





# A LETTER

TO THE

## REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.

IN REFERENCE TO HIS

LETTER TO THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

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## A LETTER,

*&c. &c.*

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REVEREND SIR,

IN addressing you in this manner, I request to be understood to entertain very sincere respect for your piety, while I freely offer my animadversions on certain excesses, into which you appear to me to have been led by your anxiety to maintain a true profession of your adherence to the church of Christ. By your published letter, addressed to the Bishop of Oxford, you have in effect invited such animadversions; and that a considerable time had passed without the appearance of a reply may have caused surprise to you, as it was to me a motive for addressing you on the subject, especially when in a private discussion this consideration had been urged upon me in proof of the correctness of your views. I had accordingly, with this intention, made some progress in preparing the following letter, when I found that the immediate occasion had passed away, a very able letter on the subject, addressed, like your own, to the Bishop of Oxford, having been published "by a clergyman of the

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diocese and a resident member of the university." If this letter had comprehended some topics which had occurred to me as important in the controversy, I would have abandoned my intention of taking any part in it, for in all of which it treats I entirely concur, nor could I hope to treat them with more ability or research. The writer, however, has professedly confined himself to certain parts of your letter, leaving to others the care of animadverting upon the remainder. I am therefore induced to persist in my original design of addressing you, adding thus my efforts to those of the very able writer, to whom I have alluded.

I must premise that I entirely agree with you in regarding the present time as a most important and interesting crisis of our church, and even in thinking that this has been evidenced, to borrow your own language,<sup>1</sup> "by the almost electric rapidity with which these principles are confessedly passing from one breast to another, from one end of England to the other." But I cannot concur with you in concluding from this extraordinary diffusion of your principles, nor from "the sympathy which they find in the sister or daughter churches of Scotland and America," that the note which has thus vibrated throughout every part of our church, attests that "itself had been *attuned* to it by a higher unseen hand." This is dangerous reasoning. We may indeed conclude, that the public

<sup>1</sup> Letter, pp. 230, 231 ; second edition.

mind of our church had been by some predisposing causes prepared for receiving impressions of more than ordinary seriousness ; but it is quite a distinct consideration to pronounce, as you are disposed to do, that the particular note, which has been actually addressed to it, had been attuned to it by a special interposition of the divine providence. It was the complaint of Hooker,<sup>2</sup> that the reformation had been carried into dissent by the desire of withdrawing as far as possible from the corruptions of the church of Rome ; and it is now to be considered whether, on the contrary, a desire of separating as much as possible from the evils of dissent is not at this time impelling the more serious members of our church into the other extreme, of adopting much of the character and spirit of that corrupted church, however they may, and doubtless with sincerity, protest against its grosser abuses.

In offering my observations to your attention, I beg leave to assure you, that I am not at all disposed to urge against you, so far as your intentions are concerned, any of the charges which you have particularised in your letter,<sup>3</sup> as those by which you have been encountered. I expressly disclaim all disposition to charge you with “disaffection to our own church, unfaithfulness to her teaching, a desire to bring in new doctrines, and to conform our church to the church of Rome, to bring back either entire or modified popery.” However I may

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. Polity, book iv. sect. 8.      <sup>3</sup> Page 10.

be of opinion that your principles and practices have tendencies of these descriptions, I absolutely acquit you of any intention, which might authorise any of these charges. I believe, on the contrary, that you are actuated by the best and purest motives, and impute to you only an excess in your anxious desire to recover our common church from a remissness, into which it had confessedly fallen—but an excess tending very directly towards many and important errors, both of practice and of opinion. The very respect, however, with which I, in common with many others, regard you as a sincerely religious man, renders it more imperative, that I should point out those errors, because the example of such a man must otherwise recommend them with a prevailing authority.

In perusing your letter I am, I confess, staggered not a little by your disapprobation of the name *protestant*, which I have been ever taught to value and to venerate. It is, you say,<sup>4</sup> negative. But I cannot admit that it is on that account ill-fitted to characterise the faith of any portion of the christian church, because I see on every side, in all their enormity, the very abuses, in the rejection of which that appellation was originally assumed; and I cannot deem it unimportant, that the appellation should still be retained, as a standing evidence of our continued and undiminished dissent from those abuses. Perhaps, indeed, I might even

<sup>4</sup> Page 13.



plead in its behalf, that a negative is better fitted than an affirmative appellation, for designating the faith of those who, in separating from the abuses of the church of Rome, wished still to be considered as adhering to the same catholic church of Christ, of which they regard that of Rome as a corrupted member. An affirmative appellation might have been understood to denote a new sect of Christians, as holding a peculiar and appropriate creed, and therefore to imply a separation from the general body; whereas the negative designation, *protestant*, indicates only a partial disagreement, which may nevertheless be reconcilable to general or catholic unity.

Nor has this obnoxious appellation been actually used to denote any schismatical separation from the church of Rome, for the members of the protestant church of England have never refused to receive into communion those of the church of Rome, whenever they chose to assist in its services, though the corruptions of the latter had rendered it impossible that themselves should participate in the observance of its ritual. The separation, therefore, was but partial, being limited to the necessity, by which it had been occasioned. The members of the church of Rome were regarded by us as erring brethren, with whom we were still anxious to maintain religious communion, so far as it might be practicable without acquiescing in the continuance of abuses, which we had deemed ourselves

bound to reject. Nor has this been a mere effort of christian forbearance, moderating and mitigating the violence of contending churches, but a result springing essentially from the constitution and character of our own, for from the church of Rome, corrupted though it was, we profess to have received the sacred orders of our priesthood, and the commissioned authority of our episcopacy; and we are accordingly ever ready to acknowledge, as already invested with the holy orders of our church, and therefore requiring no new ordination for admission among our clergy, those of the clergy of that church, who have from time to time connected themselves with ours.

With extreme regret, therefore, have I read, in a periodical publication<sup>5</sup> believed to be now an organ of your association, and actually quoted by yourself as expressing your sentiments, the following passage, occurring indeed, where it might little be expected, in a review of the *Republic* of Plato. "Can we not trace back," says the reviewer, "our own present crimes and miseries, as a nation, to the hour when first we abandoned the only true standard of external truth by losing sight of a *catholic* church, as the external witness of an external revelation?" Do these words, then, indeed, mean, that we should never in any degree have separated ourselves from the church of Rome, because it was the external witness of an external revelation?

<sup>5</sup> Theological Review for January, 1840.

