestowing it.

of Church government, which should be, in all its parts, perpetually binding; and, of course, that the Church is not bound to be, in all respects, conformed to the apostolic model. I am not now inquiring whether this doctrine be correct or not. But if it be, how can the want of prelacy destroy the character and even the existence of the Church? In what part of Scripture is it said, that every other part of the apostolic government of the Church is mutable, and may be modified by human wisdom; but that dispensing with the single point of Bishops is fatal to the whole?"*

"I am not now inquiring whether this doctrine be correct or not." Mark this! You advocate the rigid doctrine, that a form of Church government is drawn out, in all its parts, in Scripture; and that Christians, in all places, and throughout all time, are under the most sacred obligation to conform to it. You tell us, expressly, that the form of Church government, thus drawn out in Scripture, is the Presbyterial form;† and so maintain that all Christians are bound to manage their ecclesiastical concerns in the precise way of Church Sessions, Presbyterial Assemblies, and Synodical Assemblies. Is it not, then, very surprising that you should complain of the extent to which Episcopalians carry their ideas of outward order? But on this part of the subject I have already said more than enough: I notice it here, simply to show that you never suffer the subject to pass without either

* Continuation of Letters, p. 24.

† Letters, p. 70.

decisively expressing your opinion, or, at least, entering a solemn protest, which shall protect you from being considered as entertaining the slightest doubt of the divine and unalterable obligation of the whole frame of your ecclesiastical polity.

But the paragraph before us presents a curious specimen of reasoning.

The Apostles did not intend to lay down a model of Church government which should be binding in ALL ITS PARTS; therefore, they did not intend to lay down a model which should be binding in ANY OF ITS PARTS.

It is not necessary that the Church should be conformed, IN ALL POINTS, to the Apostolic model; therefore, it is not necessary that she should be conformed IN ANY POINTS, to that model.

Such is the reasoning upon which the paragraph before us is founded.

Let us try whether we can find its parallel.

All the truths of Scripture do not enter into the essence of the Christian scheme; therefore, none of the truths of Scripture enter into the essence of that scheme. Belief of every individual truth of Scripture is not necessary to salvation; therefore, belief of no truth of Scripture is necessary to salvation.

Thus your reasoning would annihilate all distinction between things; placing all Apostolic practices upon precisely the same level, and making all scriptural truths to be of exactly equal importance.

The advocates of Episcopacy, you tell your

readers, admit that the Apostles did not establish a form of Church government with the intent that it should, in all its parts, be of permanent obligation. How, then, you exclaim, can the want of prelacy destroy the character, and even the existence of the Church? In the name of common sense, what connexion is there between the premises and the conclusion? Might not the Apostles establish a ministry, and make it essential to the existence of the Church, without instituting a precise system of rites and ceremonies, or fixing the exact mode of regulating the detail of ecclesiastical affairs? If this be, in its own nature, possible, as it undoubtedly is, your reasoning must be absurd.

Our Church has ever held, that the sacred writings set forth no *immutable* system of rites and ceremonies, and no *complete* and *particular* form of ecclesiastical polity; but she has always most strenuously contended that our blessed Saviour and his Apostles created a spiritual community, to continue to the end of the world, and that they established, in this community, a priesthood as one of its essential constituents. You have discovered, however, that these opinions are inconsistent; in other words, that our Saviour and his Apostles could not possibly institute a permanent ministry, without instituting, at the same time, an unchangeable system of rites and ceremonies, and fixing even the precise method of passing all kinds of ecclesiastical laws. This, certainly, is limiting the divine power in a very strange way.

“ In what part of Scripture is it said, that every *other part* of the Apostolic government of the Church is mutable, and may be modified by human wisdom; but that dispensing with the single point of Bishops is fatal to the whole?”

The Episcopal constitution of the ministry may not be changed, because it is immutably fixed by divine authority; the rites and ceremonies of public worship, and the particular mode of exercising ecclesiastical power, may be changed, because they are not immutably fixed by divine authority. All this we have proved by a very full examination of Scripture, and of antiquity. But you are not satisfied. You require us to produce *specific* passages of Scripture, in which the doctrine we contend for is laid down *in so many words*.

You charge us with inconsistency. And in what does our inconsistency consist? We maintain, it seems, that the priesthood is unalterable, while we admit that the precise method of organizing ecclesiastical tribunals, and exercising ecclesiastical power, are not particularly fixed in Scripture, and may, therefore, from time to time, be changed. And how do you prove that there is inconsistency in this? Do you examine into the nature of the respective establishments, and show that they cannot exist in a state of separation? Do you endeavour to prove that the divine and unalterable institution of a priesthood, necessarily draws after it the divine and unalterable institution of an entire scheme of ecclesiastical polity? Do you en-

deavour to prove that a power of change, in the business of rites and ceremonies, necessarily supposes a power of change in the fundamental article of the ministry?

If you could establish either of these propositions, you would, indeed, fasten upon us the charge of inconsistency. But you do not even make an attempt at this. What, then, is the amount of your proof? The Scriptures no where speak thus—*Rites and ceremonies may be changed, but the priesthood is unalterable.*

Now, this mode of reasoning rests upon the principle, that no institution can be binding upon the Church, and that no power can be exercised by her, unless there be an express warrant enjoining the institution, or delegating the power, IN SO MANY WORDS;—a principle which must involve the faith, the ordinances, and the ministry of the Church in promiscuous ruin. There is, certainly, no express passage of Scripture in which the doctrine of the Trinity is, *in so many words*, laid down. We prove, from an examination of different parts of Scripture, that divine attributes are ascribed to three distinct persons, and that these distinct persons possess one common and undivided nature. Again—There is no express warrant for infant baptism, for the Sabbath of the first day, or even for the priesthood; that is, there is no passage of the New Testament in which it is said, *in so many words*, that infants shall be baptized, that the first day of the week shall be substituted for the se-

venth, as the Christian Sabbath;* or, that there shall be an order of priesthood in the Church, as

* You venture to pronounce that there is *express warrant* for Infant Baptism, and for the Sabbath of the first day; but instead of producing a passage of Scripture, declaring, *in so many words*, that infants shall be baptized, and that the first day of the week shall be substituted for the seventh, as a sacred day, you enter into a regular argument on the subject. You lay down two propositions, which, you say, may be *proved from Scripture*; and from these propositions the divine right of infant baptism is to be deduced. Having gone through the argument relative to infant baptism, you proceed to observe, “*Scarcely less evident* is the scriptural warrant for the Christian Sabbath.”† Pray, Sir, what do you mean by *express warrant*? Your phraseology is so extremely loose, that it is impossible to ascertain the precise ideas which you intend to convey. Now, nothing will serve as a basis for a divine institution but an *express warrant* of Scripture; now, it is quite sufficient if the institution be capable of being *fairly proved* from Scripture. Is there no difference between fairly proving a thing by a critical examination and comparison of the different parts of the sacred volume, and producing for it what is called an *express warrant*? *Express warrant* stands opposed to *implication, inference, analogy*; it supersedes the necessity of reasoning altogether. When we have *express warrant*, we are not obliged to travel out of the passage which contains it; we have only to appeal to the passage, and the dispute is at an end. Well, I call upon you to furnish me with an *express warrant* for infant baptism. Do you refer me to any passage of Scripture which expressly prescribes this institution? Not at all. You say that the divine right of infant Church membership, and the divine right of baptism to all Church members, can be proved from Scripture. The antipædobaptist would differ from you on this subject. Besides, I do not ask you what *can be proved* from Scripture; I call upon you to show me an *express warrant*, which puts an end to all dispute, and makes reasoning superfluous.

You say that *express warrant* is necessary to render an institution binding, and then proceed to prove infant baptism by *inference and analogy*.

You say that there is no *express warrant* on the subject of ecclesiastical government, and yet that Presbyterian Church government is binding upon all Christians, throughout all ages.

We must produce *express warrant* for Episcopacy, but *you* are under no obligation to produce it for Presbytery; although you carry the latter much further than we carry the former.

† Letters, p. 129.

distinct from its other members. All these things, doubtless, may be fairly proved from Scripture; and so it may be fairly proved, that the ministry is a permanent institution, which man has no authority to change, while rites and ceremonies, as well as the peculiar organization, according to which ecclesiastical power is to be exercised, are not fixed upon any unalterable system, but are left to be adapted to times and circumstances, by the exercise of human discretion.

Again—Is there any passage of Scripture which expressly enumerates the canonical books, and commands us to believe them? Where is it said that the four Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; or that they are divinely inspired? Now, if an express warrant be necessary to render any institution obligatory upon the Church, surely such warrant must be indispensable in the important article of ascertaining those genuine records from which all her doctrines and all her ordinances are to be derived. But there is no such express warrant with respect to the canon of Scripture; and thus the infidel, with the weapons which you put into his hands, would destroy, with perfect ease, the very foundations of the Christian faith.

Still further—You maintain that Presbyterial government, in Church Sessions, Presbyterial Assemblies, and Synodical Assemblies, is of divine and unalterable obligation; but you will not pretend that there is any specific passage of Scripture like the following—“Ecclesiastical affairs, in

all parts of the world, and throughout all time, shall be governed by Church Sessions, Presbyterial Assemblies, and Synodical Assemblies." Indeed, you scruple not to admit, in so many words, that our Saviour and his Apostles have given no formal or explicit decisions relative to the ministry and the government of the Church. "While the Scriptures present no *formal or explicit decisions* on this subject, we find in them a *mode of expression*, and a *number of facts*, from which we may, without difficulty, ascertain the outlines of the Apostolic plan of Church order."*

You appear never to perceive the full extent of the reasoning which you direct against your opponents. In the case under consideration, your logic, if it be of any value, completely destroys your own doctrine relative to ecclesiastical polity, and, what is much worse, overthrows Christianity itself, by depriving us of the very canon of Scripture.

"Mr. How endeavours to represent my work as an unprovoked attack on the Episcopal Church, and to throw upon it all the odium of aggression."†

The advocates of Episcopacy, when your first Series of Letters appeared, had stated and defended the principles of their Church, in publications addressed to their own people; or they had vindicated their own character and conduct against a violent attack which had been made upon them in the public prints. In doing this, they had used a

* Letters, p. 27.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 26.

language which is not even pretended to be exceptionable; and, while they contended strenuously for the divine institution of Episcopacy, and for all the doctrines connected with this principle, they made every allowance for error that the most extensive charity can claim; placing within the arms of mercy all conscientious inquirers after truth. It is to be recollected, too, that the opponents of Episcopacy had been long in the habit of directing against it the most contemptuous expressions.

Now, what is the treatment which we have received at your hands, for this temperate exercise of a sacred and universally acknowledged right?

You have represented us as wanton disturbers of religious peace; nay, you have held us up to the community as *odious proscribers* of our fellow Christians of other denominations: and the direct tendency of your whole work is to impress the opinion that we maintain the infamous tenet, that salvation is absolutely impossible to all who may be out of the pale of our own Church.

Your Letters, then, merit to be considered as an "*unprovoked attack*." It is doing them nothing more than justice to entitle them an "*aggression*."

"Another charge which these gentlemen concur in urging, is no less unexpected and extraordinary. It is, that I have written with great bitterness, and that even my moderation is affected and insidious. This is a point concerning which no man can be an impartial judge in his own case. But, after receiving so many respectable suffrages in favour of the mildness and decorum of my style; after

receiving the acknowledgments of so many moderate and candid Episcopalians in different parts of the United States, both clergymen and laymen, that I had avoided asperity to a very unusual degree; it is impossible to avoid suspecting that these gentlemen (who, so far as I know, stand alone in making this charge,) have felt irritated by statements which they could not deny, and by arguments which they could not refute; and that they have mistaken both for bitterness and abuse.”*

I have conversed with a number of persons who have *thoroughly* examined your Letters. They unanimously regard them as conceived in a style of extreme positiveness, and as displaying a severity of temper, which, notwithstanding the studied effort to conceal it, is constantly visible. And I do most conscientiously declare, that they appear to me to possess these qualities in a conspicuous degree. At the same time, I acknowledge that they have been frequently spoken of as remarkable for the spirit of catholicism which they breathe. But this is easily accounted for. The bulk of men examine things superficially; especially things in which they feel no very deep interest;—and, in such circumstances, profession has a wonderful power. Your Letters are full of profession. You perpetually tell us how very liberal and charitable you are;—you entreat us to consider you as actuated by no spirit of hostility to the Episcopal Church.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 27, 28.

The most dangerous enemy is he who conceals himself under the garb of a friend. No temper is so truly unamiable as that which fills the mouth with professions of kindness, while the spirit of animosity possesses the heart.

Such, then, as have examined your Letters carefully, pronounce them to be remarkable for positiveness and bitterness. Persons who do not feel a sufficient interest to search attentively, are caught by mere profession. Believe me, Sir, this is the true explanation of the compliments which may have been paid to your forbearance.

It is very painful to me to be under the necessity of addressing you in this style; but when you tell the world of the great mildness and inoffensiveness of your Letters, and of the outrageous attack which they, nevertheless, brought upon you, it is proper and necessary that the matter should be placed in its true point of light. In giving the explanation of the praises, which, you say, have been bestowed upon your liberality, I am only defending Dr. Bowden and myself, from a censure that must derive all its force from the spirit of kindness by which your Letters on the Christian Ministry are supposed to be distinguished.

“These gentlemen, in the course of their strictures, have allowed themselves, frequently, to employ language of which I cannot forbear to exhibit a specimen.”*

You go on to introduce quotations, consisting

* Continuation of Letters, p. 32.

of a few words in a place; so that the reader is unable to form a judgment of the subject to which they are applied, or of the qualifications with which they are accompanied. You omit, too, all notice of those passages in which we give you credit for good intention, or in which we speak with respect of the religious denomination to which you belong. This is not dealing fairly with your people.

Fortunately you have fixed upon a passage of my Letters, which you have thought proper to present at full length; and you introduce it in a way which shows that you consider it as involving an excessive departure from all the rules of propriety. "On one occasion he permits himself to address me thus:* 'You could not possibly have adopted a mode of address more calculated to sour the minds of your readers, or better fitted to indulge the bitterness of your own heart. It is indirect and insidious; covering, under the mask of moderation and kindness, all the loftiness of pride, and all the rankling of passion.'†

This passage you have selected as the most exceptionable and offensive part of my Letters.

Let us see to what it referred.

"Such persons (the advocates of Episcopacy) are to be viewed in the same light with those who conscientiously believe (and no doubt there are many such) that transubstantiation is a doctrine of Scripture; that the Pope is infallible; that

* Continuation of Letters, p. 33.

† How's Letters to Miller. p. 16.

images are a great help to devotion; and that there is no salvation out of the pale of the Church of Rome.”*

“ After reading the foregoing sheets, I trust you will be prepared to receive such charges and such denunciations, with the same calm, dispassionate, conscious superiority, that you feel when a partizan of the papacy denounces you for rejecting the supremacy of the Pope, and questions the possibility of your salvation out of the Church of Rome.”†

“ Let me warn you against being partakers with our opponents, in the positiveness and bigotry which *some* of them manifest.” “ Remember that you are not free from a criminal bigotry, if you have not learned to *bear with bigots*. It is a difficult lesson; but we are required to learn it.”‡

I freely submit it to the reader whether I exceeded the limits of a just retaliation. The passage, particularly, in which you entreat your people to learn the hard lesson of bearing with bigots, is truly characterized when it is styled insidious. “ We are constrained, however reluctantly,” says Dr. Hobart, “ to commend Mr. H. for that manly dignity and feeling with which he tears the mask of plausibility from Dr. M.’s performance, and proves that it indulges frequently in an arrogance and bitterness, more injurious and reprehensible from the insidious professions of moderation with which they are covered.”§

* Letters, p. 20, 21.

† Ibid. p. 350.

‡ Ibid. p. 351.

§ Churchman’s Magazine, vol. v. p. 134.

“Two of the gentlemen whose attacks I am called upon to repel, accuse me of misrepresenting the high-toned Episcopal doctrine which they avow, and endeavour to maintain. They impute to me a desire to excite prejudices against them, by insinuating that they exclude all but Episcopalians from salvation. Mr. How, in particular, brings forward, and urges this accusation with great zeal. I utterly deny the charge. I never intended to convey such an insinuation; and am persuaded that my Letters do not contain a single sentence which can be fairly construed as expressing it.”*

You have my sincere thanks for being thus explicit; still, you will permit me to observe, the direct tendency of your Letters was to lead your people to believe that the advocates of Episcopacy confine all hope of salvation within the limits of their own religious profession. But, as general assertion is of little weight, I will submit one or two passages to the inspection of the reader.

“Such persons (the advocates of Episcopacy) are to be viewed in the same light with those who conscientiously believe that transubstantiation is a doctrine of Scripture; that the Pope is infallible; and *that there is no salvation out of the pale of the Church of Rome.*”† “After reading the foregoing sheets I trust you will be prepared to receive such charges and such denunciations, with the same calm, dispassionate, conscious superiority, that

* Continuation of Letters, p. 36.

† Letters, p. 20, 21.

you feel when a partizan of the papacy denounces you for rejecting the supremacy of the Pope, and questions the *possibility of your salvation out of the Church of Rome.*"*

Now let it be recollected that the idea had been diligently circulated, and prevailed not a little, in different parts of the country, that the advocates of prelacy shut out all non-Episcopalians from the very possibility of mercy. Knowing this, and you could not but know it, you have written in a way exactly calculated to countenance and confirm the injurious impression. A large proportion of your readers, I am quite persuaded, will be led to conclude that we consign all but the members of our own society to inevitable and indiscriminate perdition; for, independently of the particular passages, which I have just cited, the general spirit of your work, in reference to the point in question, is of this ungenerous tendency.

Besides, there are passages, in your last publication, of the same exceptionable character.

"But these gentlemen insist, that however high and exceptionable their claims may be considered, we, on our part, advance claims as high and as offensive as theirs; and, therefore, on our own principles, have no right to complain."†

You go on to repel this by extracts from your standards; after finishing which, you say—"In these chapters, every line is marked with wisdom,

* Letters, p. 356.

† Continuation of Letters, p. 37.

moderation, and charity." "They are so far from maintaining that there is *no salvation out of the pale of our Church*, that they could scarcely have found words more strongly to express an opposite opinion, without running into unlimited latitudinarianism."*

Again—"Does this look like pronouncing our precise form of Church order indispensable to a regular ministry, to valid ordinances, or to *final salvation*."†

Now, what is the amount of all this? You are proving that the Presbyterian claims are much less offensive than the Episcopal. And how do you proceed? Why, you tell us that the Presbyterian standards DO NOT *assert the impossibility of salvation out of the pale of the Presbyterian Church*. What is this but to say that the advocates of prelacy DO ASSERT *the impossibility of salvation out of the pale of the Episcopal Church*?

Presbyterians are less offensive in their claims than Episcopalians. Why? Presbyterians admit the possibility of salvation out of the Presbyterian Church, while Episcopalians do not admit the possibility of salvation out of the Episcopal Church.

Such is the simple interpretation of your words.

From this dilemma you cannot be extricated but at the expense of your discernment, or your candour. Either you really did not perceive the obvious import of what you were saying, or it was your object dexterously to *insinuate* what

* Continuation of Letters, p. 43.

† Ibid. p. 46

you had not courage openly to declare. You must pardon me for using this plain language. It is so unmanly, so unjust, so cruel, to impute to us, expressly or impliedly, the horrid opinion in question, that I should be justified in directing to you some of the severest epithets which language can supply. Let the idea prevail, that we cut off all but the members of our own Church from all hope of mercy, and we shall be regarded, and justly regarded, as monsters of impiety and arrogance, unfit to be tolerated among men. If a disposition exist not in the public mind to hunt us from society, we owe it to the enlightened spirit of the times; not to the forbearance of you and your fellow labourers in the Calvinistic cause. And, when it is considered that we extend our charitable ideas to a point which almost fills you with horror; that we place all infants in the arms of mercy, while you give many of them to perdition; that we admit the possibility of salvation to the conscientious heathen, while you expressly take the ground that "*none can be saved who have never heard of Christ, however diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature;*"* there is something so shameful in the attempt to hold us up to the public view, as gloomy and unrelenting bigots, that, in dealing with the authors of so gross a calumny, we can scarcely be considered as bound by the laws of ordinary and honourable controversy. But I will suppress what I presume to call a virtuous indignation, and proceed.

* Presbyterian Catechism, question 60.

I asserted, in my former Series of Letters, that the Presbyterian claims are more extensive than the Episcopal, on the subject of external order. This you strongly deny; and you attempt to support your denial by specific passages from the standards of your society.

“To show that Mr. How, in writing thus, unjustly accuses our Church, nothing more is necessary than to transcribe the following chapters from our Confession of Faith, and Form of Government. They are given *entire*, that there may be no suspicion of concealment or mutilation; that the several sections of each chapter may explain one another; and, I will add, that Mr. How, if he should ever happen to look into these pages, may have an opportunity of reading them, which, after perusing such remarks as are quoted above, I cannot suppose he has ever yet done.”*

Here is a great display of candour; but, I am sorry to be obliged to add, it is nothing more than a display. You introduce passages of your standards that are entirely irrelevant, and omit others which are absolutely necessary to make out the series of proof. For example, you present us with the passage which confines all covenanted title to salvation within the limits of the visible Church, and with that which declares an outwardly ordained ministry to be essential to the existence of this Church. But, surely, this is very far from exhibiting a complete view of the case.

* Continuation of Letters, p. 40.

You should have added the passages which make *the Presbyterian mode essential to outward ordination*; then we should have had the whole subject fairly before us.