Were we so bound, as Christians, to continue to participate in a worship which, in our hearts, we abjured as corrupted? Could we possibly have done less than was then done, and yet preserve the purity of our christian principles? Extreme reformers have heretofore deemed themselves justified in separating from our church, because we had not effected an entire separation from that of Rome; and now it seems that the more zealous members of it look back with sorrow and regret to even our moderate separation, as detaching us from a church, with which it was still our duty to continue a full and entire connexion.

This opinion must be founded on a belief, that the existing church might have been purified from its corruptions, if the reformers had remained in its communion, however repugnant to their own conception of genuine christianity. But how can such a belief be reasonably entertained at this day? The assumed infallibility of the church of Rome must for ever forbid any essential amelioration in its own character, because in the very act of improvement that pretension must be renounced. It has arrogated the attribute of God, and it cannot be amended in any ordinary process of human improvement. In the century preceding the reformation, the necessity of reforming the church had been very generally felt by men not at all disposed to be concerned in a separation, and various efforts were exerted for attaining this desirable object;

but the result served only to demonstrate, that the improvement could not be effected within the church, as it was then constituted. In that century, a council was held first at Pisa, afterwards at Constance, and another subsequently at Basle, for the express purpose of reforming the church from its manifold and gross abuses. Their exertions terminated in utter failure, and the council of Constance has even rendered itself for ever infamous by ratifying the papal ordinance, that faith should not be observed to the prejudice of the church. A church arrogating infallibility may transmit faithfully the creeds and orders of our religion, but must leave its own abuses unamended, so long as it retains its form and character.

You profess, indeed, even while you<sup>6</sup> borrow the language of the very periodical publication which has spoken so hardly of the reformation, to be, at least, “at this moment,” well satisfied with “the existing state of things;” but your whole argument directs the mind to a different standard, to be discovered, as you conceive, in the ordinances of another and purer church, according to which you believe that our reformers wished to trace their path. This assumption involves the main question at issue between your association and those members of our church who differ from you, which is simply whether our reformation has indeed

set up as its standard the authority of the church, as it existed in some earlier period subsequent to that of the apostles, or refers its faith and ordinances immediately to those communications which had been directly made by divine authority, either by our Saviour himself or by his inspired followers. You have, indeed, proposed very fairly to decide this question by an examination of our articles, in which course I propose to follow you. But it is necessary that some preliminary considerations of the authority of the church should be previously discussed.

The main question at issue is, indeed, what authority should be admitted as belonging to the church? Every member of our church readily acknowledges the high authority of the earlier church as a witness of the genuineness of the scriptures, and of the sense in which their more obscure passages were understood by those, who lived nearest to the times of the writers. But this acknowledgment is not sufficient to satisfy your pretensions. While the church is thus admitted as a mere witness, however respected, the value of its testimony must be estimated by referring it to the written word; nor is any distinct and independent authority conceded to it for the direction of individuals in matters either of faith or of practice. You have, on the other hand,<sup>7</sup> stated

<sup>7</sup> Pages 30, 53.

that the church is not only a witness, but also an expositor. Nor can this be understood to signify merely that the church may declare its own sense of the right interpretation of the sacred scripture, and claim for its exposition a respectful attention, for this also every member of our church would most willingly concede : but you claim that it may do this with an authority binding on the consciences of its individual members, even in contradiction to their private judgment.

This doctrine of the paramount authority of the church is founded on the declaration of our Saviour, in the concluding verse of the Gospel of Matthew, to the eleven apostles, “That he would be with them always, even to the end of the world:”—a most important declaration surely, but not by any means warranting a persuasion of infallible authority. In the verse next except one preceding this assurance, our Saviour informed them, as the ground of the commission given in the intervening verse, that “All power had been given to him in heaven and on earth.” On this ground they were directed by him to go and instruct and baptise all nations ; and they were, in conclusion, assured that he would himself be ever with them. We may, therefore, rest persuaded that the church will ever experience his special protection ; but we have not from these words any warrant for assuming over individuals the exercise of an infallible authority of direction. Our Saviour has not added, whatsoever you shall

decree in my name shall be implicitly received by my church ; but, on the contrary, has limited them in teaching to all things whatsoever he had himself commanded them. With this limitation they were assured of his especial protection. They were not empowered to determine by any intrinsic authority what things should be observed in the church.

If these words of our Saviour should indeed be considered as conveying to the church an infallible authority of dictation, which should in every case overrule the convictions of individuals, it is not easy to see why this authority must not be considered as belonging to the church equally in every age, the promise being so expressly extended through all future time—*πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας*. You, however, have been aware of this difficulty, and have devised an expedient for extricating yourself from it ; whether it is sufficient for this purpose is now to be considered. “And hence it is,” you say,<sup>8</sup> “not from any abstract ideal of the first ages, that our divines appeal to the church anterior to the division of the east and west :” and you add,<sup>9</sup> “this they do, because the church was then one ; and it was to his one church, and as being one, that our Lord’s promise was made. And now, on that ground, her functions are, in this respect, suspended ; she cannot meet as one ; and this coincidence of the errors

<sup>8</sup> Page 43.

<sup>9</sup> Page 44.

of these later days, and the interruption of her harmony, seems remarkably to illustrate this fulfilment of our Lord's promise ; particular churches have fallen into error because the church has separated, and the church is prevented from meeting that she may not, as a whole, fix any of these errors. What further fulfilments our Lord's promise may have hereafter we know not ; or whether the church shall again be at one, and so be in a condition to claim it in any enlarged degree. It might be so ; for although we have broken our traditions, yet might an appeal to those of the church, when it was yet one, set at rest what now agitates us. For the present, sufficient for us what has been bestowed in the period of her unity ; the main articles of the faith have been fixed and guarded by her, and we possess them in her creeds, and believe that the church shall, by virtue of her Saviour's promise, preserve them to the end."

If I rightly understand this passage, the great sin of the church, in your opinion, was the religious separation of the east and west, which occurred, according to Mr. Palmer,<sup>1</sup> in the year 1054, when the eastern and western churches were separated by mutual excommunications. By that unhappy division, you conceive the promised protection to have been forfeited. The articles of the faith, however, had been happily fixed while the

<sup>1</sup> Treatise on the Church of Christ, vol. ii. p. 189. London, 1838.



church was yet one, and will be preserved to her to the end by virtue of her Saviour's promise; and our sole expedient for setting at rest what now agitates us is, you think, to make an appeal to the traditions of the church when it was yet one, or during the earlier period of its existence.