You bring against me the charge of gross misrepresentation of the doctrine of your religious articles; you assert that the claims of your society, on the subject of external order, are much less extensive than those of the advocates of Episcopacy; you make a great parade of quotation; telling your reader, in plain terms, that you present him with every passage which bears upon the point in question. Will it be believed that, in the midst of all this, you scruple not to mutilate the language of your standards? Those passages which speak of the visible Church, *generally considered*, you introduce; but the moment you come to the sections which set forth the *Presbyterial character* of this Church, you stop.*

Conscious of having acted unfairly, you endeavour to excuse yourself.

“ These gentlemen, however, insist, that in the chapter of the Confession of Faith, (chap. 27) which treats of the Sacraments, it is formally declared, that ‘ neither of the sacraments may be dispensed by any other than a minister of the word *lawfully ordained*.’ But what is this to the purpose? Who is a ‘ Minister of the word law-

* You omit the passage which declares the power of ordaining to be in the Presbyterian Assembly, and that which rests the method of ordination by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery on Apostolic example.

fully ordained?" If any preceding or subsequent passage in our public standards had asserted, or even intimated, that no minister is lawfully ordained, but one who has been set apart *exactly in our mode*, there would be some pretext for this cavil."*

Do not your religious standards say that the Presbyterial Assembly is a tribunal of divine institution? Do they not say that the power of ordaining is in this assembly? Do they not expressly rest the particular method of ordination by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, upon apostolic example? Have you forgotten your own positive language? "It is only so far as *any* succession flows through the line of Presbyters, that is either regular or valid. It is the *laying on of the hands of the Presbytery* that constitutes a scriptural ordination." Have you forgotten the Ecclesiastical Catechism of Dr. M'Leod? "A person who is not ordained to office by a Presbytery, has no right to be received as a minister of Christ. It is rebellion against the Head of the Church to support him in his pretensions."† What is the language of the Westminster Divines, and of the General Assembly of Scotland? "*The power of ordination is in a Presbytery.*" "*The act of ordination is the act of a Presbytery.*"

"*Exactly in our mode.*" And do you hope to escape thus? Will you venture to assert that the power of ordination is possessed by any other tri-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

† Eccl. Cat. p. 29, 30.

bunal than a Presbyterial Assembly? Will you admit ordination to be valid which is not performed by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery? Will you receive any man as a lawful minister of Christ who has not been ordained, substantially, in the Presbyterial mode? No, no: "Exactly in our mode." Pray, what do you mean by the term "*exactly*?"

It must be a weak cause which requires to be thus supported.

Again—You tell us, by way of apology, it would seem, for the strictness of your principles, that your standards represent the visible Church as including all who may be professors of the true religion.* This is, to be sure, a definition in which nothing is defined. Until it be ascertained what the true religion is, such a mode of describing is, literally, putting the reader off with empty sound. But we are to have recourse, doubtless, to the standards of your society, to know what the true religion includes. Very well! Those standards tell us that a ministry outwardly ordained, is essential to the very existence of the visible Church, and that the power of ordination can be validly exercised only by a Presbyterial Assembly. So that, go where we will, we are brought back to Presbyterial ordination as the criterion of all lawful ecclesiastical order.

Besides, your standards make the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism a most important part of the

* Continuation of Letters, p. 43.

true religion;—of course, without the profession of these doctrines, there can be no Church. How will you get rid of this conclusion? If the visible Church consists of those who profess the true religion, and if the principles of Calvinism be a part of the true religion, it must follow that none can be really members of the Church but such as embrace those principles. And as your standards tell us, unequivocally, that there can be no covenanted title to salvation without the pale of the visible Church, it follows that Calvinists alone are in covenant with God. Now, you expressly declare that there is no mercy but such as is secured by covenant transaction.* So that we are fairly brought to the following train of conclusions—No true religion without Calvinism†—

* Continuation of Letters, p. 57, 58.

† Apart from the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, “the whole plan of salvation,” according to you, “is a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; a system, on the whole, nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God.”‡ Surely, then, the doctrines in question must be of the very essence of Christianity; there can be no true religion without them. In saying, therefore, that the Church consists of all those who profess the true religion, you only say that it consists of the Calvinists. The definition which your standards give of the visible Church is thus so vague, that we must look through the whole of your religious formularies before we can understand it. In examining these formularies, we find nothing more prominent than the doctrines of partial redemption, of absolute unconditional election and reprobation, irresistible grace, and final perseverance. In the writings of distinguished Presbyterian divines, the doctrines are equally conspicuous; with you they are so important, that Christianity, without them, would quite as well deserve to be called a scheme for our destruction, as for our salvation.

‡ Continuation of Letters, p. 359.

No Church without the true religion—No covenanted title but in the Church—No salvation without a covenanted title. Thus is it literally made out that none but Calvinists can be members of the Church, and that none but members of the Church can be saved.

Put you and your religious articles together, and we have a scene of never ending inconsistency.

“And lest the phrase, *the true religion*, might be construed to mean an exact conformity with their own standards, they declare that they consider as included in the visible Catholic Church, many Churches *less pure than their own*.”*

There is no such declaration as this in the extracts which you have given us from the standards of your society, nor in any other part of those standards. It is merely said that the Church may exist in different degrees of purity; and I humbly apprehend that a religious society may be Presbyterian in its structure, without being absolutely perfect either in its creed or its practice.

But you embrace, in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ from you upon the subject of ecclesiastical order.† So do we. We embrace all men in the spirit of charity—we make allowance for what we conceive to be error—we extend the divine favour to all conscientious inquirers after truth.

“Our Confession of Faith and Articles of Government, were drawn up by the Westminster

* Continuation of Letters, p. 44.

† Ibid. p. 44.

Divines. And it is remarkable, that all of these divines, excepting about seven or eight, had received Episcopal ordination, and no other. Is it credible that these men, assembled as ministers, judicially deliberating and acting as ministers, could have intended to pronounce their own ordination null and void?''*

It is very much to be lamented, Sir, that you will continue to be so extremely disingenuous. Who has ever pretended that you deny the validity of Episcopal ordination? You, surely, are too wise to unchurch your own religious society. Episcopal ordination is the basis upon which that society must ultimately rest. But, Sir, you admit the validity of this mode of ordination, as I have already more than once observed, only on the ground that it is *in fact Presbyterial*; and even this poor concession in favour of Episcopacy, is extorted from you by the hard principle of *necessity*.

As Episcopal clergymen, we are innovators, intruders, rebels. But you are pleased to view us with a Presbyterial eye; and instantly, as by the power of magic, we become real ministers of Christ. There must be prodigious virtue in the spirit of Presbyterianism to purge away the dross of so much corruption, and to convert rebels and impostors into the ambassadors of Heaven.

You charge me with grossly misrepresenting the opinions of Drs. Mason and M'Leod; in doing which you use the following very severe language

* Continuation of Letters, p. 45.

—“ Although both Dr. Mason and Mr. M'Leod may hold some opinions concerning the Christian Church in which I do not entirely concur with them; yet there cannot be greater injustice than to speak of them and their writings in the manner in which Mr. How has permitted himself to do. To what this misstatement of their opinions is to be ascribed, it becomes not me to say. I dare not impeach the integrity of Mr. How. For acquitting his honesty at the expense of his understanding, he would not thank me: And to suppose that he has allowed himself to speak with so much positiveness of their tenets, without any acquaintance with them, would be as offensive as either.”*

Thus do you permit yourself to speak, without specifying a single case, or advancing a single argument in proof of your charge.

I have not misrepresented Drs. Mason and M'Leod in the slightest degree. The opinions which I have ascribed to them, they scruple not, in the most public manner, to avow and defend. They maintain that the ministry is essential to the very existence of the visible Church; that outward ordination is essential to the ministry; and that valid ordination can be performed only by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. That is, they maintain that Presbyterian ordination is the basis upon which the whole structure of the Church visible must rest. Drs. Mason and M'Leod,

* Continuation of Letters, p. 47.

I am persuaded, will never charge me with having misrepresented their opinions upon this subject. Agreeing with you in the most rigid principles of Presbyterianism, they have the merit of adhering to them with much greater consistency.

“ But are there not some Presbyterians who hold that their form of Church government was the apostolic and primitive form? Undoubtedly, many. And are there not some also, who go further, and insist that this form is binding on the Church, under all circumstances and states of society, and, of course, ought to be adopted in all ages? There are certainly some who go even this length. Well! my opponents will reply, is not this holding to the *divine right* of Presbyterian government? It is. And is it not, of consequence, going the whole length with us, and denying that there can be any true Church, or valid ordinances without it? Certainly not. The conclusion has no more connexion with the premises, than with the most remote object in creation.”*

“ It is to no purpose to say, ‘ that if these be the opinions of *jure divino* Presbyterians, they are inconsistent with themselves; for that a belief that Presbyterianism was the apostolic form of Church government, necessarily carries with it, on every principle of sober reasoning, a belief that there can be no Church, no ministry without it.’ This conclusion is as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is false in fact.”†

* Continuation of Letters, p. 47, 48.

† Ibid. p. 52, 53.

“ Thus it appears, that the charge brought against Presbyterians, that they unchurch all who reject the Presbyterian government, is perfectly unfounded,” and that the authors of the charge are guilty of “ calumniating our venerable Church.”*

The whole of this is a mere evasion, founded on the vague meaning of a phrase. Who has ever said that you represent the *entire frame of Presbyterial government* as essential to the existence of the visible Church? No, Sir, the point of the argument is not here. Let us, for a moment, substitute “ ministry” for “ government,” and then see whether you can escape so readily. Tell me, therefore, do you believe, with your religious standards, that an outwardly ordained ministry is an *essential* ingredient of the Christian Church? Do you believe, with the same standards, that the power of ordination has been delegated by the great Head of the Church to a Presbyterial Assembly, and that it can be lawfully exercised by such an assembly alone? Afraid to meet the doctrine directly and manfully, you retire under cover of the vague term *government*. This is your constant practice.

Presbyterianism is the Apostolic form of Church government—therefore, without Presbyterianism, there can be no ministry, and no Church.

This is very lame indeed. We are not quite such Tyros in the art of reasoning. In holding us out to the public as arguing in this way, you do

* Continuation of Letters, p. 54, 55

injustice, I assure you, to our logical powers. But if we only say, the ministry being necessary to the Church, and ordination by a Presbyterial Assembly being necessary to the ministry, it must follow, that, without a Presbyterial Assembly, there can be no Church—our reputation for dialectic skill, perhaps, will not be totally ruined.

If you had been contented with extricating yourself from a difficult situation by the ingenious use of ambiguous phrases, it might have been set down to the account of excusable frailty; but when you venture to represent your opponents as making themselves ridiculous by their ignorance, and even to brand them as calumniators, in reference to the point under consideration, you are guilty of an outrage which must excite the indignation of all honest men.

“ The most rigid Presbyterians have, at different times, both as individuals and judicatories; both by their writings and their decisions, explicitly acknowledged different denominations of Christians to be true Churches of Christ. They have acknowledged our *Congregational* brethren in *New-England*; the regular *Independents* in various parts of *Great-Britain*; the *Episcopalians* in *England* and *America*; the *Lutherans* in *Germany* and the *United States*; and the *Methodist* and *Baptist* denominations, as all Churches of Christ. They consider all these, indeed, as more or less corrupt; and have, accordingly, at different times, and without reserve, written, preached,

and printed their testimony against those corruptions.”*

Ordination, as practised by all these societies, you consider as *substantially* Presbyterian, and therefore valid. But what becomes of the Quakers? You do not venture to put them down as a true Church. The Greek Christians, too, more numerous than all the societies of Protestants united, you excommunicate merely because ordination is performed among them by a *single clergyman*, instead of being performed by a *plurality of clergymen*. So rigid is your adherence to the principle of the exclusive validity of ordination by the hands of a Presbyterian Assembly. Indeed, Sir, it would be wise in you to keep this subject out of sight. Turn and disguise it as you please, it will still be apparent that your principles relative to external order, are more strict than those of your opponents, and that they exclude from the visible Church a much greater number of professing Christians.

“ This simple statement also refutes another assertion, which Mr. How permits himself, without the smallest foundation, to make and repeat. The assertion to which I allude, is conveyed in the following terms. “ All of you declare baptism and the supper to be *general conditions of salvation*; representing them as seals of the covenant of grace, without which, it is impossible to have any ordinary or regular claim to the bless-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 51.

ings of that covenant.”—“ Mr. How asserts that *all* Presbyterians believe and speak thus. But can he find *one* that does? I know of none; and am confident there is none. Our *Confession of Faith* says no such thing. On the contrary, it expressly declares, that persons to whom these ordinances are *never* administered, *may be saved*; and that those who *do* receive them *may perish*.”*

Was there ever such a refutation?

Does not God require us to be baptized? And is not obedience to his laws a condition of salvation? To be sure, a merciful Being will make allowance for the errors of his frail creatures. *Wilful* departure from his institutions must infallibly exclude from the kingdom of Heaven; but not so, we humbly trust, with such as proceeds from ignorance or prejudice:—therefore, we say, baptism is a *general* condition of salvation. To this you answer, that unbaptized persons *may be saved*. Surely, Sir, you understand the distinction between a *general* condition, and a condition that can, under no possible circumstances, be dispensed with. The assertion that your standards represent “ baptism and the Lord’s Supper, as *general* conditions of salvation,” must be considered, then, I believe, as remaining firm.

“ But,” says Mr. How, “ your *Confession of Faith* represents baptism as the only mode of admission into the visible Church; it declares that out of the visible Church, there is no *ordinary* possibility

* Continuation of Letters, p. 60.

of salvation; and it maintains that baptism ought not to be administered by any but a minister of the Gospel *lawfully ordained*. Does it not follow then, that without baptism, there is ‘no ordinary possibility of salvation?’ “No, it does not follow. His premises are incorrect, and his conclusion is equally so. With all his confidence he blunders at every step. Every one who has read our *Confession of Faith*, knows its doctrine on this subject to be, that *all who profess the true religion*, are members of the visible Church; that the *children* of such persons, by virtue of their *birth*, and of course *anterior to baptism*, are also members of the Church; and that baptism is only the appointed *seal*, or solemn *recognition* and *ratification* of their membership. This is perfectly plain; and it cuts up by the roots every pretence for the statement which Mr. How has made.”*

Let me refer you to the following passages from your *Confession of Faith*:—“Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the *solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church*, &c.”† “Sacraments are holy signs and seals, &c. immediately instituted by God, &c. to *put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world*.”‡

It is, then, the clear doctrine of your *Confession of Faith*, that baptism is the *only* mode of admis-

* Continuation of Letters, p. 61.

† Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxviii. sect. 1.

‡ Ibid. chap. xxvii. sect. 1.

sion into the visible Church; otherwise, how can it be said, that the sacraments distinguish the world and the Church from each other?

Baptism admits us into the Church, and distinguishes us from the world; and yet we may be members of the Church, and so distinguished from the world without baptism.

Is not this imputing contradiction and absurdity to your religious formularies?

But what shall we say to the passage to which you allude—"The visible Church consists of all those, throughout the world, that profess the true religion, together with their children."*

Unless we consider this passage as simply setting forth the *right* of the children of Christian parents to baptism, it will be impossible to reconcile it with the other parts of your Confession of Faith, or with common sense. It is very clear that we cannot be members of the Church until we are admitted into it. If the children of Christian parents are admitted into the Church, and distinguished from the world by their natural birth, it can never be said that baptism admits them into the Church, and distinguishes them from the world. But your Confession of Faith expressly says that children are admitted into the Church and distinguished from the world by baptism; therefore it does not mean to say that they are thus admitted and thus distinguished by their natural birth. Either, then, the construction which

* Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2.

I have given to the passage under consideration is the true one, or your Confession of Faith is inconsistent with itself.

“Baptism is only the appointed *seal*, or solemn *recognition* and *ratification* of their membership.” Does your Confession of Faith hold this language? Far from it. Baptism is ordained by Jesus Christ, says that Confession, as the mode of *admission* into the Church, not as the mode of *recognizing a previous admission*.

It is not Mr. How that “blunders,” then, but Dr. Miller, that makes his own religious standards both contradictory and absurd.

“With respect to Mr. How’s direct and repeated assertion, that Calvinistic Presbyterians make a belief in the doctrine of ‘election,’ and the other ‘rigid peculiarities of *Calvinism*,’ essential to our being in covenant with God, and that they represent all who do not receive these ‘peculiarities’ as given up to uncovenanted mercy, it is difficult to answer it as it deserves, without speaking of its author in a manner in which I cannot permit myself to speak of a Christian minister.”*

This is very harsh language. To give the reader an opportunity of judging how far I have merited it from you, I will present at full length the principal passage of my Letters on which it is founded.

“What if I should show that we do not carry Episcopacy further than you carry the doctrine of particular, unconditional election and reprobation?”

* Continuation of Letters, p. 61, 62.

“ We say, with you, that the visible Church is the ‘ household of God, to which his gracious promises and his life-giving spirit are vouchsafed;’* and that out of this visible Church, in the language of your own Confession of Faith, there is no ordinary, in other words, no covenanted possibility of salvation. Persons who depart from the Church, as I have before observed, we suppose to be in a great error; but we judge them not; leaving them in the hands of a merciful God, who will deal both justly and graciously with them. All who sincerely desire, and endeavour to know and do the will of God, will be accepted by him; and fundamental error will not shut out from mercy the truly devout and penitent soul. Even irregular and invalid ministrations will be blessed, to the faithful and humble recipient, as channels of grace, and means of salvation. Men must answer to God for their errors; and error will be a subject of condemnation just so far as it is fairly imputable to the individual who cherishes it. This can be known only to Omniscience. Pardon my repetition: I think it necessary frequently to state the principle to you, as in your animadversions upon the doctrines and reasoning of your opponents, you appear to have entirely overlooked it. Nor do we run into the absurdity of maintaining the innocence of error; or, that provided a man be sincere, it is immaterial what profession he is of. Far from it. They who reject revealed truth, reject

* Letters, p. 342.

it at their peril; losing all covenanted title to salvation; and the hope which we cherish is founded on the nature, and the language of God, who has given us abundant reason to believe that he will make great allowance for human frailty; pardoning the errors of the head, where the heart is truly sincere; knowing whereof we are made, and remembering that we are dust. There is no reason why the same general principle should not be applied to incorrect opinions, as well as to improper actions.

“ Error is, indeed, almost always, in this imperfect state, more or less mixed with sin; being the result of neglect, which will not use the means of information; of pride, which will not submit to the mortification of its claims; of bad passions, which have been indulged until they have corrupted the whole habit of the soul. At the same time, not a little, we humbly trust, will be to be traced to a more venial origin. God only knows when error proceeds from a criminal, when from a pardonable source; and he only can tell what degree of allowance may be made for it consistently with the claims of justice. That this allowance will be far from inconsiderable, we hope and believe.

“ Now, Sir, let us see how far persons of your way of thinking carry the rigid doctrine of particular unconditional election and reprobation; that doctrine upon which you place so high value, never ceasing to enforce it from the pulpit and from the press.

“ Faith you represent as necessary to salvation ; and you hold the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation to be a most important article of faith ; considering the rejection of it as flowing from pride, and as indicating an unregenerate state of the heart. In refusing to believe this doctrine, then, we refuse to believe divine truth, and so far *violate the conditions of the covenant*. And upon what ground do you place us? You say we are in the hands of a merciful God, who knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but dust. This is the express language used by Calvinistic writers. They place those who reject the doctrine of particular unconditional election and reprobation on the ground of the general mercy of God ; cherishing the hope that he will, in condescension to human frailty, pardon their error. A stranger to the subject would really suppose, upon reading your book, that your opponents deny the very possibility of salvation out of their own Church. After all, they lay no more stress, in reference to future happiness, on communion with the visible Church, than you lay upon the rigid peculiarities of Calvinism.”*

It is not here asserted that Presbyterians represent a belief of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism as necessary to our being in a covenanted state ; on the contrary, in saying that Presbyterians regard persons who reject the doctrines in question as violating the conditions of the cove-

* How's Letters to Miller, p. 17, 18.

nant, it is taken for granted that they consider them as being within its pale. Well, then, Presbyterians admit that anti-Calvinists may be within the covenant; but deny that they can fulfil its conditions.* Now, surely, it would be better never to enter the covenanted state, than to be thus incapacitated to perform the conditions on which its blessings are suspended.

The case is made worse for you by explanation.

* Faith is one of the conditions; and the peculiarities of Calvinism you represent as an *essential* branch of the Christian scheme—so essential, that without them, “the whole plan of salvation is nothing better than a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God.” *Continuation of Letters*, p. 339.

LETTER XI.

**EXAMINATION OF DR. MILLER'S LIFE OF
DR. RODGERS.**

SIR,

IN the conclusion of your last Series of Letters on the Christian Ministry, you declare the object for which you had taken up your pen to be completely attained, and express a firm resolution to engage no more in the Episcopal controversy. I do not think you have kept this resolution. In a life of the Rev. Dr. Rodgers, published in the year 1813, you go out of your way to renew the attack upon the Church and her advocates; asserting, among other things, that the Reformers were almost all decided Presbyterians; that Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer were doctrinal Calvinists, and drew up Calvinistic articles as a perpetual standard of faith for their Church. When we are held up to public view as opposers of those religious articles which we are sacredly bound to observe, is it of much consequence, think you, whether this be done in an *epistolary* or a *biographical* form; in a work addressed to the *Presbyterian Churches* in the city of New-York, or one dedicated to the *Ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*? Besides, there are many passages in your Life of Dr. Rodgers, which do great injustice to the Episcopal Church; and

many topics are introduced, which every principle of conciliation, not less than of consistency and of policy, should, in my humble judgment, have led you to keep entirely out of sight.

I have already endeavoured to show, at some length, that the Reformers of the Church of England were decided Episcopalians, and decided anti-Calvinists; but still I think it proper to take a short notice of the very positive assertions which you advance on this subject in the work now under review.

“An impression seems to have been received by multitudes, that Luther and Calvin differed materially on important points, particularly on the subject of the divine *decrees*, or the doctrine of sovereign *election*. Nothing can be more erroneous than this impression. Excepting in the single article of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, there was the most entire harmony of opinion between these two great Reformers.” “Indeed, all the eminent Reformers, both in *Great-Britain* and on the continent of *Europe*, were agreed on these points. The leading men among them were all doctrinal Calvinists.”*

This is most positive, and most unqualified language. Shall I be blamed for saying that no man, even moderately acquainted with the subject, would thus have committed his reputation? You will recollect, Sir, how frequently you take occasion to speak of the limited views, and slender

* Life of Dr. Rodgers, p. 32, 33.

information of your opponents. When, therefore, you display the most palpable ignorance of obvious facts, connected with the great event of the Reformation, we must be excused for reminding you of your own unpleasant language.

The leading Reformers were Zuingle, Luther, Melancthon, Cranmer, Ridley, Calvin.

Was Zuingle a Calvinist?

Let me refer you to the explicit testimony of Mosheim.* “The absolute decree of God with respect to the future and everlasting condition of the human race, *which made no part of the theology of Zuingle*, was an essential tenet in the creed of Calvin.”†

But an authority still more to our purpose, and one, to which, I am induced to think, you will attach even greater value than to that of Mosheim, is the Ecclesiastical History of Isaac Milner, the present Dean of Carlisle, and President of Queen’s College in the University of Cambridge.

“On a *careful perusal* of his voluminous writings, I am convinced, that certain *peculiar sentiments, afterwards maintained by Calvin*, concerning the absolute decrees of God, *made no part of the theology of the Swiss Reformer.*” “The lamentable rupture among the first Reformers was not occasioned by disputes concerning predestination.”‡

The historian here pronounces an opinion perfectly coincident with that of Mosheim:—he pro-

* I have not access to the writings of Zuingle.

† Century 16, book II. sect. iii. part 3.

‡ Milner’s History of the Church of Christ, vol. v. p. 570, 571.

nounces it, too, in the most unhesitating terms, and after a thorough investigation of the subject. Mark the force of his language. "Certain PECULIAR sentiments, AFTERWARDS maintained by Calvin." The author seems to discriminate Calvin from all the other Reformers, and to represent the predestinarian scheme as originating with him; especially when we take the sentence just quoted in connexion with one which immediately follows it—"the rupture among the *first* Reformers was not occasioned by disputes concerning predestination."

PECULIAR sentiments of Calvin—sentiments AFTERWARDS maintained by Calvin—sentiments upon which the disputes among the *first* Reformers did not turn.

The following unequivocal passage is in the Liturgy of the Church of Zurich, of which Zuingle was the founder. "Consider, therefore, that it is the will of God our Saviour, that *all men* should attain unto the knowledge of his will, through our only mediator Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for the redemption of *all mankind*."*

Were Luther and Melancthon Calvinists?

This question has been briefly touched already; but its importance demands a more full examination.

Luther and Melancthon at one period held the doctrine of a strict philosophical necessity. The followers of Luther, however, strenuously contend

* Liturgia Figurina, London, 1693.

that even the harshest of his opinions cannot be understood in a sense favourable to the Calvinistic system.* Be this as it may, the opinions in question were entertained by Luther and Melancthon only in the very earliest part of their career; they soon became convinced of their error, and did not hesitate formally to confess and renounce it. So early as the year 1527, a form of doctrine was drawn up by Melancthon, for the Churches of Saxony, in which the free will of man in acts of morality was expressly asserted. This work was afterwards re-published by Luther, with expressions of his approbation; insomuch, that Erasmus, upon seeing the work, thus remarked upon it—“The Lutheran fever daily grows more mild; so much so, that Luther himself writes apologies for several things, and, among the rest, for the very one on account of which he has been held to be a heretic and a madman.”† Luther, indeed, did not scruple to confess that at the commencement of the Reformation he had not completely settled his creed;‡ and in his last work of im-

* See Pet. Haberkornii Solida et Necessaria Vindicatio, Lib. Art. Luther. For this, and for every thing relative to the opinions of Luther and Melancthon, on points connected with the predestinarian controversy, I beg leave, once for all, to refer to Dr. Laurence's Bampton Lectures, where the subject is fully discussed, and the different authorities are minutely quoted. It would swell the present work to much too great a size to give numerous extracts from the writings of Luther, Melancthon, and others; I, therefore, content myself with referring the reader to the lectures before mentioned, in which he will find full satisfaction.

† Anno 1528. Epistolæ, lib. xx. ep. 63. Erasmus and Luther had previously been engaged in controversy on the subject of the will.

‡ Opera Witteb. vol. vii. p. 139.

portance, the Commentary upon Genesis, he expressly apologizes for his former opinions.* Melancthon appears, from his letters, to have renounced and condemned the doctrine under consideration, as early as the year 1529, which was previous to the session of the Diet of Augsburg.† Before that Diet was laid, as is well known, the famous Lutheran Confession, drawn up by Melancthon; in this Confession, the obnoxious tenets alluded to do not appear. The celebrated work of Melancthon, entitled, “Loci Theologici,” furnishes decisive evidence of a change in his opinions: in the first edition of this work, the doctrine of fatality is asserted; but in the year 1533, a new and enlarged edition appeared, when the obnoxious tenet was exchanged for the opposite one of contingency. The doctrine of the cooperation of man with divine grace in the act of conversion, is most unequivocally asserted in the “Loci Theologici.”‡ Luther, indeed, never went so far as to deny, in some sense, this cooperation, even in his controversy with Erasmus;—a fact which Erasmus himself confesses.§

The universality of grace is clearly declared in the correspondence and other writings of Luther. For this I may refer you to the celebrated German historian, Seckendorf, who supports his declaration on the subject, by extracts from Luther’s

* Opera, vol. vi. p. 355.

† Epist. Lib. Lond. p. 407.

‡ See the chapter De Libero Arbitrio.

§ Opera Brasmi, vol. x. p. 1480. ed. Lug. Bat. 1706.

writings.* Indeed, the idea of grace being offered to all, but bestowed only on a few, Luther reprobated with the utmost severity of language.† The same doctrine was repeatedly advanced by Melancthon. Both these eminent men also expressly and strongly maintained the defectibility of grace; condemning the opposite doctrine in the most pointed terms. They held that our fall from grace may be both *total* and *final*.‡ It may be well to present you with a short passage from Melancthon on this point. “They who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God; but when they act wickedly, they grieve and expel the Holy Spirit; then they cease to be the sons of God.”§ “I affirm that many falling into great wickedness, drive from them the Holy Spirit, and become again justly exposed to eternal punishment; some of whom, however, again becoming penitent, as Aaron and David, return to God, and are received into his favour; many do not return, but fall into eternal misery.”||

The language held by Luther and Melancthon on the subject of *predestination* is widely different, indeed, from that of Calvin. Let me once more refer you to a testimony, to which, I persuade myself, you will attach high value; that of the learned and pious Dean of Carlisle, in his very interesting Ecclesiastical History. “Content with what Scripture had revealed, he never undertook to ex-

* Seckendorf, vol. i. lib. ii. sect. 43. † Postilia Domestica, p. 57.

‡ Luth. Oper. vol. v. p. 405. Ibid. vol. vi. p. 98.

§ Loci Theologici, p. 280.

|| Opera, vol. i. p. 375.

plain this difficult subject with any thing like a systematic precision; much less did he ever think proper to propose the arduous speculations concerning the divine decrees, as necessary articles of a Christian's faith."* "He argues that God chose, and seriously decreed from eternity, the possibility of the salvation and everlasting happiness of all men."† Calvin, on the contrary, ventures to speculate with great precision on the secret decrees of God; setting forth a complete system upon the subject, and representing it as of vital importance in the Christian scheme. So far from admitting a possibility of salvation to all, he holds, that God, by an eternal and unconditional decree, consigned the great body of mankind to inevitable perdition. It is impossible to find a more fervent dissuasive than is contained in the writings of Luther, from those intricate speculations, concerning the divine decrees, which constituted the favourite occupation of Calvin. "Many have perished in the indulgence of such curious inquiries; it is a temptation which leads even to blasphemy."‡ "The thought of investigating causes is pernicious and pestilent; bringing with it inevitable destruction; especially when we ascend too high, and undertake to philosophize upon *predestination*."§ "Those stoical disputations," said Melancthon, "are to be execrated, which some introduced, who imagine, that the elect always retain the Holy Spirit, even

* Milner's History of the Church of Christ, vol. v. p. 571.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 572. ‡ Ibid. p. 572. § Opera Lutheri, vol. vi. p. 204.

when they commit atrocious crimes—Let us not confirm in fools security and blindness.”*

Perfectly conformable to these wise reflections was the doctrine of predestination, as held by the celebrated men of whom we are speaking. In order to understand it properly, it is necessary to have reference, for a moment, to the scholastic doctrine, on this subject, which they so strenuously opposed.

In the Church of Rome, immediately before the Reformation, the doctrine of an *individual* predestination prevailed—that is, the predestination of certain persons to future happiness; but this predestination was represented as conditional, and founded on foreknowledge. The radical error of the Church of Rome on this point, however, consisted in connecting the doctrine of human merit with that of predestination. She held a predestination of one man to future happiness in preference to another, not by an absolute decree, but on the ground of his foreseen worthiness. The power of man to merit grace, and, by the help of merited grace, to merit Heaven, was one of the foulest corruptions of the papacy; striking directly at the fundamental doctrine of salvation through the sole merits of Christ. Against this corruption Luther and Melancthon never ceased to inveigh. But, in rejecting the doctrine of the predestination of particular persons to happiness as the *meritorious objects of mercy*, they were very

* Loci Theologici, p. 125, 126.

far from going into the contrary extreme of decrees consigning a specific number of persons to happiness, and a specific number to misery, without reference to faith, or works, or any other thing in the creature, moving thereunto. This desperate extreme was reserved for the adventurous ambition of Calvin; both Luther and Melancthon warned their followers to beware of it in the most urgent and affectionate terms. They assumed the Gospel promise, which they expressly represented to be universal, as the basis of predestination; considering predestination, not as fixing the future state of individuals, but as relating to the Christian Church viewed as a collective body. In a word, while the Church of Rome held the doctrine of a predestination of *individuals* to *grace*, on the ground of *congruous merit*; and to *glory*, on the ground of *condign merit*; Luther and Melancthon contended that the only predestination revealed in Scripture, is a *gratuitous* predestination of a *collective body* to spiritual privileges in this life; of the Christian Church to her connexion with Christ, her supreme Head.

The following passages from Melancthon will place his sentiments and those of Luther, on the subject before us, in a very clear point of light.

“There are two things to be considered in the promise of the Gospel, to wit—that it *gratuitously* offers mercy, and that the offer is *universal*. For these two things, at present, greatly exercise the minds of men. One while there is a dispute about *merit*, it being said that we are not elected

because we are unworthy. At another, the dispute is about *particularity*; it is said that even if we were worthy, still God has elected *his own particular ones*, to whom he will be especially favourable. And, therefore, it is denied that salvation is to be hoped for by us because we may not be in that number. Both of these imaginations are to be rejected, and it is of the utmost importance that pious minds should be diligently fortified against them. We ought neither to lay stress upon *our worth*, nor convert the universal promise into a *particular one*.”*

“ Concerning the effect of election, let us hold out this consolation, that God, not willing that the whole human race should perish, always of his mercy, and on account of his Son, calls, draws, and collects a Church, and receives those who assent, and thus always wills that there should be perpetually some Church which he assists and saves.”† “ But you will say, this consolation is so far a benefit, that I know that a Church is preserved for others; but perhaps that profits me nothing, and how can I know who are the elect. I answer, This general consolation is beneficial to you also, because you ought to believe that the Church is preserved for you also, and the command of God is eternal and immutable, that you also should hear his Son, should exercise penitence, and believe that you are to be received on account of the Mediator.”‡

* Loci Theologici, de Prædest. ed. 1535.

† Ibid.

‡ Opera Melancth. vol. iv. p. 161.

The following passage from Bucer, relative to Melancthon's doctrine of predestination, will show how that doctrine was originally understood. "The question is to be repelled—Are we predestinated? For, as has been said, he who doubts of this, cannot believe that he is either called or justified;—that is, he cannot be a *Christian*. It is, therefore, to be assumed, that we are all fore-known, pre-appointed, separated by God from the rest, and selected for this end, that we may be eternally preserved, and that this purpose of God cannot be changed; and hence all our thinking and care should be directed to this point, that we may answer to this predestination and calling of God, that we may co-operate to eternal life, according to the strength which the Lord hath ever supplied.....Certainly, those whom God calls, *if they do but follow the call*, he hath predestinated and foreknown; he will also justify and glorify."*

"As the preaching of repentance is universal, so also the promise of grace is universal. Let us, therefore, remove from Paul stoical disputations which overturn faith and prayer.....Against these imaginations let us learn the will of the Deity from the Gospel."† "I have often said that the consideration of universality is necessary, so that every one should include himself in the universal promise, nor ascribe to the Deity a *respect of persons*, or *contradictory wills*."‡

It is truly astonishing that any man possessing

* Enar. Epist. ad Rom. p. 359. ed. 1536.

† Loci Theologici, de Prædest. ed. 1545. ‡ Opera, vol. iv. p. 163.

the slightest knowledge of the history of the Reformation, should venture to pronounce Melancthon a Calvinist. Enough has, probably, been already said on this point; but evidence so decisive and so particular remains yet to be produced, that I must be excused for trespassing somewhat longer upon your patience.

“ In the beginning (of the Reformation) the stoical disputes among us concerning fate, were too horrid, and they were injurious to discipline. Wherefore, I beseech you not to think of any such formula of doctrine.”*

“ I am no stoic; but contend more strongly with the family of Zeno concerning fate, than our warriors have fought at the Danube and the Elbe.”† “ Let us, therefore, remove from the Deity this stoical severity, and let us consider it as certain that we are beloved by him.”‡ “ I understand there are some who are about to make war upon me concerning this stoical necessity, and if they move the subject I shall think it a duty I owe to God and the Church to refute those contumelious ravings against God.”§ “ Those stoical disputations are to be execrated which some bring forward, contending that all sins are equal, and that the elect always retain the Holy Spirit, even when they allow themselves in atrocious lapses.”||.

This, it will be admitted, is very strong lan-

* Melan. Epist. 44. lib. 3. † Epist. Lond. p. 370. ‡ Ibid. p. 557.

§ Anno 1555. Ibid. p. 458. See also, p. 266, 271, 405, 463.

|| Loci Theologici, p. 126.

guage. Now, it is certain that Melancthon, in the use of this language, had a particular reference to the opinions of Calvin. On more than one occasion he did not scruple to brand Calvin as the *Zeno* of his age.

“Lelius writes to me, that so great are the disputes at Geneva, about *stoical necessity*, that a certain person venturing to differ from *Zeno*, has been shut up in prison. Oh unhappy state of things! The true and wholesome doctrine is obscured by disputes foreign to it.”*

Beza, in his life of Calvin, expressly tells us, that Melancthon, in the year 1552, began to mark the Reformers of Geneva as the introducers of a stoical fate:—“Genevenses Stoicum fatum invehentes notare.”† In perfect consistency with this, was the conduct of Melancthon, when the Articles of Concord, drawn up in the year 1549, between the Churches of Zurich and Geneva, were presented to him:—He indignantly erased the article, *de electione* ‡

But the radical difference of opinion, on this subject, between Calvin and Melancthon, will abundantly appear from their correspondence.

A life of Calvin, written by a clergyman of your own religious society,§ is now lying before me; with translations of some of his letters annexed.

* Epist. Lond. p. 390.

† Vita Calvini, anno 1552.

‡ “We carefully teach that God does not exert his power promiscuously upon all who receive the sacraments, but only upon the *Elect*.” Article 16.

§ The Rev. Elijah Waterman, Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Let me present you with a few extracts from these translations; they will be of greater weight with you, probably, than any translations that might be made by myself; beside that I shall be saved the trouble of a tedious examination of the originals.

“ CALVIN TO MELANCTHON.

“ I have been told that you were so much offended at some of my too free admonitions, that you tore my letter to pieces before several witnesses. The person who related this was not indeed worthy of much credit; but as it appeared to be confirmed by various signs for a long time, I was at length constrained to suspect that some part of it might be true.”* “ It is no small grief to me, that our method of teaching is manifestly observed to be too discordant.....I candidly confess, that religion prevents me from acceding to you on this point of doctrine; as you appear to me to dispute too metaphysically concerning the freedom of the will.....It cannot be attributed to an oversight, that a man of your acuteness, caution, and thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, should confound the election of God with those promises which are common to all. Nothing is more evident than that the preaching of the word is promiscuously common to all persons; but that the spirit of faith is given by special privilege to

* Waterman's Life of Calvin, p. 367.

the elect alone.....I hear, when you received the formula of our union with the Church of Zurich, taking a pen, you erased the sentence, which cautiously and soberly distinguishes the elect from the reprobate. This was totally different from your usual moderation, not to say more.”*

Still you tell us, in the most peremptory language, that a perfect harmony of opinion existed between Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin on the subject of the divine decrees; indeed, that all the leading Reformers, both in Great-Britain and on the continent of Europe, were doctrinal Calvinists. The very reverse of this is the truth. Calvin stood almost alone among the Reformers on this subject. Some of the opinions, which pass under his name, prevailed, in a degree, from the beginning of the Reformation; but he greatly added to them, and embodied them, finally, into a regular system. In the language of the ecclesiastical historian, Milner, the opinions concerning the absolute decrees of God were peculiar to Calvin; they were maintained by him, long after the time of Zuingle; the rupture among the first Reformers had no connexion with disputes upon the subject of predestination.† Indeed, it is not only true that Calvin was the first of the Reformers who adhered to the scheme of *absolute* predestination; there is further strong reason to believe, that he did not himself embrace that scheme until the latter part of his career. See the language which

* Waterman's Life of Calvin, p. 370, 371.

† Milner's History of the Church of Christ, vol. v. p. 570, 571.

he uses in the preface to a French translation of the New Testament, published by him in the year 1535. "Our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Mediator, was the one, true, eternal Son of God, whom the Father was to send into the world to collect all men from that horrible state of devastation and dispersion occasioned by the fall.....At length, when the fullness of time pre-ordained by the Lord, was come, the Messiah, so much desired for so many ages, made his appearance; and he fully performed all those things which were necessary for the redemption of *all men*.....By one Christ the *whole human race* was to be reconciled to God, as is set forth, and most amply demonstrated in the writings of the new covenant.....All are called to that inheritance *without any respect of persons*.*No one* is excluded from this inheritance who admits and embraces Christ, as he is offered by the Father for the salvation of *all*."

Calvin avoided this mode of expression in his subsequent works.

But the opinions of Calvin, you will say, are most fully set forth in his Institutes of the Christian religion, published so early as the year 1535.

I have already pointed out an error, relative to the opinions of Calvin on the subject of Episcopacy, into which you have been drawn by a mistake connected with the publication of his Institutes. It is true, the Institutes were first published in the year 1535; but they appeared then in a very small and imperfect form. Beza, in his life of Calvin, calls the publication of 1535, a mere sketch

of the great work as it came forth in 1558. Then it consisted of four books regularly divided into eighty chapters; whereas, in the year 1535, the number of chapters which it contained was no more than twenty. Now, the question is, whether the predestinarian scheme, as it appears in the edition of 1558, was contained in that of 1535? You, certainly, cannot prove that it was; on the contrary, evidence is to be produced that it was not contained in the edition of 1535, which will go far, I think, towards satisfying an unprejudiced mind. We know, for example, that Calvin, in works published at the same time, held a language quite inconsistent with that of his Institutes in their present state.*

Further—Light is thrown on this subject by the proceedings of the Council of Trent. It was the practice of this Council to connect, with the decrees which they published, a condemnation of opposite errors. Now, Father Paul, in his History of the Council of Trent, expressly says—“in the books of Luther, in the Augustan Confession, and in the Apologies and Colloquies, there was nothing found that deserved censure,” relative to predestination, “but much in the writings of the Zuinglians.” But Calvin had published his Institutes, with a most eloquent and remarkable dedication to Francis I. in the year 1535; and the work possessed, from the moment of its appearance, no little celebrity, both in the scientific

* Witness his preface to the French translation of the New Testament, just mentioned.

and religious world. The proceedings of the Council of Trent, to which we have alluded, took place in the year 1546. Is it probable that the Council, in censuring error relative to predestination, would pass by the work of Calvin, and fix upon works of no reputation, whose authors Father Paul has not even thought it necessary to preserve from oblivion by mentioning their names?*

Still further—The dispute relative to predestination did not break out until the year 1551. Then we find Calvin engaged in a violent controversy with Bolsec and Castellio; nor did he succeed in introducing his doctrine even into the Church of Geneva until after a severe struggle. A difference arose, at the same period, between Calvin and Melancthon; the latter styling Calvin *Zeno*, and indignantly erasing the article, *De Electione*, from the Form of Concord between the Churches of Geneva and Zurich. Calvin, in his letters to Melancthon, complains bitterly of this, and urges him to modify his sentiments; to which Melancthon, however, makes no reply. But, if the peculiar opinions of Calvin, on the subject of the divine decrees, were published in the year

* This fact is stated with a similar view, by Bishop White, in his "Comparison of the Controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians with the Doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church."† I know no works which place the question, relative to the Calvinism of our Articles, in so just and striking a point of light as those of Bishop White and Dr. Laurence.