Now, if there be any one thing in our Saviour's promise more clear than another, it is, that it cannot be fairly understood to convey an assurance liable to be suspended on any account whatsoever. The terms implying uninterrupted continuance are as express as any which language could supply,—*all the days, even to the end of the world*; and therefore I feel myself required to infer, that the subject of the assurance could not have been that, which admitted a suspension. Your expedient therefore, instead of removing the difficulty arising from the errors and abuses of the later church, presents to my mind an additional argument in proof, that the promise of our Saviour could not have been made with any reference to the authority of the church. I do not maintain that even the providential protection of the church has been promised without any limitation, for I see that it is limited to the consideration of what he had himself commanded; but I contend that the promise cannot be understood to be at any time wholly withdrawn. There is in it no intimation of any limit or qualification by which its active operation was to be suspended, and the followers of Christ were to be thenceforward aban-

done, as a church, to the advantages already bestowed, without any prospect of further protection, except in their own efforts to return to religious unity by a common appeal to the ordinances of the earlier church. He did not warn his followers that they should be careful so far to maintain ecclesiastical unity, that they might be at least capable of being represented by a general council, as the indispensable condition, on the observance of which they might find a hope of experiencing his promised protection; but he assured them, without limitation or reserve, of his immediate presence and consequent support, *during all the days*, even to the end of that great period, which they were then directed to commence.

You argue, indeed, “that it was to his one church, and as being one, that our Lord’s promise was made;” and I am disposed to admit your position, but not in a sense in which it would be available to your argument. Your argument requires that the promise should be conceived to have been made to the outward and visible church, as one; but the limitation which I conceive to be connected with the promise, can relate only to that invisible church, which is constituted by the union connecting each individual with Christ. “Teaching them,” says our Saviour, “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;” he adds, “lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” So long, and so long only, as you

adhere closely to my instructions, may you depend implicitly on my presence and protection. That there will be always a number of such Christians, however dispersed in place, and even separated by being connected with churches outwardly disunited, I can entertain no doubt; and therefore I rely firmly on the continuance of the promise, without any suspension on account of any interruption of external union.

How entirely your attention has been directed to the outward authorities of the church, even in disregard of the piety of its individual members, appears from a part of the passage just now cited from your letter. You tell us that the church is prevented from meeting, that she may not, as a whole, fix any of her errors; appearing to have conceived that, if the church could by any possibility be now assembled as a whole, she would by that outward unity be actually empowered to *fix* her errors as the authorised ordinances of our religion. In another passage<sup>2</sup> you have proceeded yet further, for you have attributed to particular churches an authority, not indeed sufficient for establishing new articles of doctrine, but powerful enough to preclude all attempts at individual reformation, by passing from a corrupted to a purer profession of belief. Speaking of the church of England, you say, "We receive as articles of

<sup>2</sup> Page 52.

faith what she delivers to us as fixed by the universal church; what she has by her private judgment deduced from holy scripture we teach, because we also think it to be so deducible; if we did not so think, we should obey, must belong to her, but could not teach. Her sacraments we receive, because she has received the commission to impart them; her rites, because she has the power to ordain or to change them. To our own church we owe submission; to the decisions of the church universal, faith." In support of this fixed relation to our own particular church you had premised, "We belong to her because we were baptised in her, and she is the descendant of the primitive church in this land, and her bishops the successors of the apostles." The same plea for an unchanged adherence to his church would be not less applicable to the Romanist of Spain, Portugal, or Italy, and would thus forbid utterly any separation from a regularly constituted church, however corrupted.

Mr. Palmer, who is not less anxious to establish the controlling authority of the church, appears to have felt that your supposition of a suspension of the promise of our Saviour is liable to some objection, for he has devised a very different mode of guarding himself against the admission of the abuses of the papacy. Whether this is more satisfactory it may be useful now to consider. His principle for maintaining the authority of the

Church in coercing the judgment of individuals, is,<sup>3</sup> that every decree possesses such authority, if it shall have received the acquiescence of *the church dispersed*. What he understands by *the church dispersed*, he has not thought it necessary to explain. I, for my part, cannot understand any other part of the general church than that comprehending all members of it not represented in the council issuing the decree. If this be the meaning, Mr. Palmer appears to me to have cut the ground from under his own feet, by referring the authority of a decree to the sanction of the judgment of individuals. In one passage of his treatise<sup>4</sup> he has even admitted expressly the controlling authority of private judgment. “‘Though,” says he, “it be abstractedly possible that some prevalent opinion may be incorrect, yet we should not hesitate to believe generally what is received in the visible church, because the promises of Christ assure us that the church, on the whole, teaches the truth revealed by him; and the authority which teaches us christian doctrine is so probable in itself, that we can never be justified in doubting it on any point, *unless there be clear evidence that scripture and catholic tradition do not support, but are rather repugnant to it, in that point.*” How is such evi-

<sup>3</sup> Treatise on the Church of Christ, vol. ii. pp. 153, 154, 158, 164, 165, 356.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. vol. ii. p. 148.

dence to be found except in the exercise of individual judgment?

Of the general reasoning, by which Mr. Palmer supports his doctrine of the imperative control of the church over the judgment of individuals, it may be sufficient to adduce a single specimen. "Whatever texts or arguments," he says,<sup>5</sup> "establish the right of individuals to judge, establish directly that of the church. I conclude, therefore, that the right of individuals to judge, directly establishes that of the church." I confess that this, which is his leading argument, appears to me to fall within the description of that inconclusive reasoning, which in logic is denominated *sophisma compositionis*, or a fallacious inference from the parts to the whole. It is not by any one maintained, that an individual has a right to coerce the private judgment of another; and there is therefore no ground for inferring, that any number of the individuals composing a church has a right to coerce the private judgment of a minority. The individual right claimed, and the collective right inferred from it, are dissimilar, and even contradictory; and no inference can be fairly made from the one to the other. The logical example of this kind of reasoning is this: *three* and *five* are odd numbers; therefore *eight*, their sum, is an odd number. This, it must be admitted, is rather

<sup>5</sup> Treatise on the Church of Christ, vol. ii. p. 97.

puerile ; but it has the merit of being distinct, and I really do not perceive, that the argument of Mr. Palmer, though a little more specious, is at all more conclusive.

Mr. Palmer has cited from the early fathers many passages, in which they have greatly magnified the authority of the church. But it should be considered, that these passages were written in opposition to those *gnostic* sects, which, in their vain pretension to a superior knowledge of divine things, had fabricated for themselves scriptures of their own, differing in many important particulars from the authentic revelation transmitted by the church ; so many and so important, indeed, that the late professor Burton<sup>6</sup> denied to them, in any proper sense, the appellation even of heretics, contending that they should rather be considered as externs than as erring members of the church of Christ. In these circumstances, it was natural that the fathers should, in the strongest language, oppose the authority of the church to adversaries so opposed to the truth ; but it does not at all appear, that in any of these passages they sought to coerce the private judgment of any individual acknowledging the same gospel with themselves. The first question which gave occasion for a determination of the church, in regard to those who

<sup>6</sup> Lect. upon the Eccles. Hist. of the First Cent. p. 379. Oxford, 1831.

were properly its own members, acknowledging the same scriptures, but differing in their interpretation of them, was that of Arianism; and to decide this question the first general council was convened. On such an occasion we might expect to find a decree claiming entire and unqualified submission, if it was indeed the received principle that to the general decision of the Church, on an article of faith, all private judgment should be required to give way. But we find<sup>7</sup> no such pretension advanced by the council in the recorded history of the transaction. The very numerous bishops assembled under Constantine, who had before them a decree of the apostles claiming the sanction of the Holy Spirit, and might be believed to be sufficiently inclined to magnify their own new-found power, prefixed no such claim of authority to their determination of this most important question, but merely issued it, as they were well authorised to do, for the regulation of the public order and profession of the church. The emperor did, indeed, in his letter, claim for the decree of the council the respect due to an act sanctioned by divine authority; but the question to be considered by us is, what did the council claim for itself? The testimonial of the emperor is of the less value, as he,<sup>8</sup> five years afterwards, in disregard

<sup>7</sup> Socratis Hist. lib. i. c. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 417. Lond. 1782.



of the determination of the council, recalled Arius from his exile.

The man, who more than all others should have been disposed by circumstances to magnify the authority of the council, was Athanasius. It had been convened chiefly to determine the great question of the divine nature of Jesus Christ, contested between him and Arius, and it gave him a decisive triumph over his adversary. If, then, this first œcumenical council were indeed at that time held to have been an unquestionable expositor of the faith of Christians, we might expect to find in the writings of this eminent father of the church some express declaration of its unimpeachable right of deciding this controversy, which appears to have continued for some time to agitate and distract the church. It appears, indeed, that there is among his writings<sup>9</sup> an epistle on this very subject, from which his opinion may be collected. We find in it, however, no statement of this kind, but, on the contrary, language of a very different import. In reply to an anticipated plea of the Arians, that nothing should be stated concerning our Saviour except what is stated in the scripture, and in the words of scripture, he says, “so also would I have consented that we should do, because the arguments of truth, which are taken from the scriptures are far more fit, than those which are

<sup>9</sup> *Epistola de Decretis Nicænæ Synodi*, ATHAN. Opera, tom. i. pars 1, p. 237.

drawn from any other source.” Nor is this all, for,<sup>1</sup> in writing of two provincial synods, he urged, “what, I beseech you, is the use of synods, when the Nicene is sufficient, which, being assembled against the Arian and other heresies, hath condemned them all by its own sound faith?” He did not tell them, as I must suppose you would have done, that a provincial council has not any right to prescribe articles of faith, but merely that their interference was unnecessary, that of Nice having been sufficient. The truth is, that the pretension has arisen in opposition to the assumed infallibility of the papacy, and it should be abandoned to the church, in which it had its origin.

All the confusion of this question appears to have arisen from the fundamental error of rejecting the distinction between the visible and the invisible church of Christ, which had grown out of the reformation; between the outward framework, by which the orders and sacraments of the church are regularly transmitted from age to age, and the inward influences of the Holy Spirit, establishing the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of individuals, however dispersed and unconnected. The peculiar opinions and practices of yourself and your associates require the acknowledged existence of an outward and visible church, in the determinations of which, whether relating to doctrine or to mere

<sup>1</sup> Epist. de Synodis Arimini in Italiâ et Seleuciæ in Isauriâ.

order, all should be obliged to acquiesce with entire submission, as of the commissioned expositor of the will of God; and you, therefore, ascribe to that outward church the promise of his personal presence and protection, which our Saviour had coupled with the condition, that men should be taught to observe what he had himself commanded.

The distinction between the visible and the invisible church is expressly authorised by our Saviour. When he<sup>2</sup> compared the kingdom of heaven to a net, which “gathered of every kind,” the good and the bad, to be separated by the angels at the end of the world, he must have spoken of an outward and visible church, comprehending, together with sincere believers, all who professed a belief in him, however little deserving to be acknowledged as his followers. When, on the other hand,<sup>3</sup> he told the Pharisees that the kingdom of God was within them, he must have spoken of that regenerated state of the heart, which would constitute a true believer and faithful follower, and must, therefore, have limited his conception of his church to those scattered individuals who should be members of it in the sincerity of their christian profession, though perhaps not among its authorities. Nor is there any incongruity in maintaining that, while an outward frame-

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 47-50.

<sup>3</sup> Luke, xvii. 21.

work has been, by the divine providence, supported for preserving due order in the visible church, the special object of the divine protection through every age should be that aggregate of pious Christians who, in various circumstances and in distant places, are yet united together in one christian community by their common engraftment into the vine of the gospel.

It is natural that no special attention should have been given to this distinction, until the accumulated abuses of the visible church had rendered it indispensable to the purity of religion to effect a separation from them, though not from the framework of the church, in which they had been engendered. The minds of Christians were then, necessarily, directed to another consideration of the character of the church, distinct from that which had previously prevailed, and had been abused to the assumption of an undue dominion over the minds of men ; and they sought in the obscure and secret piety of individuals the constituent parts of an unmixed and pure church, to which the promised presence and protection of our Saviour might safely be understood to have been assured. The two characters of the church appear to have two distinct functions: the visible church, that of maintaining and transmitting the ordinances and divine commission of the gospel ; and the invisible, that of forming and preserving within the other a number of Christians, spiritually united with their

Lord, however little connected outwardly among themselves. The former is represented by *the net*, the latter by *the leaven*, of our Lord's own illustrations. Nor is the former of these without its appropriate promise ; for, as we are assured of the immediate presence and protection of our Saviour in supporting the other, so are we assured by a distinct promise, that the power of hell should not prevail against the visible church, but that it should ever continue to bear witness, by maintaining a sound profession of the faith, to the doctrine of christian salvation.