† See Churchman's Magazine, new series, vol. iii. p. 13.

1535, how happened it that there was no controversy about them until 1551 ?

There is an additional fact on this subject which is worthy of being mentioned.

It appears, from the correspondence between Melancthon and Cranmer, that the latter consulted the former, in the year 1548, on the subject of a public standard of faith for the Church of England. Melancthon, in reply to the letter of Cranmer, conjured the Archbishop to extend the benefit of his labours beyond the limits of the English Church, and to draw up a Confession in which the whole Protestant world might unite.* In conformity with this advice, Cranmer addressed letters, in the year 1551, to several of the continental Reformers; among the rest, to Calvin and Bullinger. Now, is it probable that either Melancthon or Cranmer would have applied to Calvin, on such a subject, after he had exhibited, at full length, and in a deliberate work like the Institutes of the Christian Religion, that system of doctrine which Melancthon branded as Stocism, and for which he marked Calvin as the Zeno of the age? Could any hope have been entertained of union with a man who brought forward, as of the essence of Christianity, a principle which Melancthon indignantly expunged from a public document, and of which he warned Cranmer, in the most urgent terms, to beware?†

Such, then, are the circumstances which induce

* Epist. Libri. Lond. Epist. 66, lib. 1.

† Ibid. Epist. 44, lib. 3.

a belief that Calvin did not advance his peculiar opinions on the subject of predestination until the latter part of his life.

1. In a work published by him, in the year 1535, we meet with language very different from that which is held in the present edition of his Institutes. 2. The Council of Trent, in censuring error relative to predestination, pass by the Institutes of Calvin, and select the works of some obscure followers of Zuingle. 3. There was no dispute among the *early* Reformers on the subject of predestination; in the correspondence of Calvin and Melancthon no trace of a difference between them, relative to the divine decrees, appears previous to the year 1552.* It was not until 1551 that the violent

* I hasten to lay before you the following passage in the correspondence of Melancthon and Calvin, which I have just met with. †

“As to the question of Predestination, I had, at Tubingen, a friend, the learned Francis Stadian, who used to say, that he approved of these two points: That all things came to pass, as divine Providence had decreed; and yet that all things were contingent. These cannot be reconciled with each other. I hold the hypothesis, that God is not the cause of sin, nor does he *will* sin. I admit also contingency, in this our infirmity of understanding; that the common people may know that David fell freely by his own will; and I think that he, when he had the Holy Spirit, might have retained it, and that in the struggle, there was some action of the will. Although these things may be disputed with more subtlety, yet when proposed in this manner, they appear accommodated to the government of our minds. Let us accuse our own will when we fall, and not seek, in the counsels of God, an excuse for lifting ourselves up against him. Let us believe, that God will afford assistance, and be present with those who strive. *Μονον θελησον και Θεος προαπαντα, only will, and God will meet thee with help,*

† It is given as translated by the Rev. Elijah Waterman, Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation at Bridgeport, Connecticut.

dispute broke out in Geneva, where Bolsec openly attacked Calvin as the introducer of heretical opinions, in consequence of his preaching the doc-

says Basil. Attention, therefore, should be awakened in ourselves, and the immense goodness of God should be praised, since he has promised and administers assistance to those who seek, as says the Lord, that is, to those who take heed to the promise. For we must be governed by the word of God, not opposing the promise, but assenting to it, and that without any previous controversy.....I do not write these things with the intention of delivering precepts to a man the most learned and experienced in the exercises of piety. *For I know that these things agree with your opinions.*"*

Thus Melancthon addressed Calvin in the year 1543. Of course, Calvin had not then declared that, "God not only foresaw that Adam would fall, but also decreed that he should;" that "God blinds the understandings and hardens the hearts of the reprobate to fit them for their doom;" that "the necessity of sinning is cast upon the reprobate by the ordination of God." He had not then censured Chrysostom for asserting that when God draws us, it is "with our consenting will." He had not then declared that human nature, in consequence of the fall of Adam, became an unmingled mass of corruption, and that the sinner, in the change which he undergoes in conversion, is the mere passive recipient of irresistible grace. He had not then declared that all but the elect are *uninterruptedly inclined* to all manner of wickedness, and would be always *positively engaged* in the perpetration of horrible crimes, if God did not, for the preservation of human society, restrain them through the influence of some *selfish* motive.†

It may, therefore, be taken for granted, that in the year 1543, the date of Melancthon's letter, Calvin had not published his predestinarian theory, as it now appears in his Institutes of the Christian Religion. If he had published that theory, Melancthon never would have said to him—"I know that these things agree with your opinions." When, in the year 1552, Calvin published his first tract in the Predestinarian Controversy, Melancthon did not hesitate to brand him as the Zeno of his age: and, in the same year, he expunged, with indignation, the article, *De Electione*, from the Form of Concord which Calvin had drawn up between the Churches of Zurich and Geneva.

* Waterman's Life of Calvin, p. 305, 306.

† See Letter viii. of this work, where all these opinions are shown to be contained in the present edition of Calvin's Institutes.

trine of absolute predestination. 4. In the year 1548, Melancthon advises Cranmer to compose a system of Articles to which all Protestants might subscribe; and in the year 1551 Cranmer writes to Calvin on the subject;—which he would never have done if the peculiar system of Calvin had been previously made known.

It has been already mentioned that the doctrine of absolute decrees was strongly resisted in Geneva itself, when preached there by Calvin, in the year 1551. Great opposition was also made in the Churches of Switzerland. For this we have the unexceptionable testimony of Turretin, who derived his information from the original documents, as preserved at Geneva. In a letter to Archbishop Wake, Turretin expressly says—“ Calvin was not satisfied with the letter of Bullinger;* he complained of it to Bullinger, who attempted to justify himself; but he maintained his opinion always in very general terms, and with vague excuses ”†

The answers from Berne and Basle were equally unsatisfactory to Calvin; indeed, the latter contained the following strong and explicit language. “ It is the wish of God that all men should come to the acknowledgment of the truth, and be saved. He is the common Lord of *all*. Jesus Christ is the common Saviour of *all*.” ‡

* This was the answer sent from Zurich to the circular which had been addressed by the Ministers of Geneva to the Helvetian Churches.

† Acta Eruditorum, Supp. t. vii. sect. 3. Also, Biblioth. Germ. vol. xiii. p. 208.

‡ See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 241—245.

It further appears, from Beza's Life of Calvin, that the opposition to his system of doctrine was so strong in Switzerland in 1555, that a combination of Ministers was formed against him, and that the preaching of absolute predestination was even obstructed in the Canton of Berne by public authority. This, with the opposition of Castellio and Melancthon, deeply affected Calvin's mind. "These things grievously affected him, as they were likely to do; and they affected him the more severely as at that time the prevalence of error was so great that he was hindered by public authority from proclaiming the truth."*

It has been already observed, that the Church of England reformed herself, as far as she followed any modern authority, not upon a Calvinistic, but upon a Lutheran model. This subject, however, merits a more full and distinct consideration.

1. During the period in which the Church of England was engaged in reforming her offices, and settling her creed, the Lutheran Church of Germany was a mature establishment, and in the full splendour of her reputation. To her the eyes of the friends of true religion were steadily directed. Calvin, at this time, did not possess the celebrity which he finally attained: his system was still in its infancy;—a feeble luminary when compared with the Lutheran Church, which was, emphatically, the Sun of the Reformation. Of the truth of these assertions, no one who has ex-

* See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 241.

amined the history of the period in question, can, for a moment, doubt. Calvinism had not yet become a characteristic appellation. Fox, the Martyrologist, dwells, at great length, upon the writings and merits of Luther and Zuingle, but the name of Calvin he does not particularly distinguish. It appears, too, from the history of Fox, that the martyrs, who suffered in the reign of Mary, were charged, not with the heresy of Calvin, but with that of Luther, or of Zuingle. What more conclusive evidence could be furnished that Calvinism, at the period of the Reformation under Cranmer, was in the infancy of its reputation and its influence?

Evidence of the same decisive character may be derived, on this subject, from the proceedings of the Council of Trent. It is quite clear, from those proceedings, that Calvin was not regarded, at the time, as a person of distinguished importance; frequent mention being made of Luther and his system, while Calvin is not noticed. Accordingly, Mosheim, who had thoroughly examined this subject, expressly tells us, that at the rise of the Predestinarian controversy, in 1551, the influence of Calvin was very limited.

It is, then, in its own nature, probable that the English Reformers would fix their eyes upon the splendid system in Germany, rather than upon the feeble and unimportant establishment at Geneva.

But let us pass from this general reasoning to such as is grounded on specific facts.

2. Cranmer, it is well known, was the chief

conductor of the English Reformation. It is of no little importance, therefore, in the consideration of the question before us, to ascertain what his predilections were. Now Cranmer formed an early acquaintance with the Reformers of Germany, and he kept up a constant correspondence with them for a course of years.* He was particularly intimate with the great and excellent Melancthon. The correspondence between these two eminent Reformers began early, and continued long. We find a letter from Melancthon to Cranmer, under date of the year 1535, in which he submits to the judgment of the Archbishop, a work which he had prepared for the press, with a dedication to king Henry.† Cranmer seems, too, to have consulted Melancthon in every case of importance connected with the Reformation of the Church. There is a letter from the Archbishop to Melancthon, dated May, 1548, in which he asks his opinion on the subject of a public creed. This was precisely the time when the English Liturgy was preparing. Melancthon, in his reply, urged Cranmer to draw up a Confession that should embrace the whole Protestant world.‡ In the same year we find Melancthon anxiously entreating the Archbishop to beware of those *stoical* disputations, by which, at an early period, the Lutheran Reformers had been so much disturbed. Now, where is the proof of intimacy between Cranmer and Calvin? The correspondence between them was extremely short.

* See Strype's Memorials of Cranmer, p. 285—288.

† *Pistolæ Libri Lond.* p. 521.

‡ *Ibid.* Epist. 66. lib. 1.

There is no evidence of more than three or four letters having been written by Calvin to Cranmer; and two of these were in reply to that *general* letter which the Archbishop addressed to him, in reference to the plan, suggested by Melancthon, of a Confession of Faith for all Protestants. This letter to Calvin, it will be recollected too, was prior to the developement of his peculiar system on the subject of the divine decrees; whereas the intimate correspondence between Cranmer and Melancthon, continued after the latter had avowed those opinions, on the subject of grace and free-will, which led him to brand Calvin with the most opprobrious epithets, and to erase, indignantly, his doctrine of election from a public document.

3. But the bias of the English Reformers towards the Lutheran model will still more strikingly appear from the repeated and earnest efforts which were made to induce Melancthon to settle in England. There is evidence of an invitation having been given to him to this effect, even in the year 1534; for, in a letter written in that year, he says, "I am just now called to England by other letters."* And in the ensuing year, he informs his correspondent:—"I am again invited, and indeed importuned, not only by letters, but also by embassies from England."† He was solicited a third time in the year 1538; when Henry wrote an urgent letter to the Elector of Saxony on the subject.‡ Nor was the wish of the English

* Epist. p. 717. † Epist. Libri Londini, p. 732.

‡ Seckendorf Histor. Luther. lib. iii.

Reformers less strong in the ensuing reign. In the year 1549, Latimer, in a sermon preached before the King, speaks thus—"I heard say, Master Melancthon, that great clark, should come hither. I would wish him, and such as he is, to have two hundred pound a year. The King should never want it in his coffers at the year's end." In a letter to J. Camerarius, dated May, 1550, Melancthon says—"I am once more invited to England;"* and again, to the same person, immediately before the death of Edward, in 1553—"I am invited to England by letters from the King, which were written in the month of May."† In addition to all this, let it be mentioned, that the theological professorship at Cambridge was kept open for Melancthon from February, 1551, to the spring of 1553; the precise period during which the Articles of the Church of England were in preparation.

Now, was application made to Calvin to settle in England for the purpose of assisting in the work of Reformation? No. Was his advice ever asked in the business? No. Heylin, indeed, tells us that he tendered his assistance to Cranmer, but that the Archbishop, knowing the man, declined the offer.‡ The letter from Cranmer to Calvin, dated 1551, which has been so much relied upon, related simply to the project of a general standard of faith for Protestants; it was, indeed, a circular

* Epist. Londin. p. 915. lib. iv. epist. 780.

† Ibid. p. 930 lib. iv. epist. 813.

‡ History of the Reformation of the Church of England, p. 65.

letter written to a number of eminent foreign Reformers, in pursuance of the advice of Melancthon, already mentioned, and written, too, before Calvin had advanced those opinions, relative to the divine decrees, which produced so violent a rupture, the moment they were advanced, even in Geneva itself.

What is the inevitable conclusion from all these facts? That there was no tendency in the Reformers of the Church of England to those peculiar dogmas, which constitute what is now called the system of Calvinism. The opinions of Melancthon, when he was so urgently and perseveringly solicited to settle in England, were perfectly well known. Speculations on the subject of *individual* predestination he held in utter abhorrence. He maintained both the *universality* and the *defectibility* of grace. So far from believing in the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints, he expressly asserted, that the Saints may fall from grace both *totally* and *finally*.* The theological professorship of Cambridge was still kept open for his acceptance, even after he had warned Cranmer to beware of those stoical doctrines which he imputed to Calvin, and for which he did not hesitate to characterize him as the Zeno of his time.†

* This has been already proved by distinct references to the works of Melancthon and Lutler.

† The theological professorship was kept open for Melancthon from 1551 to 1553, and his letter to Cranmer, relative to the importance of guarding against the doctrine of a stoical fate, was written in 1548.

But we have evidence of a much more decisive character on this subject;—evidence which must place the question before us, with all dispassionate inquirers, entirely beyond the reach of dispute.

4. In the whole progress of the Reformation of the Church of England, we find great reference to Lutheran standards, and to the works of Lutheran authors. It will conduce to a clearer view of the subject to divide the English Reformation into several distinct periods:—1. From its commencement to the year 1551, when Cranmer was directed to draw up a book of Articles. 2. The period during which the Articles in question were digested and prepared. 3. The re-organization of the Church upon the accession of Elizabeth to the throne.

In the year 1536 the first *public* attempt at a reformation of religious opinion was made in England. A code of doctrine was then set forth, entitled, “Articles devised by the King’s Highness Majesty, to stablish Christian quietness and unity among us, and to avoid contentious opinions; which Articles be also approved by the consent and determination of the whole Clergy of this realm.”

Now, it is remarkable that this measure was adopted in compliance with the advice given by Melancthon, in a letter to King Henry, in the preceding year—“Nor do I doubt but that these

In the year 1552, Melancthon styled Calvin Zeno, in letters to his correspondents, and struck the article, *De Electione*, out of the Form of Concord between the Churches of Zurich and Geneva.

religious controversies might be softened, if your Royal Majesty would exert your authority to incline other Kings to moderation, as well as deliberate with learned men concerning the true kind of doctrine. For there is not the least doubt that certain abuses, too flagrant to be concealed, have crept into the Church; neither have Kings taken proper care that there should be set forth a simple and explicit form of doctrine.....D. Antonius, (Dr. Barnes, then Henry's ambassador in Germany, and afterwards a martyr) hath discoursed with us concerning articles of faith, with the utmost confidence and attention, concerning which I have given him, at full length, my opinion in writing.”*

The articles drawn up in consequence of this letter, were Lutheran in their character. On the important subject of justification, the very language of Melancthon was literally translated—“The word justification signifieth remission of our sins, and our acceptation or reconciliation into the grace and favour of God.”† Now mark the language of Melancthon on this subject—“Justificatio significat remissionem peccatorum, et reconciliationem, seu acceptationem personæ ad vitam æternam.”‡

In the year 1537, was published what is called the Bishops' Book, as having been composed chiefly by the Bishops of the Church; and in the year 1543, the King's Book, or, “A necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man.”

* Epist. Londin. p. 11.

† Articles drawn up in 1536.

‡ Loci Theologici de Gratia et Justific.

These works are admitted to hold a language, on the subjects of redemption, grace, free-will, fundamentally different from the language of Calvin. On the contrary, they will be found, upon minute examination, says Dr. Laurence, to have adopted "not only the ideas, but sometimes the very language of the Lutherans."* Now, where are we to look for the reformed doctrine of the Church of England, as held in the reign of Henry VIII. ? Undoubtedly to the work published in 1543, entitled, "Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man;" a work full, as we have seen, of Lutheran ideas, and even of Lutheran language. It is true, this work contains a good deal of Romish superstition. The progress from error to truth was gradual. But, on the subjects connected with the Calvinistic controversy, precisely the same language was held during the ensuing reign; the doctrine of the Church under Henry VIII. continued to be her doctrine under Edward VI. In reference to transubstantiation, and some other popish errors, the English Reformers changed their opinions; but their language relative to redemption, predestination, grace, and free-will, was uniform from the very earliest stages of the Reformation to its complete settlement in the year 1553.

This brings us to the second period—that in which the Articles of the Church of England were finally prepared and adopted. And here the refer-

* It would occupy too much space to give the necessary extracts. They may be seen in Dr. Laurence's *Bampton Lectures*; particularly in note 17 to sermon fifth.

ence to Lutheran authorities was ample and decisive. Cranmer appears to have kept his eye steadily fixed upon the noble Confession of Augsburg, the production of Melancthon; whom he admired and valued more than any of the Reformers. Some of the Articles of the Church of England, it has been already shown,* were copied, almost literally, from the Confession in question; while, in others, we meet with the doctrine of that Confession, if not its precise language.†

* See Letter viii. of this work.

† It is asserted in the Christian Observer,‡ that “the qualifying clause of the seventeenth Article is nearly copied from Calvin’s Institutes;” and that “the latter part of the clause is a literal translation of that Reformer’s caution against the abuse of the doctrine of predestination.” But no authority is given for this assertion; it is rested simply on a comparison of the language of two passages of Calvin’s Institutes with the English translation of the seventeenth Article. Let us put down together the words of the Latin Article, and the passages cited from Calvin by the Christian Observer, and we shall find such a difference between them, as repels, instead of leading to, the conclusion, that the one was copied from the other.

“Deinde promissiones divinas sic amplecti oportet, ut nobis in sacris literis *generaliter* propositæ sunt, et Dei voluntas in nostris actionibus ea secunda est, quam in verbo Dei habemus diserte revelatam.”
Latin Article.

“Suis promissionibus (Deus) vult nos esse contentos neque alibi quærere an futurus sit nobis exorabilis.”§ “Proinde in rebus agendis ea est nobis perspicienda Dei voluntas quam verbo suo declarat.”||

The whole complexion of the seventeenth Article differs, fundamentally, from the language of Calvin’s Institutes. The Article is silent on the subject of reprobation. But Calvin sets forth the decree of reprobation just as explicitly as the decree of election; asserting that the one cannot possibly stand without the other. With Calvin, the decree of God is, “*de unoquoque homine;*” it fixes the fate of each individual person.¶ But mark the *collective* character of the language

‡ Vol. iii. p. 438.

§ Inst. iii. 24. 5.

|| Ibid. i. 17. 5.

¶ “Prædestinationem vocamus eternum Dei decretum, quo apud se constitutum habuit, quid de unoquoque homine fieri vellet.” *Inst. lib. iii. cap. 21. sect. 5.*

If we pass to the third period—that of the re-organization of the Church under Elizabeth—we

used by our Church. Predestination she considers as relating to “those whom God hath chosen in Christ out of mankind.”—“Quos elegit ex hominum genere.” Language of this kind frequently occurs in the writings of Melancthon and Luther;—never in those of Calvin. We can be at no loss, therefore, to determine with whom the English Reformers symbolized on this important subject. Let me present you with a few passages from the works of Melancthon, and beg you to compare them with the Latin Article of the Church of England, quoted in the preceding page. “Quod Pater æternus in genere humano elegerit sibi Ecclesiam.” Loci Theologici, Art. de Deo, p. 22. “Recte dicitur causam electionis esse misericordiam in voluntate Dei, qui non vult perire totum genus humanum, sed propter Filium colligit et servat Ecclesiam. . . . Sed tamen in accipiente concurrere oportet apprehensionem promissionis, seu agnitionem Christi. Nam ideo electi sumus, quia efficimur membra Christi.” Ibid. p. 473. And again, in a passage already alluded to: “Revelavit arcanum decretum de remissione peccatorum propter Filium, et colligit sibi ex tam corrupta massa humani generis Ecclesiam.” *Disput. Luth. Opera, vol. ii. p. 505.*

“Et si alia subtiliter de electione disputari fortasse possunt, tamen prodest piis tenere, quod promissio sit universalis. Nec debemus de voluntate Dei aliter judicare, quam juxta verbum revelatum, et scire debemus, quod Deus præceperit, ut credamus. . . . Nos igitur simpliciter interpretamur hanc sententiam universaliter, ‘Deus vult omnes homines salvos fieri,’ scilicet, quod ad ipsius voluntatem attinet.” *Opera, vol. iv. p. 498, 499.* “Hæc universalia dicta de promissione teneamus, et opponamus tentationi de particularitate, cum disputant mentes, an sint in numero electorum? Ab hac disputatione ad revelatam Dei voluntatem in Evangelio deducamur, et credamus expresso verbo Dei, et nos in universalem promissionem includamus, sciamus eam ad nos quoque pertinere, sciamus Filium Dei veracem nuncium esse, per quem prolata est promissio ex sinu æterni Patris, nec fingamus de eadem re contradictorias voluntates in Deo, quia Deus verax est. Hanc consolationem sumptam ex verbo expresso teneamus, nec ipsos inextricabilibus labyrinthis disputationum implicemus, quæ fidem evertunt.” Vol. iv. p. 86. “Item. Rom. viii. ‘Quos elegit, hos et vocavit.’ Dulcem, salutarem, et multiplicem consolationem continet hæc sententia. . . . Secunda consolatio est, quod monet hæc sententia non removendam esse vocationem a consilio electionis. Elegit Deus, qui vocare nos ad Filii agnitionem decrevit, et vult generi humano suam voluntatem et sua beneficia

find the same reference to Lutheran authorities. The Articles, which had been established in the reign of Edward, were adopted, in general, word for word; and the few additions, which were made, were borrowed, not from a Calvinistic quarter, but from the Lutheran Confession of Wirtemberg. The original document itself is still in existence; exhibiting the emendations of Edward's Articles, apparently in the hand-writing of Archbishop Parker himself, with the autographs of the respective members of the convocation. This instrument, says Dr. Laurence, "is nothing more than an interlined and amended copy of the formulary which had been adopted in the preceding reign."*

We see, then, the state of things in England in the year 1562. In the re-modelling of the

innotescere. Approbat igitur et eligit obtemperantes vocationi." Loci Theolog. de Prædest. p. 475. See also p. 473.