As this distinction is the essential principle of the reformation, so is it very plainly discoverable in the articles of our church. In the nineteenth article, a definition is given of the *visible* church. Why should this have been proposed, if *an invisible* church were not at the same time acknowledged to exist? The two terms are correlative, and either without the other would be unmeaning and absurd. Neither is this all ; for in the twenty-first article it is stated, that general councils “may err, and sometimes have erred.” What is the meaning of these words but that the visible church, though collectively represented in a general council, is different from that aggregate of the faithful followers of Christ which is favoured with the presence and protection of their Lord? To abandon the distinction is in effect to renounce the reformation, and return to that misconception of the character

of the church, in which all the corruptions of the church of Rome have had their origin.

It should not, therefore, be matter of surprise that you are found palliating practices, which are foreign from the spirit of the reformation, as they are not warranted by any sound authority of scripture. You disclaim, and doubtless with sincerity, any intention, or wish, to return to the communion of the church of Rome; but you do actually return to that assertion of church-authority, which by degrees was matured into the monstrous usurpation of the papacy. Nor can I quit this part of my subject without noticing a passage,<sup>4</sup> in which you intimate your resumption of the title *θεοτόκος*, and represent the objections with which you have been on that account assailed, as illustrating “the danger of an over-anxiety to recede from Rome, or of sacrificing truths which that corrupt church has abused.” And is it then indeed a truth, that Mary was the mother of Jesus as God? We are taught in the Scripture that she was his mother according to the flesh, or in regard to his human nature; and we find him rather availing himself of occasions for admonishing both herself and his disciples, that this relation did not invest her with any title to interfere with him, even in the conduct of his ministry on earth. You remark, indeed, that these objections “imply that some have sadly

<sup>4</sup> Page 25.

forgotten what was the origin of the Nestorian heresy." I would remark, on the other hand, that to resist these objections might rather seem to imply a forgetfulness of the origin of those grosser abuses, by which, in the church of Rome, she is adored as *the queen of heaven*, and in the Greek church worshipped as *all-holy*.

You intimate, indeed, in a note, your approbation of a reference of this title, *θεοτόκος*, to the authority of the council of Ephesus, which falls within your period of the authoritative unity of the church; and you support the reference by observing that "the state, by the advice of our church, acknowledged that what the council of Ephesus 'ordered, judged, or determined to be heresy,'" is such. 1 Eliz. i. 36. The statute did indeed so acknowledge; but, as that council was convened expressly for the condemnation of the doctrine of Nestor, which was understood to separate the divine from the human character in our Saviour, and thereby to constitute in his nature two distinct personalities, the condemnation of this doctrine must be considered as the object of the statute, and not the epithet given in the decree of the council to his earthly parent, which is but incidentally introduced to justify that condemnation by the authority of those by whom it had been bestowed. "In tali sensu," says the decree,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Summa Conc. per F. B. Carranzan, p. 185. Salm. 1551.

“sanctos patres fuisse comperimus. Ideoque illi non dubitaverunt sanctam virginem dicere θεοτόκον, *i. e.* Deum parientem; non quia verbi natura deitasque in sanctâ virgine sumpsit exordium, sed quia ex eâ natum sit sacrum illud corpus, animatum animâ rationali, cui substantialiter adunatum Dei verbum, carnaliter natum esse dicitur.” Well, indeed, might the council conclude that such was the opinion of those fathers who had used the epithet, for it appears<sup>6</sup> to have given occasion to the heresy of Nestor, by provoking opposition; and it might seem that the objections, with which you have been assailed on account of this epithet, had been urged by those who well remembered, not by those who had “sadly forgotten, what was the occasion of the Nestorian heresy.”

On the other hand, I do not see how you can, consistently with your principle of church-authority, disown the decree of the second council of Nice, which established the worship of saints, reliques, and images. This council was convened towards the close of the eighth century, and therefore two centuries and a half before that time, which Mr. Palmer has fixed for the disruption of the unity of the church, on account of which you conceive that the promised protection of our Saviour has been suspended.

Having disposed of these preliminary consider-

<sup>6</sup> Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.* vol. ii. p. 66.



ations, I will now proceed to review your examination of our articles, on which you have proposed to rely for your vindication.

On the first five articles of our church, those which relate to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, you say,<sup>7</sup> “happily no imputation has been cast against us; and on these, even the church of Rome is allowed to have transmitted faithfully the doctrine of the primitive church.” In all this I readily concur, though without entertaining on this account much reverence for the fidelity of the church of Rome, because I perceive that it is to be ascribed to the absence of temptation, the corrupting principle of the church of Rome having been a desire of establishing a system of priestly domination, and not, as among the orientals, a disposition to indulge in speculative refinements on the mystery of the divine nature. Neither can I consider as much to be commended the fidelity of a church, which, to veil its own idolatry, has expunged a commandment from the decalogue, and, to screen from inquiry its manifold abuses, has shut up the written word of God from the laity.

I also concur with you in holding,<sup>8</sup> that “the natural bias of what terms itself *a scriptural theology*, is to a naked creed,” to a creed stripped of the distinguishing doctrines of our religion, because, in appealing to the authority of private judgment, it

<sup>7</sup> Page 22.

<sup>8</sup> Page 23.

tends to generate an excessive self-confidence in the minds of individuals. But does it therefore follow, that the exercise of private judgment, in collecting from the scripture the essential doctrines of our religion, should be proscribed? Is there no danger of a contrary kind? I know that you protest against any warning reference to the example of the church of Rome, because you teach that the promised protection of Christ had been withdrawn. I have already reasoned against this distinction, and I will not repeat what I have urged. I will, therefore, merely state the conclusion to which I have myself been led, that the path of the sincere Christian lies between two opposite dangers; that of unduly confiding in his private judgment, and so being hurried into an unscriptural rationalism, and that of too implicitly submitting to the guidance of his church, and so being seduced into all the corrupt tenets and practices of an ambitious hierarchy. The church of England has happily taken that middle course, as will appear from the articles, neither referring all consideration of doctrine to the judgment of every individual, nor yet setting up an authority distinct from the written word, to which individuals should be bound to submit implicitly in every case their private judgment, as to a commissioned expositor of the faith.

In proceeding through the articles, you take together the sixth, *Of the sufficiency of the holy scriptures for salvation*, and the twentieth, *Of the*

*authority of the church*; to which I conceive you should have added the twenty-first, *Of the authority of general councils*, as you attribute so much to that unity, which permits a general council to be assembled. These involve the consideration of the main question of this controversy, as proposing to determine the nature and extent of the authority of the general church of Christ.