Mark the striking resemblance between the language of the seventeenth Article, relative to the danger of viewing the predestination of God as fixing the fate of individuals, and that held by Luther. "Unde illos," says the article, "diabolus protrudit, *vel in desperationem, vel in æque perniciosam impurissimæ vitæ securitatem.*" On the same subject Luther thus writes—"E contra ii, qui sentiunt Dei voluntatem non esse, ut omnes salventur, aut in desperationem ruunt, aut in securissimam impietatem dissolvuntur." *Postill. Domest. p. 58.*

The following language of Bucer, in explaining Melancthon's doctrine, harmonizes perfectly with our seventeenth Article—"Qui de hoc (viz. de predestinatione) dubitat, nec vocatum se et justificatum esse credere poterit, hoc est, nequit esse *Christianus*. Presumendum igitur, ut principium fidei, nos omnes a Deo esse præcitos, præfinitos, separatos a reliquis, et selectos in hoc, ut eternum servemur, hocque propositum Dei mutari non posse." *Enarrat. in Roman, p. 360. See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 428—435.*

* Bampton Lectures, p. 41, 232.

Church at that period, no reference was had to Calvin or his doctrine, but to Lutheran authorities. The system originally established by Cranmer, in compiling which he had borrowed very largely from the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg, was restored, with very few and immaterial alterations. Articles were adopted which do not sanction a single peculiarity of Calvinism, and in which some of its most important peculiarities are expressly contradicted; so much so that at a later period, when Calvinism became more powerful, its advocates laboured strenuously to alter the language of the Articles, as adopted in 1562, and to introduce additional Articles setting forth the distinguishing doctrines of their favourite creed. In fact, Calvinism did not become formidable in England until towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth. The accurate historian, Strype, expressly tells us that "Calvin's way of explaining the divine decrees was not entertained by many learned men in the university of Cambridge before the year 1595."* Originally introduced from Geneva by the English Refugees upon their return to their native country, it was zealously propagated by Cartwright while Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and its growth greatly cherished and promoted there, by the learned Whitaker. At length, it succeeded so far as to become the prevailing doctrine at Cambridge. But what was the consequence? No sooner did

* Life of Whitgift, p. 435.

the Calvinists at Cambridge perceive their strength, than they began to show their dissatisfaction with the standards of the Church of England, by drawing up the Lambeth Articles, and endeavouring to get them established by public authority. Not long after was held the celebrated conference at Hampton Court, where another unsuccessful attempt was made by the Calvinists to procure the adoption of the Lambeth Articles. Proceeding forward a few years we come to the period of the famous Synod of Dort. The state of opinion among the clergy of the Church of England, at this time, will appear from the following passage from Mosheim. "Scarcely had the British divines returned from the Synod of Dort, and given an account of the laws that had been enacted, and the doctrines that had been established, by that famous Assembly, than the King, together with the greatest part of the Episcopal Clergy, discovered, in the strongest terms, their dislike of these proceedings, and judged the sentiments of Arminius, relating to the divine decrees, preferable to those of Gomarus and Calvin."*

5. I proceed to notice, distinctly, a very important fact on this subject; a fact, indeed, which is, of itself, sufficient to determine the controversy.

Cranmer was ordered to draw up a book of Articles in the year 1551. The book was compiled and laid before the Bishops of the different dioceses in the same year, and was finally published,

* Ecclesiastical History, vol. v. p. 372, 373.

with authority, early in the year 1553. Now the peculiar opinions of Calvin were not promulgated until late in the year 1551, when he was attacked in open Church by Bolsec, for preaching the doctrine of *absolute* decrees. His first tract on the subject of Predestination was not published until the year 1552.* Thus it appears, from a comparison of dates, that the peculiar system of Calvin could not possibly have had influence upon the Reformation of the Church of England; the Articles of that Church having been drawn up before the system in question had been communicated to the world.

6. The circumstances, attending the preparation of the Liturgy of the Church of England, furnish additional evidence that her Reformers were under a Lutheran, rather than a Calvinistic bias. In purifying the offices of the Church, they followed, in a great degree, a Liturgy that had been recently prepared by Melancthon and Bucer for the Archbishoprick of Cologne. Where the forms of the English Liturgy vary from the ancient forms, they are generally fashioned after those which were used, as above mentioned, in the Archbishoprick of Cologne; indeed, they are often literal translations from them.† Calvin, while settled at Strasburg, used, in public worship, a liturgy of his own composition: after translating it into Latin, and introducing some alterations, he

* It has been shown, in this letter, that the Institutes of Calvin, as first published, could not have contained his predestinarian scheme.

† See Laurence's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 197—201, 282, 283.

established it as the public form of the Church of Geneva in the year 1545. The English Liturgy first appeared in 1548. Now it is to be particularly observed, that the English Liturgy of 1548, bears no resemblance whatever to the production of Calvin; and we have just seen that it was in a great measure derived from the Liturgy of Cologne, prepared by Melancthon. But further—A new translation of the work of Calvin, with alterations and additions, was made in the year 1551, by Valerandus Pollanus, who then resided in England. The English Liturgy was revised and republished in 1552; and it is a very important fact that many of the additions and alterations, then introduced, were derived, or, at least, the hint of them was taken, from the work of Pollanus. For example, the Introductory Sentences, Exhortation, Confession, and Absolution were added to the English Liturgy at the revision, in 1552; as were also the Ten Commandments, with the responses subjoined to them, at the beginning of the Communion Service. All this was suggested by the translation of Pollanus, not by that of Calvin; for the decalogue and an office of absolution are contained in the former, and not in the latter. The circumstances just detailed prove either that the English Reformers were unacquainted with the work of Calvin, or that they did not think it a fit subject of imitation.*

7. In the Reformation of the Church of England

* See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, p. 197, 198, 199, 282.

under Edward, an article was adopted, asserting the descent of Christ into Hell. Now this is a tenet against which Calvin had declared with great violence; being so enraged with his friend Castellio for embracing it as even to banish him from Geneva.*

8. The English Reformers differed materially from Calvin as to the ground on which they rested the canon of Scripture.

The Church of Rome referred the question of the canonicalness or uncanonicalness of any book, not simply to the testimony of the Church, but to her decisive authority. Calvin rejected this criterion altogether, and substituted for it the testimony of the Spirit. For, in reference to the question—who shall determine whether this or that book is to be received—he thus writes—“ Because religion, with profane man, is seen to stand only in opinion; least they should believe fool-

* The following language of Beza will show that he was far from considering the Reformation of the Church of England as fashioned upon a Calvinistic model.

“ As to what regards the English Reformation, when you say that it was established with the advice, and according to the mind of Bucer, you do a great injury to this excellent man, who, when he was in that kingdom, at the beginning of the evangelical reformation there, deeply lamented that a greater degree of rationality in discipline and purity of rites had not been observed in organizing the Church. In certain letters to a very dear friend in Canterbury, on the 12th Jan. 1550, he thus writes—As to what you say with respect to the purity of the rites, know that no foreigner here is consulted about these matters.....“ He, (Bucer) a little before his death, wrote these things, that he by no means acquiesced in the English form, of which you *falsely and impudently* make him the author.” *Beza Tractationes Theologicæ, vol. ii.*

ishly or lightly, they desire and demand to be proved to them by reason, that Moses and the Prophets spoke with divine authority. But I answer that the testimony of the Spirit is better than any reason. For as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his word; so likewise, the word will not find faith in the hearts of men, before it is signed to them by the inward testimony of the Spirit."

The same test is adopted in the Belgic and Westminster Confessions, but in no Confession of the Lutheran Church, nor in any of the writings of her great Reformers. If the Lutheran Church had adopted such a test, she would have inserted it, of course, in the Augsburg Confession; and the Council of Trent, in their decrees relative to the Holy Scriptures, would not have failed to point it out as an heretical innovation.

The English Reformers, with their usual moderation and good sense, avoided the different extremes on this subject. They declared the Church to be "a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ;" thus resting the canon of Scripture neither on the mere authority of the Church on the one hand, nor on the simple testimony of the Spirit on the other.

In this fundamental point, then, the Church of England agrees with the Lutherans, while she totally differs from Calvin;—which is a very strong circumstance to show that she did not propose Calvin as her doctrinal guide in the work of Reformation. For, "that the said Church," to use

the language of Bishop White, "in framing her Articles, should take this Reformer for her guide on predestination and its kindred points; and yet run so wide of him as to the source from which alone light is to be gathered concerning these matters and all others, seems altogether improbable."*

9. The very great respect paid by the English Reformers to the Paraphrase of Erasmus, is, of itself, sufficient to decide the question relative to the supposed tendency of those Reformers toward the peculiar tenets of Calvinism. By a royal injunction, issued in the beginning of Edward's reign, the Paraphrase of *the Gospel* was ordered to be placed in every parish Church, that the people might have an opportunity of reading it; while another injunction directed that the *whole* Paraphrase should be in the hands of all the clergy below the station of Bachelors in Divinity, and that they should, moreover, be examined in it by the Bishops. This is a circumstance the force of which can never be eluded.† It is positively ridiculous, in the face of such a fact, to talk of the Calvinism of the English Reformers.

10. The Church of England varies more from

* Churchman's Magazine, new series, vol. iii. p. 20, 21.

† The attention paid to the Paraphrase of Erasmus was distinctly noticed in the eighth Letter of this work; but, in an enumeration of circumstances which prove that the English Reformers were under a Lutheran, and not under a Calvinistic bias, it seemed proper again to mention the fact. I might go on to show the opinions of the English Reformers from their private writings; but, beside that this has been sufficiently done already, my object now is briefly to state some of those public circumstances which point out the true character and tendency of the English Reformation.

that of Geneva, in point of government and discipline, than from any other of the continental Churches. Now, what can be more improbable than that she should have adopted as her model, in point of doctrine, a Church from which she differs, in respect of government and discipline, so fundamentally. To be sure, a presumption of this kind must yield to positive evidence of a contrary nature; but no such evidence has ever been produced. The correspondence between Calvin and the English Reformers was very limited; it took place, moreover, before he had brought forward his peculiar theory of Predestination. Besides, there is evidence of much greater intimacy between the English Reformers and Calvin's great opponent—the wise Melancthon.

In proof of your position that the English Reformers were doctrinal Calvinists, you go on to speak of the very great respect which was paid to Calvin's Institutes, in the universities of England, "for a number of years during the reigns of Elizabeth and James."

You surely know that the Articles were originally established while Edward VI. was on the throne, and were re-established, after the Marian persecution, in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth. Elizabeth came to the throne in the year 1558, and died in the year 1603. The Calvinistic opinions, it is very true, became somewhat powerful in the Church of England toward the close of her reign; but it would appear, from the

most accurate testimony, that they were not embraced by many learned men of the University of Cambridge until so late as the year 1595, and that they were not then understood to be certainly the sense of the Articles even by those by whom they were most zealously espoused.*

How very singular, then, is your mode of proof! You assert, positively, that the leading Reformers of the Church of England were doctrinal Calvinists, and, by way of proof, relate an event belonging to the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, and to the reign of her successor James,—a period posterior by more than thirty years to the re-settlement of the Church under Elizabeth, and by more than forty years to its original Reformation, in the reign of Edward VI. Instead of bringing forward the opinions of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, or those of their illustrious successors who re-organized the Church upon the death of Queen Mary, you refer to a fact the only tendency of which is to throw light on the opinions which prevailed in the Church of England in the last years of the sixteenth century, when the original Reformers under Edward were certainly, and their successors in the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth were probably in their graves.

But, to do you justice—"Let those who deny the Calvinism of the early Reformers and standards of the Church of England, impartially consult Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, the Lambeth Ar-

* See Strype's Life of Whitgift, p. 435.

ticles, the writings of Hall, Davenant, and Horsley, and they will perceive, and be ashamed of their mistake.”

Well, Sir, where is your proof of the Calvinism of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer? Not one word have you, or your guide, Mr. Overton, ventured to produce from their writings. I call upon you to substantiate your assertion. No, Sir, the English Reformers were decidedly opposed to the shocking principles of Calvin. Not one of those principles did they embrace. This has been completely proved from their private writings, and from the Articles and Homilies which they provided for the government and instruction of the Church.*

“The Lambeth Articles”—Suppose Archbishop Whitgift did declare these Articles to be consistent with the formularies of the Church of England. This would only prove that the Archbishop was tinctured with Calvinism, and disposed to see the standards of the Church through a Calvinistic medium. But you have forgotten to inform your readers that the Lambeth Articles gave great offence, that they were immediately ordered to be suppressed, and the Divines concerned in drawing them up threatened with a *premunire*. So far from proving, therefore, that the Reformers in 1552, and 1562, nearly half a century before, were Calvinists, the case of the Lambeth Articles does not even prove that the Church of England was Calvinistic at the time the Articles were com-

* See Letter viii. of this work.

posed. It is, indeed, evident, from the affair in question, that Calvinism prevailed to a considerable degree; but it is equally evident that it was not triumphant:—on the contrary, it appears to have been viewed, both at court and in the university, with deep disapprobation.

You appeal to the writings of Hall and Davenant in proof of the Calvinism of the early Reformers of the Church of England. Now, Hall and Davenant, you surely know, were not of the number of those Reformers. Bishop Hall was born in the year 1574, and Bishop Davenant in 1576; whereas the Church was settled under Edward in 1552, and re-settled under Elizabeth in 1562.

But perhaps Hall and Davenant have written unanswerable treatises to prove the Calvinism of the English Reformers—Nothing of the kind, I believe, has ever been pretended.

Admit that Hall and Davenant were Calvinists—Does it follow that the great men who reformed the Church of England before Hall and Davenant were born, were Calvinists also?

But Hall and Davenant were very far from being disciples of Calvin. No other proof of this need be cited than the part which they acted in their attendance upon the Synod of Dort. They there publicly opposed the rigid doctrines of Calvinism; maintaining the universality of Redemption, and the sufficiency of grace for the conversion and salvation of all men.* Is it not absurd

* See Brandt and Collier.

to call such men disciples of one who held that Christ died simply for the elect, and that effectual grace is given to them alone?

Of the strong dislike of Bishop Hall to the violent opinions and language of Calvin, there is abundant evidence on record. Let me present you with a short specimen—"When we say CHRIST died for mankind, we mean that CHRIST died for the benefit of mankind. Now let this benefit be distinguished, and contentions hereabouts will cease. For if this benefit be considered as the remission of sins, and the salvation of our souls; these are benefits obtainable only *upon the conditions of faith and repentance*: on the one side, no man will say, that Christ died to this end to procure forgiveness and salvation to every one, whether they believe and repent, or no. So, on the other, none will deny that he died to this end, that salvation and remission should redound to all and to *every one*, in case they should believe and repent. For this depends upon the sufficiency of that price which our Saviour paid for the redemption of *the world*."*

"If some Divines shall defend the rigid opinions of predestination, surely the Church is a collective body, so it hath a tongue of her own, speaking by the common voice of her Synods, of her public Confessions, Articles, Constitutions, Catechism, Liturgies: what she says in them must pass for her own; but if any single person

* Hall's Works, vol. iii. p. 574

shall take upon himself, unauthorized, to be the mouth of the Church, his insolence is justly censurable.”*

“ The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law :” wherein our main care must be not to sever in our conceit the end from the means, and withal to take the means along with us in our way to the end. It is for the heavenly Angels to climb down the ladder from heaven to earth: it is for us only to climb up from earth to heaven. Bold men! what do we begin at God’s eternal decree of our election, and then descend to the effects of it in our effectual calling, in our lively and steadfast faith, in our sad and serious repentance, in our holy and unblameable obedience, in our infallible perseverance. This course is saucily preposterous. What have we to do to be rifling the hidden counsels of the Most High: let us look to our own ways. We have his word for this, that if we do truly believe, repent, obey, persevere, we shall be saved: that if we heartily desire and effectually endeavour, in the careful use of his appointed means, to attain unto these saving dispositions of the soul, we shall not fail of the desired success. What need we to look further than conscionably and cheerfully to do what we are enjoined, and faithfully and comfortably to expect what he hath promised.”†

* Hall’s Works, vol. iii. p. 45.

† Bishop Hall’s Remedy of Profaneness, sect. xviii. vol. iii. p. 89.

“ Neither doth God only admit, but he invites, but he entreats, but he importunes men to be saved. What could he do more, unless he would offer violence to the will, which were no other than to destroy the best piece of his own workmanship. It is the way of his decree and proceedings to dispose of all things sweetly, neither is it more against our nature than his to force his own ends: and when he sees that fair means will not prevail to win us from death, he is pleased feelingly to bemoan it as his own loss: “ Why will ye die, O house of Israel?”*

Bishop Hall did not hesitate to distinguish the rigid notions of predestination maintained at the Synod of Dort, by the title of the “ Belgic Disease;” and in speaking of the unsound and unscriptural comments and glosses of the strict followers of Calvin, he contemptuously represents them as fished out of the lake of Geneva.

No, Sir, no—The Reformers of the Church of England were very far from being disciples of Calvin—They were very far from establishing Calvinistic Articles of Faith. Instead of the eternal and *unconditional* ordination of some persons to future happiness, and of others to misery, they taught a predestination of fallen man to the mercies of God in Christ; or, if individual destiny was in their view, they taught simply a predestination to life founded on prescience. Instead of the doctrine of partial redemption, they set forth

* Bishop Hall's Remedy of Profaneness, sect. xx. vol. iii. p. 91.

the death of Christ as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Fallen man they described as *far*, not as *totally* gone from original righteousness. To the doctrine of irresistible grace, and its necessary concomitant, the passiveness of man in conversion, and his perseverance in grace, not from his own will, but from the immutability of the decree of election, they were utter strangers; for they expressly taught that God worketh *with us* and is our continual *help*; and that after falling from grace we *may*, and of course *may not* arise again and amend our lives. "When the Reformers spoke of the ruin occasioned by the fall, they modestly hesitated to define the precise extent of this ruin, and seemed still to recognize in some of those natural graces which survive the fall, certain relics of divinity—as the noble fragments scattered here and there in the 'marble waste,' indicate the original majesty of the fallen city..... When they spoke of the influences of the Holy Spirit, they feared to paint man as an inert mass, waiting for a ray from Heaven; but urged all to seek the aid which all need. The rebellionists, on the contrary, presented a coarser exhibition of these doctrines. As to original sin, they described us not as men but as devils. As to faith, they taught its necessity, but left accident, or human corruption, to describe its effects. They taught the efficacy of the Spirit, but would have men merely wait in passive tranquillity for the impulse of light."*

* British Review, vol. iii. p. 489, 490.

For what purpose have you introduced the name of Bishop Horsley? We are to peruse his writings, it seems, and be ashamed to doubt of the Calvinism of the Reformers and Articles of the Church of England. This is, certainly, very extraordinary language. One would naturally suppose that Bishop Horsley had expressly declared the Articles of the Church of England to be Calvinistic, and had expressly admitted the Calvinism of her Reformers. But not a word of the kind is to be found in his writings. Was Bishop Horsley himself a Calvinist? It is evidently your design to induce the reader to suppose so, although you have not thought proper to assert it in so many words. Until you become more explicit, and refer us to some particular part of his writings in proof, it will be sufficient simply to say that Bishop Horsley was not a Calvinist.*

In your Letters on the Christian Ministry you assert, in very positive terms, that the Reformers were all Presbyterians in principle; most of them regarding Episcopacy as a corruption, and all viewing it as an institution founded in human policy. But you have not ventured to go quite so far in the work which we are now examining. You make, indeed, the same broad and unqualified declarations with respect to all who have in any age protested against the corruptions of the Romish Church, with the single exception

* This can be very easily and abundantly proved.

of the Reformers of the Church of England. In your Letters you did not hesitate to say that Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, were Presbyterians in principle. This assertion you have been forbearing enough not to repeat; passing the English Reformers without notice. How much more becoming would it have been, to have confessed and retracted your error! After telling us that men who expressly declared, in standards which they drew up for the permanent government of the Church, that Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, did institute the three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, were Presbyterians, it is a very poor compensation to the cause of truth and candour, merely to abstain from repeating the assertion. An ingenuous disputant would have been eager to acknowledge and apologize for so great a misstatement.*

I proceed to notice some of the statements, contained in your Life of the Rev. Dr. Rodgers, which are of a nature to reflect great discredit on the Episcopal Church in this country. I deeply regret that you should have thought it necessary to introduce them. Having made inquiry into the circumstances to which they relate, I feel authorized to declare that they are extremely inaccurate and unjust.

* Your assertions relative to the Presbyterianism of the continental Reformers are full of inaccuracy; but this subject has been already pretty fully discussed in the seventh letter of this work, to which I refer you.

“ In the year 1760, in the midst of Mr. Rodgers’ usefulness at St. George’s, an event occurred, which not a little mortified him and his friends, and which made considerable noise in the ecclesiastical circles of America. There resided in Philadelphia, at this time, the Rev. William Mc Clenachan, an Episcopal clergyman, whose preaching was considered as more evangelical than that of the generality of his brethren of the same denomination. While this circumstance endeared him to a considerable number of the Episcopalians of Philadelphia, and rendered them earnestly desirous of retaining him as their minister; it excited the opposition of a still greater number, and threatened to produce his exclusion from the Episcopal Church in that city. During a meeting of the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, in May, 1760, the character, difficulties, and prospects of Mr. Mc Clenachan, happening to be the topic of more general and more warm conversation than usual, a number of the members of the Synod were so deeply impressed with the excellence of his character, and the probable usefulness of his ministry, and felt so much interest in his continuing to reside in Philadelphia, that they determined to attempt something in his behalf; and accordingly addressed a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, requesting him to exert his official influence, in favouring Mr. Mc Clenachan’s wishes, and those of his friends, that he might retain his place.”*

* Life of Dr. Rodgers, p. 105, 106.

Mr. Mc Clenachan was a zealous and exemplary clergyman. In his public ministrations he was more fervent, and insisted more upon the evangelical doctrines of the Cross than the generality of his brethren. This rendered him obnoxious to the majority of the Episcopalians of Philadelphia, and led them to take measures to expel him from the Church.

Such is your statement.

Never was there a grosser misrepresentation of facts. The conduct of Mr. Mc Clenachan was, in a very high degree, reprehensible. He was not only extremely factious in his temper, and indecent in his conduct; but there was serious ground for questioning his private as well as his ministerial integrity. Let me present you with a few extracts from the letter of remonstrance addressed to him by the excellent Archbishop Secker.

“ You speak of your behaviour as a Missionary; and I follow you in that the more readily, as it relates to the Society. You were appointed March 21, 1755: and your salary commenced from Christmas preceding: But you did not embark for America till August. You say it was *for want of a ship*: And I make no objection, though the time seems long. You landed at Boston October 10th, and there you stayed till May following, because you *did not think it safe* to carry your family, *on the eve of winter*, to the place of your mission, where no house was provided for you. But might not you have gone without your family, as you did at last, no house being still provided for you?

However, I pass over this also. Nor will I enter into what hath been reported of your hiring a house at Boston for a year, some say for three years, as if you proposed to fix there; or of your attempting to procure a settlement in Dr. Cutler's Church, till you were forbidden his pulpit.... You first went to Virginia; of which I shall take notice afterwards; then to Philadelphia: from which city you sent, June 22d, 1759, your first notification to the Society of your resigning your mission; and desired to have your salary paid till midsummer, alleging that it wanted but two days of the time. This the Society granted of course; not suspecting that you had left the place of your mission six months before, which you ought fairly to have told them. And thus you received your salary for four years and an half, besides gratuities of 20l. and were but two years and an half upon your mission."

"You say, that you are *cruelly and unwarrantably thrust out of the Church*, meaning Dr. Jenney's. Now, from what he and others have said, I rather conceive, that cruel and unwarrantable steps have been taken to thrust you into it. But certainly you were not thrust out; for you were never legally admitted."

"Yet your followers professed great zeal for the peace of the Church; and you profess great grief, that it is *wounded*; and declare in your own name, and theirs, that you will *strictly adhere*, not only to the *Liturgy and Doctrines*, but to the *Discipline* of the Church of England. Pray, Sir, consider:

Can you adhere to the Discipline of the Church of England, whilst you act in defiance to the Bishop, the Minister of the Parish, and the Vestry, on principles that tend to the dissolution of all Churches, and the subversion of all ecclesiastical order? How could such an imagination come into your mind? And how can you request me to countenance such proceedings?"

"On what grounds do you affirm, that *the doors are shut against you for teaching the doctrines of the Gospel?* I hope you do not account your Bishop an enemy to them: And besides, his reasons for declining to license you are not in the least founded on the doctrines which you teach. Nor, I believe, have you been charged in any letter to him, nor certainly are you charged in Dr. Jenney's letter to the Vestry on your dismissal, with false tenets, but with railing accusations. And of this charge you have, in your letter to me, gone a great way towards proving yourself guilty."

"Ought it not to give you a further distrust of your proceedings, that no one clergyman of the Church of England in America hath declared himself to approve them: And that the convention of clergymen, which met at Philadelphia last May, have strongly expressed their disapprobation of your behaviour both in that convention and out of it; and have signified that they would not suffer you to preach in any of their pulpits? Which is the more probable presumption of the two? That you are in the wrong, or that all the rest of the Clergy are?"

“But, for the sake of an infinitely more important interest, I beg you would consider the solemn promise, which you have made, ‘reverently to obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers to whom the charge and government over you is committed;’ and ‘to maintain and set forwards, as much as in you lieth, quietness, peace, and love amongst all Christian people.’ But if you turn a deaf ear to this entreaty, I must then beg your followers, for whose perusal, as well as yours, this letter is intended, to remember and observe St. Paul’s rule, ‘Mark them which cause divisions and offences, and avoid them.’ As I have written these things, if I know my own heart, in the spirit of meekness, I hope you will read them with the same; and not be kindled by them into that ‘wrath of man,’ which ‘worketh not the righteousness of God.’ Part of them, I am sensible, must give you pain. But ‘faithful are the wounds of a friend:’ and I am very sorry, that you have allowed me no other way of approving myself

“Your sincere friend

“THO. CANT.”

You had free access, I know, to the book containing this letter of the Archbishop, with the other documents relating to the subject. That you should suffer yourself, with full knowledge of the true circumstances of the case, to advance such a charge against the Episcopalians of Philadelphia, and the Episcopal clergy of the state of Pennsylvania generally, is to me most astonishing. I

am far from referring it to a disposition to misrepresent—No, Sir, I sincerely believe that it proceeds from a force of prejudice, which completely blinds you on every subject connected with the Episcopal Church.

Before leaving this subject, I must do you the justice to say, that you condemn, in very decided terms, the improper interference of the Presbyterian ministers in the affair of Mr. Mc Clenachan. I can also add, with perfect sincerity, that I believe the address of the ministers in question to the Archbishop of Canterbury was the result simply of ill-regulated zeal. The address is conceived in very respectful terms, and is far from breathing an unfriendly spirit.

“ About the year 1754, Capt. Jeremiah Owen, a native of England, who had long been an exemplary member of the Presbyterian Church in New-York, died, and left a legacy of 750 dollars, the interest of which he directed to be applied annually toward the instruction of *poor children* of that congregation, in reading, writing, and the use of figures. Capt. Owen, having been long intimate with Mr. William Ludlow, a respectable inhabitant of the city, and a member of the Episcopal Church, appointed him his executor. This legacy, of course, with the other portions of the testator's estate, came into Mr. Ludlow's hands. The gentlemen who were in the habit of managing the temporal concerns of the Presbyterian Church, called, soon afterward, on Mr. Ludlow, and requested the payment of the money. He

declined complying with their request, alleging that, as the Church was not incorporated, no person or body of persons, could legally receive the legacy, or give him a discharge for the same. The applicants, not knowing how to remove this difficulty, suspended the prosecution of their claim until some more favourable opportunity might arise.

“ In the mean time, the Vestry of Trinity Church, being informed of the legacy, and that the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church had applied for it in vain, made every effort to get it out of Mr. Ludlow’s hands, and appropriate it to their own use. They entreated, remonstrated, and threatened; but without success. Mr. Ludlow declared; that, although he was a zealous Episcopalian; yet as the money was committed to him in trust, and for a very different purpose, they should never possess it, unless they took it from him by force. Finding his honesty and honour too inflexible to admit the hope of getting the legacy into their hands, the Vestry next proposed to Mr. Ludlow, that he should send those children, the expense of whose education the interest of the legacy would defray, to their charity-school, where they might be instructed at the ordinary rate. But this proposal also Mr. Ludlow pointedly rejected, observing, that Capt. Owen was a Presbyterian, of long standing, and of known principle; and that, although he had not mentioned it, or made it one of the conditions in his will; it doubtless was his *intention*, that the children instructed by means

of his legacy, should be educated in the Presbyterian faith, and attend the Presbyterian Church: whereas, if the proposal of the Vestry were accepted, the children instructed at their school must of necessity attend their Church. The members of the Vestry appointed to conduct this negotiation, by way of answer to these remarks, asked him, somewhat tartly, 'Are you not a *Churchman*, Sir?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'I am a *Churchman*; but I am also an *honest man*, and am determined to fulfil the intention of Capt. Owen, to the best of my knowledge and ability.'

"The Vestry at length, despairing of success, abandoned the pursuit of this legacy; and it remained a number of years in Mr. Ludlow's hands. This gentleman, however, with characteristic probity and honour, though he could not pay it to any corporation, nor to any body of persons entitled by law to receive it, determined to employ it, while in his hands, most rigidly in conformity with the will of the testator. He was, therefore, in the habit, for near ten years, of selecting poor Presbyterian children, placing them under the care of Presbyterian school-masters, and defraying the expenses of their instruction with the avails of this legacy. Things continued in this state until the year 1765, when Mr. Rodgers became the pastor of the Church; and when the bequest of Capt. Owen was destined to become the foundation of an important charity-school establishment."*

* Life of Dr. Rodgers, p. 167, 168, 169, 170.

This, it will be admitted, is a most extraordinary narrative. We naturally call for the evidence on which it rests; but not a particle of evidence is produced. You tell us, indeed, that the history which you give of the Presbyterian Church in New-York, is compiled from documents which were prepared by Dr. Rodgers himself, and put into your hands by him several years before his decease.* But where are these documents? Surely, in advancing such a serious charge, and one calculated deeply to wound the feelings of the whole body of Episcopalians, you must have been aware that proof would be demanded capable of enduring the test of the strictest examination. Still you offer no proof;—speaking, indeed, of documents; but giving your reader no opportunity of inspecting them. Dr. Rodgers settled in the city of New-York some years after the transaction in question is represented to have taken place. Of course, it was only matter of hearsay with him. Some one told it to him, and he told it to you. Such is the ground upon which you have felt yourself at liberty to cast the foulest aspersion upon a body of men who have ever maintained the most unimpeachable character.

Here, then, I might dismiss the subject. The common rules of justice require us to believe a man innocent until he is proved guilty. A naked charge only reflects disgrace upon him who advances it.

* Life of Dr. Rodgers, p. 173.

But your narrative is incredible upon its very face. Suppose as much baseness as you please in the Vestry of Trinity Church, and only admit that they were not absolute idiots, and they never could have been guilty of the foul conduct which you impute to them. It must have exposed them to the contempt and derision of every decent man in the community. What! a rich and most respectable corporation throw away their character for the paltry sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars? What absurdities will not the keen spirit of sectarian jealousy digest! No, Sir, no—your statement is too ridiculous to be credited by a single man of common understanding united with common charity. If there be any foundation whatever for the story, the circumstances must be so entirely perverted in the narrative as to lose all resemblance to the reality. How easy is it, even by a very slight departure from the exact facts of a transaction, completely to change its whole complexion! Take your narrative as strictly accurate, and the Vestry could not have displayed a more profligate disregard for all the rules of honesty if they had appointed a committee to plunder Mr. Ludlow's house. At the period in question, the Rev. Dr. Barclay was Rector of Trinity Church—a man who has bequeathed a most pure and exalted character to his posterity. Would Dr. Barclay, think you, have engaged in such a base scheme of robbery? Would the highly respectable men who composed the Vestry? I find, upon inquiry, that none of the members of the

Vestry at present in the city, had ever heard a syllable of the charge in question, until it appeared in your Life of Dr. Rodgers. A venerable gentleman, who was a member of the Vestry before the revolutionary war, and who is now upwards of ninety years of age, remarkable for his knowledge of the affairs of Trinity Church, could give me no information upon the subject. It was perfectly new to him. When I stated the case, after assuring me that he had never heard of any such transaction previously to the publication of your work, he added, that he had never known the Vestry to show a disposition to invade the property of others—on the contrary, their distinguishing trait of character had always been that of liberality, in the gratuitous distribution of their own.

The minutes of the Vestry, from the year 1754 to the year 1764, have been strictly examined, and the following is the result.

Having examined with strict attention the minutes of the Vestry from the year 1754 to 1764, do not find the name of Mr. William Ludlow, or a Mr. Owen once mentioned; or a committee appointed to wait upon or to treat with William Ludlow, on that, or any subject which has the least reference to what is inserted in Dr. Miller's Life of Dr. Rodgers.

THO. BARROW.

Here, Sir, is the best evidence which the nature of the case will admit. You have no way of obviating it but by charging the Vestry with mutilating their records. Men who would be guilty of so base an act as that which you impute to the

Vestry of Trinity Church, would not hesitate, certainly, to destroy the evidences of their guilt.

Unless you had unanswerable proof to produce, the rules of common decorum required you to be silent. In bringing forward such a charge, without a single document to support it, with nothing, as appears from the very face of the story, to rest it upon but mere hearsay, you have offered an insult to every respectable man in the community.

You mention one other attempt made by Episcopalians to seize the property of their Presbyterian brethren. It occurred in the village of Jamaica, Long-Island, where the Episcopal congregation, according to your statement, took violent possession of a building for public worship, erected by the Presbyterians; and also contrived to get the parsonage house into their hands. It seems, however, that they were finally defeated in their dishonest attempt.

There is great difficulty, in these cases, to get at the exact truth. We can never rely upon the statement of one of the parties. Take the case precisely as related by you, and the Episcopalians of Jamaica acted most unworthily; but it is fair, and quite natural to suppose that they had some explanation to give, or some justification to offer, which, if we could have access to it, would present the thing in a very different point of light.

Do you think the minute relation of such small controversies calculated to render any service to the cause of religion? At all events, was it not your duty to accompany this narrative, and others

of a similar nature, with the remark, no less charitable than true, that the genuine principles of religious toleration were not properly understood, or acted upon, at that period, by any denomination of Christians? To assert or insinuate that there was a peculiar disposition in Episcopalians to treat their fellow Christians of other denominations with severity, would be doing them very great injustice. I pass this part of your work with the single remark, that if the Episcopalians of this country have sometimes inflicted pecuniary injury upon Presbyterians, they have much more frequently, and much more seriously suffered it at their hands. There would be no difficulty in descending to particulars. But I dismiss an odious subject, which I deeply regret that you should have thought it expedient to introduce.

You give a very particular account of several unsuccessful applications which were made to the British government, by the Wall-street congregation, for an act of incorporation; ascribing the failure, in a great measure, to the influence of the Episcopalians of this country, and especially to that of the Vestry of Trinity Church.

This, like most of the charges contained in your book, is a mere *ex parte* statement, resting very much on tradition. There can be no doubt that unsuccessful applications were made by the Wall-street congregation for a charter; but that these applications failed in consequence of unjust and ungenerous practices of the Episcopal Church of this country, may well be set down as a ca-

lummy of her opponents, rather than as an authenticated historical fact.

The charge under consideration was urged with much warmth in the controversy which took place, in this country, previously to the revolutionary war, on the subject of an American Episcopate. The following is the notice taken of it by Dr. Chandler, in his Reply to Dr. Chauncy.

“The disappointment of the Presbyterians in New-York, with regard to a charter, he had mentioned in his former pamphlet; and enough was said in answer, to show that they have, upon the whole, no great reasons for complaint. Among other things, it was observed in the *Appeal Defended*, that ‘it was the belief at home, that the Church of England had been treated with peculiar malevolence, by some of those very persons whose names were annexed to the petition. It was therefore not unnatural to suspect, that any additional power put into the hands of such persons, would, as opportunity should offer, be exerted against the Church.’ If nothing farther could be said, yet so long as this was *believed* to be the case, whether justly or not, it was of itself a sufficient reason—not for abridging the religious liberty—but for not enlarging the power, of the Presbyterians in New-York. And yet Dr. Chauncy takes not the least notice of this observation, nor of any thing I said relating to the subject; but sounds a false alarm to all the Colonies, to prepare for a defence, against the oppressive designs of the Church of England.

“ But the refusal of favours by the government, to particular persons who had made themselves obnoxious to government, by a supposed scurrilous abuse of the national establishment, which ought always to be treated with decency, is no proof of the ill temper of Episcopalians, nor an argument of the unwillingness of government to grant favours to other persons, although of the same religious denomination, that have not discovered the same disposition:—Much less does it prove any design to deprive such persons of any privileges, of which they are in fair and legal possession. If the conduct of the Presbyterians in New-York has been mistaken, or misrepresented, let it be made to appear. If they, or their friends, can prove, or make it probable, that they have not publicly vilified and abused the national Church, and that they have been free from all secret intrigues and combinations against it; in my opinion, they, as well as other Protestants, are entitled to all favours from the patrons of the Church, that are consistent with safety, or the constitution. But, on the other hand, if they are conscious of their own evil intentions and practices against the Church of England, and know that some of them have been actually discovered; it is surprising that they can expect, much more that they can have the assurance to ask, particular favours, to the granting of which, the consent of those, who regard the interest and honour of the Church, is necessary. I will not enter farther into the conduct, or the case of the Presbyterians

in New-York. Let them but clear themselves of the charges and suspicions with which they are loaded; and then, if any reasonable favours are refused them, barely on account of their religious principles, the dissenters throughout the colonies will have just reason to expect the same treatment, and not before.”*

I will not undertake to defend the conduct of the British government on this occasion. It would probably have been more correct, as well as more liberal to have granted the petition. Of the exact force of the reasons assigned for the refusal in the work of Dr. Chandler, it is extremely difficult, however, now to judge. But, complaint, at all events, comes with a very ill grace from you; for, in the same publication in which you prefer the complaint, you scruple not to justify the violent opposition made by the dissenters to the application of the Episcopalians of this country, to have Bishops settled among them. It is a fact, that although the Episcopal Church was the established Church of England, it was not placed, in her American colonies, upon equal ground with dissenting societies. It could scarcely, indeed, be said to enjoy the full benefits of religious toleration. Being destitute of Bishops, it had not the means of exercising those powers, and dispensing those ordinances, which, in its view, constitute very important parts of the Christian dispensation; while its dissenting brethren pos-

* Appeal farther Defended, p. 228, 229, 230.

sessed all the officers, and all the ordinances admitted or recognized in their public formularies. This was a state of things not more unnatural than it was unjust. There can be no doubt that the British government was principally influenced, in the part which it acted in this business, by the fear of inflaming the dissenters of this country, who opposed the measure with the utmost violence. Collect, Sir, the examples of intolerant conduct on the part of the American Episcopalians towards their dissenting brethren, which history may really furnish, and this single case of the furious opposition made by the dissenters, to what may in fact be called the toleration of the Episcopal Church in this country, will infinitely outweigh them all. At the same time, I have no hesitation in expressing my belief, that no inconsiderable part of the opposition, in question, proceeded less from a spirit of injustice or persecution, than from misapprehension and prejudice. But, amid all the charges which you bring against your American fellow Christians of the Episcopal Church, if we look for any charitable allowance grounded on misapprehension, prejudice, or even the universally prevailing errors of the age, we look in vain.

Indeed, Sir, it was not without some reason that your opponents represented you as writing with bitterness.

You proceed to relate, very minutely, a journey of Mr. Rodgers to Virginia, and the severe treatment which he met with from Episcopalians there.

The journey of Mr. Rodgers to Virginia, took place in the year 1748. The Episcopal Church being then the established Church of Virginia, the privileges of dissenters were regulated by an act of the British Parliament, entitled the "Act of Toleration." Under the construction given to this act, at the period in question, in Virginia, licenses could be demanded for regular congregations of dissenters. Accordingly, it appears from your own account, that Mr. Davies was licensed as the regular pastor of four congregations;* but Mr. Rodgers not being called to any particular congregation, but intending to pass through the State as an itinerant preacher, his case seems to have been considered as not coming within the terms of the "Act of Toleration," and his application for a license was, accordingly, refused.

This treatment was certainly very much at variance with the ideas and practice of the present day, both in Great-Britain and the United States. We should consider such conduct now as extremely oppressive; but we shall not do justice to our forefathers, if, in judging of their acts, we forget to make allowance for the ideas and spirit of the age in which they lived. Take as at least a complete set off against the treatment of Mr. Rodgers by the Episcopatians of Virginia, that which Mr. Finley received from the Congregationalists of Connecticut. The case of Mr. Finley is incidentally mentioned in your work. "The Legisla-

* Life of Dr. Rodgers, p. 47, 48.

ture of Connecticut passed a law, about this time, prohibiting itinerant preachers from entering parishes in which a minister was settled, unless by his consent. For violating this law, by preaching to a congregation in New-Haven, the Rev. Dr. Finley, afterwards President Finley, was arrested by the civil authority, and carried, as a vagrant, out of the Colony.*

Now the treatment which Mr. Finley received was much more humiliating than that of Mr. Rodgers; the former having been arrested and carried away as a vagrant, while the latter was merely refused a license to preach. And yet the one case is dwelt upon by you at much length, as an intolerable grievance, and an evidence of the persecuting temper of Episcopalians; whereas, in mentioning the latter, you drop not the slightest hint of disapprobation.

It is a most wanton violation of justice to represent the Church of England as remarkable for her intolerance. No Church in Christendom, indeed, can pretend, in this particular, to be entirely guiltless. All Christian societies have, in a greater or less degree, persecuted.† But thus far

* Life of Dr. Rodgers, p. 80.