We all readily admit the church to be the witness, on whose testimony we must rely for the genuineness of the records of our religion; we all, moreover, admit the testimony of the church to be of great value in interpreting these records, as it has transmitted to us, together with the records themselves, a knowledge of the interpretation given to them by those, who lived in times near to that of the original communication of our religion, and may, therefore, be believed to have received by tradition from the inspired teachers some knowledge of their true acceptation. But your tenets require much more than this, for they demand that we should esteem the church to be, not only the witness, but also the authorised expounder of the sacred writings; so that, in the consideration of the true faith, nothing is left to the exercise of private judgment, except, perhaps, to ascertain what it is, which the church may have determined on the subject.

Of this further claim of authority for the church, I perceive nothing in these articles. The sixth,

on the contrary, appears very plainly to refer the whole to the judgment of individuals. “Holy scripture,” saith the article, “containeth all things necessary to salvation : so that *whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby*, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” For determining what may properly be considered and received as articles of faith, we are directed to the scriptures, to ascertain, as we best may, *what is read therein* ; or, if it should not have been precisely delivered, may, however, *be proved thereby*. This direction must seem to be idle and unmeaning, if the church was to be the authoritative expositor of the true meaning of the scriptures. Who is to read for this purpose, or to collect the proof? The church, in proposing an article of faith, has already judged. The true sense of the scriptures, if to be determined by the church, has been determined in the very act of proposing it; and the individual has only to receive implicitly, and without hesitation, whatever has been so proposed.

The twentieth article does indeed state, that the church has “authority in controversies of faith.” But what is the meaning of this word *authority*? It is plainly not used here to signify a power, from which there is no appeal to the judgment of individuals, for the article had just before ascribed to the church “power to decree

rites or ceremonies," and then, changing the term, applies this other one, *authority*, to controversies of faith. In regard to rites or ceremonies the individual may be required to yield entire submission, for they properly relate only to the order, which should be observed in the outward acts of a church; but in controversies of faith the case is different, as these relate to the opinions to be entertained in the minds of individuals, and should, therefore, be addressed to their conviction. The authority here claimed for the church must, therefore, be understood not to exceed the limit of respectful consideration, leaving still to every individual the liberty of examining for himself the determination of the church, so far as he may be enabled by his abilities and opportunities. And with this interpretation the remainder of this twentieth article well agrees. "And yet," it adds, as if an apprehension were felt that the ascription even of this altered term might be too rigorously interpreted, "it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written, neither may it so expound one place of scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the church be a witness and a keeper of holy writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation." These very strong expressions plainly signify, that the authority ascribed to the church is of a very qualified nature,

to be controlled by a consideration of the fair sense of the sacred writings, which can be held only in the minds of inquiring individuals. The church is described as but “a witness and a keeper of holy writ,” and expressly precluded from proposing any thing contrary to scripture, or not contained in it. It is idle to say that the church must judge its own expositions, for this would render the qualification nugatory.

That the meaning of the word *authority* should be restrained in correspondence to the concluding part of the article, may receive confirmation from the history of the composition of it, now generally known. It now appears<sup>9</sup> that the introductory statement of the power and authority of the church was not in the article, as it was originally composed, but was added by the command of Queen Elizabeth. This, therefore, instead of having contained the primary and main position of the article, though qualified and limited by the expressions which follow, was itself prefixed as a qualification of those expressions, and should accordingly be understood as introduced in apprehension, lest the article, as at first framed, should be destructive of a reasonable admission of authority in the church. The main object was to restrain the supposed authority of the church : the statement premised was merely a

<sup>9</sup> Cardwell's *History of Conferences, &c.* relative to *the Common Prayer*, page 21, note. Oxford, 1840.

saving clause in its behalf, to guard against an undue interpretation of that which had been first proposed, and was still admitted.

That individuals must form their own opinions of these matters, as they best may, though under the general direction of that divine assistance, which has been promised to all who sincerely and humbly ask it, may be yet more directly inferred from the next following article, the twenty-first, *Of the authority of general councils*, which you have, strangely enough, omitted to consider in your vindication. In this article it is collected even from their liability to error, and still more from error actually committed, “in things pertaining unto God,” that “things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy scripture.” The meaning of these latter words surely cannot be that a council, to give authority to its decrees, should add its own declaration, that they had been taken out of holy scripture, and that this declaration should have the effect of precluding any further inquiry? What confirmation would such a declaration supply to the authority of a council acknowledged to be fallible, and, on account of its liability to error, requiring the support of the written word of God? The very form of the phrase employed in speaking of it would imply the contrary, for the expression is, *unless it may be declared*, not *unless it is*

*actually at the same time declared* ; and the meaning must be, unless such a declaration may be made in consistency with the true sense of the sacred scripture, of which possibility the individual must, as he best may, judge for himself. But if this be the manifest bearing of the twenty-first article, how has it happened that you have omitted it from your vindication ? Can it be that it was so omitted, because it inconveniently stated the fallibility of general councils ?

You, indeed, have by no means claimed for them the attribute of infallibility, however your doctrine of the authority of the church may appear to have required it : but you have done that which, to my apprehension, is more revolting, for you have stated as your opinion that a general council, if it could now be assembled, might unhappily *fix error*. Can it be believed that it could ever have been intended by our Saviour, in the promises which he made to his church, that his immediate protection and assistance should authorise it to impose error on the belief of mankind ? I, for my part, cannot, by any means, acquiesce in such a tenet ; but, on the contrary, utterly reject it, as dishonouring and blaspheming him. I observe that Mr. Palmer has declined to follow you in adopting it, for he has<sup>1</sup> ascribed *inerrancy* to the general church. I think that I remember that Le Clerc, in his

<sup>1</sup> Treatise on the Church of Christ, vol. ii. p. 163.



treatise of logic, has remarked, that a word by association may acquire a modification of meaning rendering it necessary to adopt a new one, of which he gives the verb *mentior* as an example. The infallibility claimed for the general church by the church of Rome, had in this manner become discredited, and so it had become necessary to introduce the new term *inerrancy*, which by its novelty was of course guarded against this inconvenience. Doctor Johnson has the word *inerability*, which is sufficiently unusual; but I suppose that it was deemed to sound too like *infallibility*, for which it had been judged necessary to provide a substitute.

The distinction stated between *power* and *authority*, as the two terms have been employed in the twentieth article, is consonant to the exposition of the latter, as given in the dictionary of Johnson. The primary signification there given is *legal power*; the second, *influence* or *credit*: the former being excluded in the present case by the distinction necessarily to be understood in the article between the two terms *power* and *authority*, the latter must be adopted. This acceptance, moreover, we readily admit; for we do not deny that the testimony of a general council is entitled to influence and credit, though, holding with the following article, that general councils “may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God,” we must deny to it

an imperative power entitling it to implicit and absolute submission.

In proceeding through the articles you have undertaken to shew concerning the eleventh, which treats *Of justification*, that you maintain a doctrine, which is that of the Anglican church, and holds a place between that of the Lutheran church, from which you derive as a legitimate offspring that of the Wesleyan Methodists, and that of the church of Rome. But how is this assertion proved? That your doctrine is that of the Anglican church you prove, not by a careful examination of the true meaning\* of the article, but by pleading,<sup>2</sup> as you say, “that which we conceive to have been the teaching of the majority of our church:” so that you first lay aside the authorised statement of doctrine, and then affix your own construction of their meaning to the teaching of a majority. This, certainly, is not to defend yourself by an appeal to the article, which you had undertaken to do; and unless you should do this, the argument, as you have urged it, could amount to no more than the very insufficient plea, *defendit numerus*, and would be in truth an appeal to the private judgment of individuals from the public profession of your church.

But even in this inconsistent plea you have failed, for your doctrine of justification has been analysed

<sup>2</sup> Page 70.

by the late archbishop Laurence, who had so ably illustrated the articles of our church, in regard to the question of their Calvinistic acceptation. In a little tract,<sup>3</sup> which may be considered as the dying bequest of the learned prelate, he has shewn that your exposition, for which you have looked in vain to the article, is no other than a revival, or at least a very close resemblance, of an exploded opinion of Osiander, a contemporary of Luther. Justification, as he has quoted from Mr. Newman, whom you have also quoted, consists “in *the habitation in us* of God the Father, and the Word incarnate, through the Holy Ghost. *This* is to be justified, to receive *the divine presence within us*, and to be made a temple of the Holy Ghost.” You yourself,<sup>4</sup> too, have cited from Mr. Newman these words, “the very presence of Christ;” and again, you say, “that which I have advocated as scriptural and catholic, buries itself in the absorbing vision of a present, an indwelling God.” In corresponding terms, Osiander thus expressed his opinion: — “*Justitiam essentialem Dei, quæ est Deus, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus, nostram justitiam esse, cum per Verbum Dei in nos credentes influit, et in nobis habitat.*”

The modern doctrine is indeed the more definite of the two, if the term may be applied to a

<sup>3</sup> The Visitation of the Saxon Reformed Church in 1527 and 1528. Dublin, 1839.

<sup>4</sup> Page 78.

vain attempt to bring such a principle within the grasp of our understandings. “Neither,” says Mr. Newman, as again quoted by the archbishop, “the imputed righteousness of Christ, nor imputed or inherent righteousness, is the constituting or formal cause of justification, or that in which a justified state consists; but a gift which includes both of these, and is greater than either, viz. the actual presence, in a mysterious way, or indwelling in the soul, through the Spirit, of the Word incarnate, in whom is the Father.”

How different is this incomprehensible mysteriousness of phrase from the simple language of our eleventh article! “We are,” says the article, “accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of justification.” Who can recognise in this simple statement the mysterious indwelling in us of the sacred Trinity, including the incarnate Word? How, then, can it be said by those who advocate the latter, that they feel that they are bound to adhere implicitly to the church of England, in which they had been baptized? You, indeed, have not attempted to shew this; but have contented yourself with stating, that this you “conceive to have been the teaching of the majority of our church.” To

justify this statement, you have cited passages from Waterland, Heylin, and Bull. These, however, prove only that justification is, according to these authorities, imparted in baptism ; and yet you tell us,<sup>5</sup> that “the whole subject of baptism was altogether foreign to that, which is handled in this whole series of articles on the relation of faith to works, before and after justification” (9–17). With expressions of the sacred scripture implying, in some sense or other, the indwelling in us of the Divine Spirit, every reader is familiarly acquainted. It appears, however, from the passages, which you have cited with approbation from Mr. Newman, that these should be received in some literal application. The disposition, indeed, to understand too literally the figurative language of the sacred scripture, seems to have been the principle of this strange interpretation of the doctrine of our church, the same which led the church of Rome to the monstrous tenet of transubstantiation.

You tell us,<sup>6</sup> that the Anglican doctrine, as you interpret it, differs both from the Roman and from the Lutheran : “from the Roman, in that it excludes sanctification from having any place in our justification ; from the Lutheran, in that it conceives justification to be not through imputation merely, but the act of God imparting his divine presence to the soul through baptism, and so

<sup>5</sup> Page 63.

<sup>6</sup> Page 70.

making us temples of the Holy Ghost, the habitation in us of God the Father and the Word incarnate, through the Holy Ghost." To the Lutheran doctrine you object that, by referring justification to faith alone, it has given occasion to the error of the Wesleyans, by leading them to seek their justification in their own assurance that they actually possess that faith. To that of the Romanists you object, that it has confounded justification with sanctification, and so has led them to seek their justification in works as meritorious. You represent, that you avoid both extremes by holding, that justification is to be referred to the actual indwelling in us of the Holy Trinity. Now, in any sense in which your doctrine is intelligible to me, I conceive that it is precisely equivalent to the doctrine of sanctification; so that you yourself fall into the error, which you impute to the Romanists, of confounding sanctification with justification. It seems to me also, that the notion of the actual indwelling in us of the Holy Trinity leads as directly to a dependence on our own internal perceptions, by which we may seek to be assured of that *indwelling*, as the reference of justification solely to faith; so that here again you appear to be involved in a tendency to the error of the Wesleyans. It is strange, and yet I do not see how the double inference may be avoided, that you should thus, in professing to take a middle course between two extreme doctrines, have actually contrived to

combine in your own the errors of both. It has frequently been said, that extremes often meet ; in this case, the extremes appear to have been brought together in that, which is proposed as the middle.

That your doctrine is not, as you have stated, that of the majority of Anglican divines, has been most satisfactorily shewn in the letter addressed to the bishop of Oxford *by a clergyman of the diocese and a resident member of the university*. For this purpose he has selected a series of writers, who had been cited in the *Tracts for the Times*, as authority for other views, and as a link for a *Catena Patrum*. All these writers, he has shewn, make a decided distinction between justification and sanctification, and, consequently, are alien from the doctrine which you have proposed. Their names will carry authority with every member of our church : Hooker, bishop Andrews, Jackson, archbishop Bramhall, archbishop Usher, bishop Hall, Hammond, bishop Bull, bishop Pearson, bishop Beveridge, Waterland, and bishop Van Mildert. Of the authorities cited by yourself—a homily, Waterland, Heylin, and bishop Bull—I have already remarked, that the passages quoted prove only, that they held justification to be imparted in baptism, which is not disputed.