† The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ventures to contrast the intolerant spirit of Christians with the mild temper of Heathenism. But, in doing this, he has certainly wandered very far from a correct representation of the fact. In truth, the principles and practice of religious intolerance, were derived from Pagan to Christian Rome; and it is matter of profound humiliation to us that they should have retained, for so long a period, their power over the human mind. The circumstance which Voltaire and Gibbon

I will, with confidence, assert of the Church of England, that she was remarkable, even among

adduce as evidence of the mild spirit of Heathenism is very far from proving that individuals were freely indulged in religious practices, and in the expression of religious opinions, that were decidedly at variance with the established modes, either of faith or worship. It was the common idea of the Pagan world, that each country had its particular divinities, who presided over it. Accordingly, when the Romans proposed to reduce any country under their subjection it was their general practice to invite the tutelary Gods of such country to abandon it, and to promise them a much more splendid worship in the city of Rome. In consequence of this practice, Rome became filled with an infinite multitude of gods, who were worshipped with an endless variety of rites. But, surely, it is very absurd to dignify this with the character of religious toleration. Were individuals permitted to judge for themselves, and, thus judging, publicly to oppose the established creed, or publicly to depart from the established forms of worship? Nothing can be more express than the testimony of the great Roman historian, Livy, on this subject. He tells us that the proper magistrates were frequently charged to prohibit the introduction of any foreign religion, and to suppress every mode of sacrifice that differed from the mode which was established. And what is the reason which Livy gives for this? Simply that all departure from the regular modes of sacrifice must prove destructive to religion.* Livy also informs us of an express edict issued by the Pretor, under a decree of the Senate, forbidding, in the most positive terms, all public sacrificing in any other than the customary modes.† This, it appears from Livy, had been the Roman practice from the beginning. He records an order given at a very early period of the Roman history, enjoining the Ædiles to take care that none but the Gods of Rome should be worshipped, and that they should be worshipped only in the established form.‡

The true character of the Roman temper upon this subject, is evident from the conduct pursued by the imperial government upon the introduction of Christianity. Here was a case exactly fitted to test the mild spirit of toleration which Voltaire and Gibbon have so freely conceded to Pagan Rome. The religion of the state was publicly opposed; idolatry in all its shapes being denounced as a heinous crime. But it was soon found that opposition to the religion of the empire would not be suffered for a moment: the blood of the Christians was

* Liv. lib. xxxix. cap. 16. † Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 30. ‡ Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 30.

Protestants, for the mildness and tolerance both of her principles, and her practice. As the Protestants have much less to answer for, on this subject, than their Romish adversaries, the Church of England inflicted upon her dissenting brethren much less persecution than she suffered at their hands. It is impossible, all circumstances considered, to survey the conduct of the enlightened and excellent Reformers of this Church without sentiments of the sincerest admiration. Never had men a more arduous task to perform. While engaged in purging the Church from papal error and corruption, and in defending her against the fury of the court of Rome, a set of men arose within her bosom to distract and convulse her by

shed in torrents. The true idea of toleration seems never to have been conceived by the Pagan mind; all positive departure from the religion of the State being universally considered as subversive of the fundamental purposes of society. The same mode of thinking continued to prevail after the empire became Christian. The religion of the prince was expected to be the religion of the subject. Thus the principle of persecution was derived from the Pagan to the Christian government of Rome; from the State it passed to the Church; and it required the long period of fourteen hundred years to purge it off. Such is the true source of the laws against heretics, which disgrace the codes of all Christian nations. Without dwelling on the blood-stained history of the Church of Rome, if we descend to the period of the Reformation, how are we grieved at finding Protestants dividing into hostile parties, and, notwithstanding all they had suffered from the fiend of papal persecution, displaying so little of the Christian temper in their treatment of one another! Freely conceding, as we do, the praise of eminent learning and piety to your great master, Calvin, how do we shudder, at the same time, in witnessing the flaming intolerance of his spirit; especially when we behold him, with inquisitorial fury, hunting Servetus to the stake. But far be it from us to mark out Calvin as an object of particular reprobation. He breathed, in common with other great and good men, the noxious spirit of the age.

their intemperate zeal. It ought here to be mentioned that the Reformation of the Church of England was conducted in so enlightened a spirit that there was no separation from her, even by the Papists themselves, during the reign of Edward; and, upon the re-establishment of the Protestant faith, under Elizabeth, the great body of the Romish clergy continued to conform; most of them, indeed, being influenced by the motive of retaining their places in order to exercise the power, thence to be derived, in furthering, whenever a suitable opportunity should offer, the designs of the Church of Rome. No such opportunity, however, was suffered to occur; and thus the corrupt views of individuals were overruled to the benefit of the cause which it was their secret wish to destroy. At length, the more sagacious of the Romish clergy began to perceive that the policy, which they were pursuing, would very soon produce a separation of the Church of England from that of Rome, as complete as tranquil. It was evident that the great body of the people would be weaned, in a few years, from their superstitious prejudices; and that, at all events, the rising generation would be lost to the Church of Rome for ever. Under this view of things, they began to withdraw from the Reformed Church, and to hold separate meetings. The first schism in the Church of England was thus produced by the Papists. But the example was soon followed by those violent men, among the Protestants, whom nothing less would satisfy than a system, not of

reform, but of utter revolution. The baneful spirit was caught at Frankfort and Geneva, to which places a number of English exiles resorted during the persecution of Mary, and where those divisions commenced which afterwards lead to so dreadful a catastrophe. It is most humiliating to reflect on the manner in which the artful policy of Rome was thus forwarded by the ill-judged violence of her enemies. She immediately fell in with the views and complaints of the separatists; constantly employing agents to travel through England, charging the Reformed Church with being still infected with the worst errors of popery, representing her form of worship as no better than the Romish mass book, and crying out, with the utmost fury, for a further, and complete reformation. The court of Rome acted, in this particular, upon the express principle of destroying the Church of England, through the instrumentality of her own divisions; and it was confidently calculated, by the papal advocates, that, the Church of England being overwhelmed, the Sectaries would soon exhibit such a scene of division, of violence, and of folly, as would compel all sober men to seek refuge even under the yoke of spiritual bondage. In this calculation, the court of Rome showed its intimate knowledge of the human character. The Presbyterian, Edwards, gives an account, in his *Gangræna*, of no less than sixty sects that poured, like a turbid torrent, into England, when the barriers of a primitive Episcopacy were thrown down. " Things grew daily worse and

worse.....Instead of reformation, we are grown from one extreme to another; fallen from Sylla to Charybdis; from popish innovations, superstitions, and prelatical tyranny, to damnable heresies, horrible blasphemies, libertinism, and fearful anarchy. Our evils are not removed and cured, but only changed; one disease and devil hath left us, and another as bad is come in his room.”*

The natural result of all this must have been the revival of Romish superstition and tyranny. But, by the good providence of God, the Church of England again reared her head; and thus prevented a relapse into popery, by presenting Christianity in her primitive features, equally removed from popish absurdity on the one hand, and sectarian extravagance on the other. Now, let us figure to ourselves the Church of England, pressed by the Romanists, shaken by the intemperate clamours of blind zealots, and endeavouring to preserve the pure faith and worship of primitive Christianity against their united assaults. It is only when we take this view of her situation, that we are able to appreciate the spirit by which she was actuated, or to make the proper allowance for the severe measures, to which, it must be admitted, she did not scruple, in a greater or less degree, to resort.

Besides, in estimating the struggle between the Church of England and the Puritans, we must always bear in mind the object which the latter,

* Edwards's *Gangræna*, Epist. ded.

according to their own confession, were labouring to accomplish. It is not uncommon for people to say, the Church should have tolerated the Puritans.—I grant it most freely.—But it was not toleration that the Puritans demanded. They held it in abhorrence. They required nothing less than the complete establishment of their own particular system, and the enforcing of it upon the consciences of all men by the civil power.—Where are the proofs?—They are so abundant as to put the most obstinate credulity to silence.

When Sir Francis Walsingham, who was their friend, offered the Puritans, in the Queen's name, the abolition of those ceremonies to which they were most opposed—kneeling at the Communion, wearing the surplice, and the cross in baptism,—they indignantly replied—*ne ungulam esse relinquendam*—“They would not leave so much as a hoof behind.” From that time, Walsingham abandoned them; seeing that nothing less would satisfy them than the entire subversion of the Church.

“They maintained, that they themselves were the only pure Church; that their principles and practices ought to be established by law; and that no others ought to be tolerated. It may be questioned, therefore, whether the administration at this time could with propriety deserve the appellation of persecutors with regard to the Puritans. Such of the clergy, indeed, as refused to comply with the legal ceremonies, were deprived of their livings, and sometimes in Elizabeth's reign were otherwise punished: And ought any

man to accept of an office or benefice in an establishment, while he declines compliance with the fixed and known rules of that establishment? But Puritans were never punished for frequenting separate congregations; because there were none such in the kingdom; and no Protestant ever assumed or pretended to the right of erecting them.”*

“Toleration had hitherto been so little the principle of any Christian sect, that even the Catholics, the remnant of the religion professed by their forefathers, could not obtain from the English the least indulgence. This very House of Commons, in their famous remonstrance, took care to justify themselves, as from the highest imputation, from any intention to relax the golden reins of discipline, as they called them, or to grant any toleration: And the enemies of the Church were so fair from the beginning, as not to lay claim to liberty of conscience, which they called a toleration for soul murder. They openly challenged the superiority, and even menaced the established Church with that persecution which they afterwards exercised against her with such severity.”†

“That Laud’s severity was not extreme, appears from this fact, that he caused the acts or records of the high commission court to be searched, and found that there had been fewer suspensions, deprivations, and other punishments, by three, during the seven years of his time, than in any

* Hume’s History of England, vol. v. p. 172. † Ibid. vol. vi. p. 79.

seven years of his predecessor Abbot; who was notwithstanding in great esteem with the House of Commons. *Troubles and Trials of Laud*, p. 163. But Abbot was little attached to the court, and was also a Puritan in doctrine, and bore a mortal hatred to the Papists.”*

It is impossible to peruse the history of those times without perceiving, at every step, the accuracy of these remarks of Hume. The sectaries affected no concealment of their sentiments on the subject of toleration, or of the purpose which they intended to accomplish. See the plain style which they employed in admonitions solemnly addressed to the government.

“ That the State did not show itself upright, allege the parliament what it will; that all honest men should find lack of equity, and all good consciences condemn that court; that it should be easier for *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* in the day of judgment, than for such a parliament: that there is no other thing to be looked for than some speedy vengeance to light upon the whole land, let the politic Machiavels of England provide as well as they can, though God do his worst: and finally, if they of that assembly would not follow the advice of the first admonition, they would infallibly be their own carvers in it, the Church being bound to keep God’s order, and nothing to be called God’s order but the present platform.”†

Is this the language of men claiming liberty of

* Hume’s History of England, vol. vi. p. 493. † Admon. p. 61.

conscience, or pleading for the sacred rights of toleration? Is it not perfectly evident that they had no idea of toleration; and that their object was to overthrow the establishment for the purpose of planting their own system upon its ruins?

See further the solemn protestation which they required of every person whom they admitted into their congregations. "Being thoroughly persuaded in my conscience, by the working and by the word of the Almighty, that these relics of Antichrist be abominable before the Lord our God; and also, for that by the power, mercy, strength, and goodness of the Lord our God only, I am escaped from the filthiness and pollution of these detestable traditions, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and last of all, inasmuch as, by the working also of the Lord Jesus, his Holy Spirit, I have joined in prayer, and hearing God's word, with those that have not yielded to this *idolatrous trash*, notwithstanding the danger of not coming to my parish Church, &c.—Moreover, I have now joined myself to the Church of Christ; wherein I have yielded myself subject to the discipline of God's word, as I promised at my baptism, which if I should again mistake, and join myself with their traditions, I should forsake the union wherein I am knit to the body of Christ, and join myself to the discipline of Antichrist. For in the Church of the traditioners there is no other discipline than that which hath been maintained by the antichristian Pope of Rome, whereby the Church of God hath al-

ways been afflicted, and is until this day. For the which cause I refuse them. God give us grace still to *strive* in suffering under the cross, that the blessed word of our God may only rule, and have the *highest place*, to cast down strong holds, to destroy or overthrow policy or imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity or subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ”*

Thus were the Puritans bound together by a solemn oath, to abjure, hate, and destroy both the government and worship of the Church. It was, indeed, their uniform language that “the constitution of the hierarchy was too bad to be mended; that the very pillars of it were rotten; that the structure ought to be raised anew, and that they were resolved to lay a new foundation though it were at the hazard of all that was dear to them in the world.”†

I repeat it, then, the question between the Church of England and the Puritans, was not whether the latter should be tolerated—toleration at this time was not at all understood—but whether the whole fabric of the Church should be overthrown, and the Calvinian system, both of doctrine and discipline, forced upon the people of England by the civil power. In addition to the public documents which have been cited, let me

* See Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 544.

† See Wilson's History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches.

direct your attention, for a few moments, to the language used by the leading men among the Puritans in their sermons and addresses. "If ministers," says the zealous Presbyterian, Edwards, "will witness for the truth and against errors, they must set themselves against toleration, as the principal inlet to all error and heresy; for if toleration be granted, all preaching will not keep them out. If a toleration be granted, the devil will be too hard for us, though we preach ever so much against them. A toleration will undo all. It will bring in scepticism in doctrine and looseness of life, and afterwards all atheism. O let ministers, therefore, oppose all toleration, as that by which the devil would at once lay a foundation for his kingdom to all generations: witness against it in all places: *possess the magistrate with the evil of it*, yea, and the people too, showing them how if a toleration were granted, they could never have peace any more in their families, or ever have any command of wives, children, servants.....Toleration is destructive to the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; therefore, whoever should be for a toleration, ministers ought to be against it. If the parliament, city, yea, all the people, were for a toleration of all sects.....yet ministers ought to present their reasons against it, preach and cry out of the evil of it, never consent to it, but protest against it, and withstand it by all lawful means within their power, venturing the loss of liberties, estates, lives, and all in that cause, and

inflame us with zeal against a toleration, the great Diana of the sectaries !!!”*

Listen to the language of Calamy before the House of Commons!—“If you do not labour, according to your duty and power, to suppress the errors and heresies that are spread in the kingdom, all these errors are your errors, and these heresies are your heresies.” Hear Baxter exclaiming—“Oh Heavens! We intended not to dig down the banks, or to pull up the hedge and lay all waste and common, when we desired the prelates’ tyranny might cease.....My judgment I have always freely made known; I abhor unlimited liberty or toleration of all.” Hear again the whole body of London ministers, in their protest against the great Diana of the Independents, crying out—“We detest and abhor the much endeavoured toleration. Our bowels are stirred within us when we call to mind how long and sharp a travail this kingdom hath been in for many years together, to bring forth that blessed fruit of a pure and perfect reformation; and now, at last, after all our pangs, and dolours, and expectations, this real and thorough reformation is in danger of being strangled in the birth by a lawless *toleration*, that strives to be brought forth before it.” Or, the still stronger language of the ministers and elders of one of the provincial assemblies of the Presbyterians. “Toleration would be the putting a sword in a madman’s hand; a cup of poison

* Gangræna, part i. 1616.

into the hands of a child; a letting loose of madmen with firebrands, and appointing a city of refuge in men's consciences for the devil to fly to."

Such were the principles of the Puritans.—What was their practice? Did they, after obtaining power, grant toleration to other denominations?—The little finger of Presbytery soon proved itself to be heavier than the very loins of Prelacy.

Of the spirit in which the reformation was conducted in Scotland, under the auspices of Knox, a judgment may be formed from the law which was enacted, that "if any person should either say mass, or be present at it, he should for the first fault forfeit all his goods, and undergo such corporal punishment as the magistrate should think fit to put upon him; the second fault is banishment; and the third death."*

See the spirit by which the Scotch Reformers continued to be actuated at a much later period! One of them declared "that as the wrath of God was never diverted from his people, until the seven sons of Saul were hanged up before the Lord in Gibeon; so the wrath of God would never depart from that kingdom, till the twice seven prelates, (the number of the Scotch sees) were hanged up before the Lord there." Another did not scruple to assert that "the bloodiest and sharpest war, was rather to be endured than the least error in doctrine and discipline."†

* See Hume's History of England, vol. iv. p. 175.

† See Churchman's Memorial, General Introduction, p. 104-

One of the first acts of the Puritans, when they had partly risen into power, was to institute an impeachment in the House of Commons, against Dr. Richard Montague, for writing a treatise against the Calvinistic opinions, and proving that they were not the doctrine of the Church of England. This irregular and violent act afforded a very clear prognostic of what was to follow. Accordingly, no sooner did the Puritans completely succeed in their efforts to get into power, than they abolished Episcopacy, plundered the Church, expelled all the clergy who would not perjure themselves by taking the solemn league and covenant, and perpetrated the most horrible cruelties.

When, therefore, the severities, exercised by the Church of England, are referred to, we must always recollect that toleration was not at that time understood or practised by any denomination of Christians; that the Puritans openly avowed their abhorrence of it, and hesitated not to declare their intention of putting down Episcopacy, for the purpose of establishing their own system in its place.* It is absurd, then, to say,

* Nothing would be more humiliating to our species than a history of "Toleration." Until a very late period it was deemed the unquestionable right of the civil magistrate to compel conformity to his own religious system, both of discipline and doctrine. Kings were in the habit of regarding all departure from their prescriptions, in this particular, as not less offensive than even questioning their title, or rebelling against their authority. The most profound philosophers considered religious conformity as so essential to the purposes of society that governments were bound to enforce it by the severest penalties. Upon this very principle the great Lord Bacon held that no toleration could,

the Church should have tolerated the Puritans. The truth is, they would not tolerate the Church.

with safety, be given to sectaries;* and, at a much later period, we find the President Montesquieu maintaining that the civil magistrate ought to repress the *first attempts* towards a departure from the established religion, and grant toleration only to such sects as had already become numerous and powerful.† Even Mr. Hume uses the following hesitating language—"It is very *questionable* whether persecution can, in any cause, be justified."‡ When we consider all this, and recollect, at the same time, that a persecution unto death of Papists was strenuously urged by the Puritans, and that they almost disdained to conceal their intention of demolishing the established Church, for the purpose of planting the arbitrary system of discipline which Calvin had introduced into Geneva upon its ruins, have we not reason to admire the moderation of the Church of England? It is very certain that she has always been the mildest and most tolerant in her spirit of any Church in Christendom. Let me refer you, on this subject, to the language of the Editors of the Christian Observer—men upon whom you and your friends have been in the habit of bestowing much praise, and who certainly discover, on all occasions, a spirit of great impartiality towards their dissenting brethren.

"There is no historical truth, we believe, more clear, no fact more incontrovertible, than that the real design of the Puritans was not the general grant of religious liberty, but the establishment of their own peculiar platform: and if we might be allowed an apparent paradox, though with a far greater approach to truth than any doctrine suggested by Mr. Brook can boast, the established Church of England, particularly during the first portions of its reign, was the real stickler and advocate for religious liberty against the close spirit, jealous designs, and unattainable discipline of the Puritan school.

"When we speak of religious liberty, we must be understood, indeed, to mean something rather different from that term in its modern use: for we believe it in this sense to have been wholly unknown in the period of which we are now speaking."

"Religious liberty, be it understood by our readers, meant in those days, if it had any meaning at all, the *most liberal* and *comprehensive Church establishment*. The question, during the whole period to which we allude, was not, whether there should be any establishment at all; but what that establishment should be. It was no part of the contro-

* See his essay *De Unitate Ecclesie*.

† See Spirit of Laws, book xxv. chap. x.

‡ Vol. vi. p. 481.

If she acted with unwarrantable severity towards them, it was in defending herself against their

versy, whether the civil power should be exercised or not in the maintenance of religion; and when even the Puritans began to refuse its headship, which was not from the beginning, it was still to be employed as a servant for the support and advancement of the Church."

"Both parties were fully agreed in the main, that some establishment was necessary; that the alliance between the Church and the State was a benefit by no means to be trifled with or quitted by the former; that the State had full authority and power not only to impose rites and ceremonies, but to enact a whole body, both of doctrine and discipline, provided it were according to the word of God, and fully to establish it by law as the uniform religion of the realm; that obedience to these enactments ought by no means to be optional, but absolutely compulsory.

"So far were the Puritan Reformers from seeking a general relaxation of penal statutes in cases of conscience, that we should be at a loss to point out the time when even the infamous and detestable writ *de heretico cumburendo** was made a subject of complaint, or in any degree animadverted upon, by the disciples of Geneva. Let their illustrious master, Calvin, himself explain the reason and pursue the tale.

"To us, we must confess, as we have hinted before, the real and substantial difference, the point at issue between the Church of England and the Puritan party, appears to have been the degree of strictness in conduct, and largeness in sacrifice absolutely to be required in the true reformed profession of religion. The established Church required less—the Puritan Reformers required more. In the violent disruption from Popery, Episcopacy was content to bleed a little—Presbyterianism was ambitious of bleeding much. The submission to a few easy and indifferent ceremonies was, as Mr. Brook observes, all that was requisite to qualify a Church of England minister for his office (in addition to the *doctrinal* subscriptions which both required alike); but the Geneva school demanded the establishment of *the godly discipline.*"

"After all, does it appear, that the established Church ever proceeded much beyond those measures of severity which at that time appeared to be necessary for the maintenance of her honour, and even of her life? She was most evidently 'set in the midst of many and great dangers.' She plainly saw what even the most peaceable non-conformity tended to, as well as what the more stubborn projected.

* It was repealed, A. D. 1677, by Charles II.'s Parliament.

assaults, made with the avowed purpose of crushing her by force.

I might go on to describe the conduct of the

On one side, she saw the dupes, on the other the ringleaders, of a most determined confederacy against the whole frame and texture of her government.

“ Under these convictions, what did they do? Re-ignite the fires of Smithfield, or re-set the instruments of torture in the inquisition? Did Bonner and Gardner revive in the persons of Whitgift, Aylmer, or even Laud? No! they in the main contented themselves with what every establishment claims the privilege of doing. They suspended and deprived disobedient ministers: they took means for ascertaining their practices and opinions, particularly in respect to those ceremonies which were the point in dispute; and they animadverted the most severely upon the neglect of these, because these happened to be the very touchstone of the Churchman’s attachment to the establishment which fed him. So far they did what was perfectly justifiable on every principle. They set out well. And if they were afterwards betrayed into violence, and enforced some enactments for the discouragement of Puritanism, which a man might have warrantably declined, and peaceably awaited his punishment for so doing, (we may particularly allude to the Act of Charles I. for reading the Book of Sunday Sports), it was partly owing to the wretched temper of the times on all sides, and partly to the abundant provocations given to the prelacy at large, by the most unheard-of series of coarse insults, injurious calumnies, and wanton attacks, on their authority and dignity, their office and very existence.

“ It should never be forgotten, that the earliest *persecutors* of the Puritans were, like themselves, Calvinists in doctrine.”*

Even Mr. Brook, the professed and zealous eulogist of the Puritans, is obliged, in his history of them, to make the following reluctant confession—“ The Puritans of these times were not without their failings, being men of like passions with their adversaries: yet while they opposed the Episcopal impositions and oppressions, if they had accomplished their wishes, there is cause to fear that *they would have imposed their own discipline*. Their notions of civil and religious liberty were confused, and their principles and behaviour sometimes rigid.” *Brook’s Lives of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 59.*

* See Review of Brook’s Lives of the Puritans in Christian Observer, for June, 1815

separatists from the Church of England after their arrival on this continent. It is well known that, both by their writings and their acts, they showed themselves lamentably ignorant of the true principles of religious toleration. How easy would it be to present a long and disgusting account of the cruelties which they practised toward the society of Quakers! Many of these unfortunate people were publicly whipped; others were branded; others had their ears cut off. Great numbers were confined in loathsome prisons; some were transported;—a few were put to death. Nor did the persecution stop until King Charles II. sent a peremptory order for the purpose to all the governors of New-England.

I assure you, Sir, I have no pleasure in relating these facts. But when attempts are made to exhibit the Church of England, and her daughter, the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country, in an odious point of light; what remains but to place the subject fairly before the reader? Dr. Holmes, in his "American Annals," offers, as an excuse for the cruelties inflicted upon the Quakers in New-England, "the prevalent opinion, among all sects of Christians at that day, that toleration is sinful." And this, indeed, is the true palliation. Is it not, then, most unjust and ungenerous, to dwell upon the severities exercised by the Church of England in Europe or this country; while keeping out of sight the intolerant principles openly avowed and acted upon by her adversaries, as well as the universally received maxims of the

age?—I repeat it, Sir, the Church of England has ever been the most mild and tolerant Church of Christendom. An impartial inquiry will lead us to this conclusion; direct it to what period you please.

But it is time to forget the cruelties of former days; except so far as the recollection of them may serve to humble us, and to lead us to bless God for the superior light and the improved spirit of the present period. This is, comparatively, an age of catholicism. Prejudice is declining; sectarian asperity is wearing off; and a bright prospect of religious unity is beginning to dawn upon us. It is a prospect full of consolation to the followers of the blessed Jesus. What would we not cheerfully undergo to restore peace and unity to his mystical body? There is no sacrifice which we are not ready to make for securing so great and glorious an object, except that of yielding an important point of faith, or jeopardizing those institutions which our Lord has established as essential ingredients of his Church. Indeed, if the world is ever to behold the blessed spectacle of a return of Christians to one fellowship, it can only be upon primitive principles, and in the bosom of an Apostolic communion. Recollecting that the Church and the Faith have been united by Jesus Christ, we shall always esteem it a sacred duty to bear our testimony against every system that would put them asunder. We conceive it to be particularly incumbent upon us, at the present period, to adhere with augmented zeal to

that divinely instituted ministry without which there can be no Christian Church;* not reproaching our fellow Christians who depart from us on this point, but desiring to contend for what we esteem important truth in the spirit of meekness; and offering to God the fervent prayer that Christians may be induced more and more to examine into the constitution of that Church which the Redeemer sanctifies with his spirit, and which he purchased with his blood;† and thus be led back to the order, not less than the doctrine of Apostolic times;—so that “keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” they may become, truly, “one fold under one shepherd.”

In the spirit, I am willing to hope, of this prayer, I would now subscribe myself, with the sincerest wishes for your temporal and eternal felicity,

Your obedient humble servant

THOMAS Y. HOW.

* “Neither the light nor heat of the sun, nor meat and drink are so necessary to nourish and sustain this present life, as the office of the Apostles and Pastors is necessary to preserve the Church.” *Calvin's Institutes, book iv. chap. iii. sect. 2.* “Her ministry enters into her very being. Had the ministry ever been destroyed, the Church would have been destroyed too.” *Christian's Magazine, vol. i. p. 219.*

† “Out of which (the visible Church) there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.” *Presbyterian Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. sect. 2.*

“Out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise.” *Presbyterian Larger Catechism, answer to question 166.*

“All the ordinances are given to it (the visible Church); all the promises are made to it.” *Christian's Magazine, vol. i. p. 156.*

NOTE

REFERRED TO AT PAGE 63.

Persons who make the distinction between the *esse* and the *bene esse* of the Church, defend it, I believe, solely upon the principle of necessity. They admit that the Apostles, acting under the commission, and in conformity to the will of Christ, established the three orders of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, and gave to the first of these orders the power of conveying the ministerial office by ordination. They admit, with the single exception of cases of necessity, that Episcopal ordination alone is valid. But necessity, it would seem, is not so much a rule to help us to ascertain what the law is, as a circumstance to excuse our *departure from the law*. It can never make that valid which in itself is void. The supposition is that God has given the power of ordaining to Bishops, and that he has not given it to Presbyters. Then ordination by Bishops clothes the person ordained with divine authority; ordination by Presbyters does not. The authority of God can be derived only from himself, and it can be derived from him only in the way which he has appointed for bestowing it. But in the case before us, the instituted mode is admitted to be by imposition of Episcopal hands. Now, if it be declared in Scripture, either in express terms, or by clear implication, that where ordination by Bishops cannot possibly be had, Presbyters may ordain; ordination by Presbyters, under such circumstances of necessity, would be as regular and valid as ordination by Bishops confessedly is in all cases. Presbyters would then be commissioned by God to ordain in a specific case—the case of necessity. But, as far as the information of the writer extends, defence of Presbyterial ordination in this way has never been attempted. If it had been the intention of the great Head of the Church that Presbyters should, in the case supposed, exercise the ordaining power, it is to be presumed that such intention would, either expressly or impliedly, have been declared in Scripture. The position, then, in favour of the validity of Presbyterial ordination, in the circumstances supposed, is to be made out solely by abstract reasoning, grounded on the necessity of the case. But reasoning of this kind, it is conceived, goes not to the point of proving the validity of Presbyterial ordination, but to that of excusing a departure from the divine plan, and to the lawful indulgence of a humble hope that God,

under the urgency of the case, will accept ministrations in themselves void, and make them channels of his grace.

It need scarcely be observed that this argument of necessity is just as strong for ordination by Deacons, or by Laymen, as for ordination by Presbyters; since Presbyters, Deacons, and Laymen, in the article of ordination, stand precisely upon the same ground in Scripture. The power is given to none of them either expressly or impliedly;—and the general principle of necessity would as much justify the exercise of the power by one as by another.

It may be proper to add that the plea of necessity cannot possibly be urged for Presbyterian ordination at the present day in any part of the Christian world. Of course, the distinction taken between the *bene esse* and the *esse* of the Church, will not apply to Presbyterian societies now; inasmuch as Episcopal ordination is, and has long been perfectly within their reach.

The Episcopal Church, it is true, no where says, *in so many words*, that Episcopal imposition of hands is necessary to outward ordination; or, which is the same thing, that the visible Church cannot exist without Episcopacy. She has not thought it necessary or proper formally to make such a declaration; but that this is the fair and inevitable conclusion from her standards, would seem scarcely to admit of a reasonable doubt. For example—it is her doctrine that the visible Church cannot exist without a ministry, and that the ministry cannot exist without a regular external ordination. She declares that Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, has appointed the orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and has given the power of ordination to the order of Bishops. In other words, she declares Episcopal ordination to be the divinely instituted method of conveying the ministerial office:—And, accordingly, on this ground of the divine institution of Episcopal ordination, as the method of conveying the ministerial office, she expressly provides that no person, without Episcopal consecration or ordination, shall be permitted to officiate as a minister of Christ within her limits. Thus we are fairly, and irresistibly brought to the conclusion that Episcopacy is essential to the existence of the visible Church.—No Church without a ministry—No ministry without external ordination—the divinely instituted method of ordination is by Episcopal imposition of hands.

Without Episcopal imposition of hands, then, there is no Church. Or, in the language of Christian Antiquity—“*Ecclesia est in Episcopo—the outward being of a Church consists in the having of a Bishop.*” *Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. iii. p. 125.*

It has been shown, in the same way, that Presbyterian standards make ordination by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery essential to the very existence of the Church of Christ.

The conduct of Archbishop Bancroft, when the Episcopacy was

conveyed by the Church of England to that of Scotland, has been cited to show the extreme care of the former Church to avoid bringing the validity of the ministry in the foreign Reformed Churches into question.

Different accounts are given of the language and conduct of Bancroft on this occasion. Bishop Andrews urged that the persons presented for consecration as Bishops of the Church of Scotland, should first be ordained Priests, on the ground that they had never yet received Episcopal ordination. Archbishop Bancroft, Spotswood tells us, replied, "that where Bishops could not be had, orders given by Presbyters must be reckoned lawful; that unless this was granted, the calling and character of the ministry in most of the Reformed Churches might be questioned." According to Heylin, however, Bancroft acted upon the principle that it is not necessary to pass through the intermediate offices of Deacon and Presbyter, but that a person may be made Bishop by a single consecration. Of this there are some examples in ecclesiastical history. Indeed, the practice of passing through the orders of Deacon and Presbyter before entering upon the office of Bishop, would seem to have arisen, not from any requisition of Scripture, but simply from considerations of general prudence. The intent was, that persons should not be advanced to the important office of Bishop until they had been well tried in inferior stations. Under peculiar circumstances, however, the rule was dispensed with. Accordingly, Ambrose was made Bishop of Milan, Nectarius of Constantinople, Eucherius of Lyons, without passing through the preparatory stages of Deacon and Priest. Indeed, departure from the general rule, in extraordinary cases, was expressly permitted by the Apostolical canons.

It is most true that the Church of England exercised, in reference to the foreign Reformed Churches, great caution and delicacy; avoiding all *explicit* declaration of the necessity of Episcopacy to the existence of the Christian Church; contenting herself with asserting its divine institution, and with suffering none but clergymen Episcopally ordained to officiate within her pale. The primitive Christians, it has been seen, did not think it necessary to practise a similar reserve. "*Ecclesia est in Episcopo*" was their avowed maxim. But the Church of England was very peculiarly situated. In the admiration expressed of her forbearance, in the particular under consideration, the writer of this does not hesitate, therefore, cordially to unite. But it is very much to be regretted that divines of the Church of England, although zealous supporters of the divine institution of Episcopacy, should have gone so far as to admit the validity of Presbyterial ordination. It is true, they confine the admission to cases of necessity. Still this admission has furnished a weapon against which it is not easy to defend the established doctrine or practice of the Church; and it may be questioned whether the concessions made by divines of the

Church of England, in consequence of the peculiar situation in which this Church was for some time placed, have not had the effect of confirming many persons in their error on the subject of Church communion, and of thus injuring the cause of Christian unity and order. The necessity of Episcopal ordination, however, to the existence of the Christian Church, although not declared, *in so many words*, by the Church of England, follows, we contend, irresistibly, from the language of her standards.

It would not appear, therefore, to be accurate to say that the Church of England, at the time of the Reformation, took very moderate ground on the subject of Episcopacy. She took the ground that the ministry is necessary to the Church, and that outward ordination is necessary to the ministry. She took the ground that Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, has appointed the orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and has given to the highest of these the ordaining power. She prescribed it as a sacred rule to herself to recognize no person as a minister of Christ, who had not received Episcopal consecration. It follows, irresistibly, as we have seen, from all this, that Episcopal ordination is essential to the very existence of the Christian Church. The Church of England, it is true, did not think it necessary formally to draw the conclusion, and thus throw it, if I may so speak, in the faces of the foreign Protestants. This would have been treating them unkindly. But does the Church of England any where admit, either expressly or impliedly, that Presbyterial ordination is valid even in cases of necessity? No. Does she any where admit that Episcopacy is not essential to the existence of the Church? No. What foundation, then, is there for saying that she took very moderate ground on this subject? There is nothing but the simple circumstance of her not *formally* drawing that conclusion which results necessarily from the plain and unequivocal language of her standards. In short, she did not declare, *in so many words*—*there can be no Church without a Bishop*; contenting herself with declaring it *in substance*. It was surely not necessary for her to say to her Protestant brethren, you have laid aside Episcopacy, and, therefore, although you are Christian societies, you cannot, fairly and properly, be considered as a Christian Church. If she had not been thus delicately situated with respect to the foreign Protestants, it is very probable that she would have *formally* adopted the primitive language—*Ecclesia est in Episcopo*. But if the Church of England no where says, *in so many words*—*there can be no Church without a Bishop*; she is very far from saying, either expressly or impliedly, *there may be a Church without a Bishop*.

In proof that Episcopacy is not binding upon Christians in all times and places, and is not necessary to the *very being* of the visible Church, reference is sometimes had to the authority of the great Hooker. It may be well to inquire into his opinions upon this subject somewhat *particularly*.

“Let us not fear to be herein bold and peremptory, that if any thing in the Church’s government, surely the first institution of *Bishops* was from *heaven*, was even of *God: the Holy Ghost was the author of it.*” *Ecclesiastical Polity, book viii. sect. 5.* “I may securely, therefore, conclude, there are, at this day, in the Church of England, no other than the same degrees of ecclesiastical orders, namely, *Bishops, Priests,* and *Deacons*, which had their beginning from *Christ and his blessed Apostles* themselves.” *Ibid. book v. sect. 78.*

Hooker, then, believed most fully in the divine institution of Episcopacy. It is impossible to imagine language more express than that which he employs upon this subject.

But did Hooker regard Episcopacy as perpetually binding upon the Church, so as to be unalterable by human authority?

“We hold, that God’s clergy are a state, which hath been, and will be, as long as there is a Church upon earth, *necessarily by the plain word of God himself*; a state whereunto the rest of God’s people must be subject, as touching things that appertain to their soul’s health.” “We hold there have ever been, and *ever ought to be* in such case, at leastwise, two sorts of ecclesiastical persons, the one subordinate unto the other; as to the Apostles in the beginning, and to the Bishops always since, we find plainly both in *Scripture*, and in all ecclesiastical records, other ministers of the word and sacraments have been.” “A number of particularities there are, which make for the more convenient being of these *principal and PERPETUAL* parts in ecclesiastical polity, but yet are not of such constant use and *NECESSITY* in God’s Church. Of this kind are, times and places appointed for the exercise of religion, &c.” “Now, although that which the Scripture hath of things in the former kind be *for ever permanent*; yet, in the latter,” &c. *Ibid. book iii. sect. 11.*

Hooker, therefore, not only represented Episcopacy as a divine institution, but maintained the general principle of its permanent obligation. He admitted, indeed, that it is proper, where ordination by Bishops cannot possibly be had, to resort to Presbyterial ordination rather than suffer the worship and ordinances of the Church entirely to cease. And upon the same principle he would, no doubt, have held it to be lawful, where *clerical* ordination is entirely inaccessible, to have recourse to ordination by laymen. But Hooker goes so far as to say—“When the exigence of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the Church, which otherwise we would willingly keep: where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a Bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give place. And therefore we are not, simply, without exception, to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of Bishops in every *effectual* ordination. These cases of inevitable necessity alone

excepted, none may ordain but only Bishops." *Ecclesiastical Polity, book vii. sect. 14.* Thus Hooker not only concedes the expediency of resorting to Presbyterianial ordination in cases of necessity, but seems to admit Presbyterianial ordination, under such circumstances, to be really valid. Whether the learned author, in this, has not gone beyond the strict line of consistency, I will not here presume to examine. But it is perfectly clear, from the passages which have been cited, that Hooker maintained, expressly and unequivocally, the *general* principles—that distinct and subordinate orders of ministers were established by divine authority—that the right of ordination is exclusively in the order of Bishops—and that this was intended by its divine author as a *permanent* institution, which man should have no power to change. To these general principles Hooker admitted but a single exception—that of inevitable necessity;—where the worship and ordinances must cease, or Episcopal ordination be dispensed with.

With the single exception, just mentioned, it was the undoubted doctrine of Hooker that Episcopacy is essential to the *very being* of the Christian Church. For example, he held the ministry to be essential to the existence of the Church, and outward ordination to be essential to the ministry.* The power of ordination he represented as peculiar to the order of Bishops—"The power of ordaining both Deacons and Presbyters, the power to give the power of order unto others, this also hath been always *peculiar unto Bishops*. It hath not been heard of that inferior Presbyters were ever authorized to ordain." Thus we have the general principles asserted—Episcopacy is essential to outward ordination—outward ordination is essential to the ministry—the ministry is essential to the Church.

But we will not rely simply upon constructive evidence, however irresistible it may be. "Nor was this order peculiar unto some few Churches, but the whole world universally became subject thereunto; insomuch as they did not account it to be a Church which was not subject unto a Bishop. It was the general received persuasion of the ancient Christian world, that *Ecclesia est in Episcopo*, the outward *being of a Church* consisted in the *having of a Bishop*." *Ecclesiastical Polity, book vii. sect. 5.*

Hooker would have been the last person to call in question a doctrine that could plead the universal reception and practice of the primitive Church. But, apart from this, he evidently mentions the opinion with approbation; and, of course, adopts it as his own.

Thus Hooker clearly made Episcopacy a fundamental of the Christian Church;—that upon which she depended not merely for her *well being*, but for her *very being*.

Profoundly as we venerate the memory of Hooker, we would take

* *Ecclesiastical Polity, book iii. sect. 2.*

the liberty, with great deference, to express the opinion, that, in admitting, as he seems to admit, Presbyterian ordination to be *really valid* in cases of necessity, he has not accurately stated the operation of the principle in question; but has been led, by his amiable feelings toward his brethren, the non-Episcopal Protestants, to recognize them as true Churches of Christ, in direct inconsistency with his own deliberate assertion—*Ecclesia est in Episcopo*—the outward BEING of a Church consisted in the HAVING OF A BISHOP. Great as may be the authority of Hooker, it must certainly yield to the universal practice and persuasion of the primitive Church. We may add, that the charitable admission of Hooker falls short of its object. He expressly confines his admission of the validity of Presbyterian ordination to cases of *inevitable necessity*. Now, it may be questioned whether a case of Presbyterian ordination ever occurred that could fairly be brought within this description. The Reformers might have found great difficulty in procuring Episcopal ordination; but, certainly, history will not warrant us in saying that there was any *actual impossibility* in the case. With proper efforts and proper sacrifices the business might have been accomplished. But anxious as the Reformers were to procure Bishops, their zeal was not of that thorough kind which is checked only by an absolute impossibility of attaining its object. Whatever may have been the circumstances of the *original Reformers*, the plea of necessity can be of no avail to modern separatists.

Real charity, let it be repeated, does not consist in lowering the standard of Christian doctrine or order to avoid hurting the feelings of others. Religious truth is of too much importance to be accommodated to the feelings of any set of men, however respectable or excellent. Charity consists in love to our fellow creatures; in a sincere wish and endeavour to do them good. It will dispose us, no doubt, to think favourably of the intentions of one another; to cherish the delightful belief that real piety exists among all denominations of Christians; and that, wherever it exists, even fundamental error will not intercept the mercy of heaven. At the same time, it is of the utmost importance that we should, in every respect, embrace the truth as it is in Christ. Sincerity in error cannot possibly be so acceptable to God as sincerity in the truth; otherwise truth and error must be precisely upon a level in his view. We must answer to God for our errors, not less than for our actions. It may be our own fault that we are in error; and just in proportion as error is the result of culpable causes, will it be a subject of condemnation. This, in any individual case, can be known only to God; with whom all judgment should, accordingly, be left. All we are at liberty to do is to lay down such *general rules* as may be fairly collected from Scripture; in the exercise of which liberty we may venture to say that responsibility for error will be great in proportion as it is entertained

under abundant opportunities of accurate information, and as the consequences resulting from it are likely to be deeply injurious to the best interests of the Church of Christ. Even in such cases, a merciful God will, we have reason to trust, make allowance for the force of prejudice, and of early impression. But what shall we say of those who continue in pernicious error from apathy that will not inquire, or from pride that will not submit to the mortification which a renunciation of former opinions is supposed to involve? It is constantly represented in Scripture as a serious and deep offence to rend the body of Christ. Imposition of sinful terms of communion seems to be the only justification that can be pleaded. Persons, officiating as clergymen, are particularly bound to subdue all prejudice and passion, that they may ascertain, by calm and thorough investigation, whether they have a valid commission from Christ; or are ministering, without any authority from him, in holy things. Inquiry, thus conducted, we do humbly think, would produce the most happy effects on the unity of the Christian Church.

THE END.

ERRATA.

- Page 19, first line of the notes, for "ageed" read *agreed*.
 83, last line, for "50" read 60.
 434, line 8, for "Rerformers" read *Reformers*.
 447, lines 21, 24, and 25, for "thurst" read *thrust*.

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