Here, then, I may leave the consideration of this most important subject, and proceed to that

of the sixteenth article, which treats *Of sin after baptism*.

In regard to that part of your letter which treats of this article, I have to remark that the object of the article, as appears especially from its concluding sentence, is to maintain a doctrine of forgiveness, moderated between two extreme opinions, the one teaching that it is impossible to fall from the faith, the other denying that there is place of forgiveness to such as truly repent. This place of forgiveness, however, you deny to the penitent while he remains in this world; for you have said,<sup>7</sup> “There are but two periods of *absolute* cleansing — baptism and the day of judgment. She (the church) therefore teaches him (man) continually to repent, that so his sins *may be* blotted out; though she has no commission to tell him absolutely that they *are*.” How you can have conceived that this is a fair representation of the meaning of the article, I am unable to imagine. The article says, “The grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after baptism;” and in the conclusion, “they are to be condemned which say they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.” This place of forgiveness, for which the article contends, must have reference to the present



life, this being the reference in the other and preceding part of the same clause, especially as it is inferred from this consideration that “by the grace of God we may arise again (when we have fallen into sin) and amend our lives.” You, however, tell us that the church has no commission to tell the sinner that his sins are at any time, on his true repentance, actually forgiven.

It is, indeed, true, that our church has directed that we should pray for forgiveness, even after the absolution of the priest has been solemnly pronounced. But why is this done? Because it belongs not to mortal men to read the heart of a penitent, and so to determine whether repentance has been in any case sincere and effectual. Of this the penitent must, with all humility, judge for himself; and especially by considering whether in his conduct it has been duly followed by amendment of life. But when a sinner has truly repented of his sin, and has proved his sincerity by a thorough reformation, the church has solemnly declared that God has pardoned and absolved him, not that he will do so at the day of judgment.

In the letter addressed to the bishop of Oxford *by a clergyman of the diocese and resident member of the university*, numerous authorities have been adduced to prove, that your opinion has not been held by any of those eminent persons, whom you have yourself mentioned with respect—Hooker, Jackson, bishop Andrews, bishop Hall, bishop

Pearson, and Bingham — while you have not adduced any in its support. You have, indeed, as that able and respectable writer has remarked, attempted to draw an argument from scripture in its favour, alleging that “peace is uniformly represented by the sacred writers as the *direct* gift of God;” whence you infer that it is to be sought, “not from men’s declarations,” but “directly from God.” But to this he has well replied, by asking, “who ever denied that God is the God of peace, any more than that he is the God of all grace?” And he adds, “But as the one consideration does not warrant us in withholding the precepts of the gospel, because he alone can enable us to perform them, so neither does the other in withholding the promises of the gospel, because he alone can enable us to avail ourselves of them. The ministry of the gospel is *a ministry of reconciliation*. It is the office of the ambassador in God’s stead to come *preaching peace by Jesus Christ*.”

One other topic, *reserve in communicating religious knowledge*, has been ably discussed by this very judicious writer, as, in the words cited by him from a charge delivered by the bishop of Chester, threatening “*a revival of the worst errors of the Romish system*.” To him, however, I will leave it, because my object is to examine your vindication, of which this topic does not properly constitute a part, having been only introduced by an allusion in a note. I will, therefore, proceed to that part of

your letter which relates to the twenty-fifth article,  
*Of the sacraments.*

In treating of this article you begin with saying,<sup>8</sup> “two sets of charges are brought: one, that we unduly exalt the sacraments of our Lord; the other, that we are not disinclined to ascribe a sacramental character to other rites, which the church of Rome has defined to be sacraments in the same sense as baptism and the holy eucharist.” In the former I do not at all concur. But I do observe in your letter a strong propensity to ascribe a sacramental importance to other rites, which have been added to the ordinances of our Lord. Strong indeed must the propensity have been, when you could think<sup>9</sup> that you perceived in this article that the church “implies or asserts that there are more” than two sacraments. “The caution of our church on this subject” is, as you have observed, “very remarkable;” but it is the caution which shuns to give unnecessary offence by an unqualified condemnation of prevailing opinions. The article expressly states that the other five, commonly called sacraments, “are not to be counted for sacraments of the gospel,” assigning as the reason of this exception, that they are “such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the apostles,” on which account, it may be inferred, some should be wholly rejected, “partly are states

<sup>8</sup> Page 97.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

of life allowed in the scriptures,” but which yet “have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God,” and therefore are not to be esteemed sacraments.

You, indeed, have relied for your authority on one of the homilies. But even the passage which you have quoted, attributes the name *sacrament* to those other rites in a very vague acceptation, as to *holy things*, and not at all in the sense in which it is attributed to baptism and the eucharist; nor could any authority be ascribed to a homily, if it could be shewn that it was really at variance with an article of the church. Our observance of the rite of confirmation, it may be added, is no exception to the principle; for it is maintained only as a fit supplement of infant baptism, and not as a distinct ordinance.

In regard to the sacrament of baptism, I have not any objection to urge, holding as I do with you, that baptismal regeneration is the express doctrine of our church. But it is otherwise in regard to the eucharist. And here I must remark some unfairness, as it appears to me, in confounding together the Zwinglian and Calvinistic doctrines of this sacrament. Zwingli, doubtless, understood the sacramental elements to be mere emblems; but it was the merit of Calvin that he introduced the doctrine of a spiritual, though yet a real presence, of our Lord, in distinction from the Lutherans, who in their doctrine of consubstantiation maintained a

corporeal presence, though without a transubstantiation of the elements. This has accordingly been acknowledged by Mosheim,<sup>1</sup> who was himself a Lutheran; and it should have precluded the formation of the compound epithet *Zwingli-Calvinist*, which you<sup>2</sup> have applied to the sacramental doctrine of Calvin, blending apparently into one two opinions so essentially distinguished.

In your account of this sacrament, indeed, I perceive a recurrence to that doctrine of consubstantiation, by which the leader of the reformation essayed to free himself from the monstrous tenet of the church of Rome, though not so enlightened as to apprehend the notion of a spiritual presence. “We are content ourselves,” you say,<sup>3</sup> “to receive the words, *the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.* as they were used in the ancient church, from which our own preserved and restored them; not as denoting something absent, but as implying the spiritual unseen presence of that blessed body and blood, conveyed to us through the unchanged though consecrated elements,—unchanged in material substance, changed in their use, their efficacy, their dignity, mystically and spiritually.” You object,<sup>4</sup> accordingly, to Calvin, that his notion of a spiritual presence does not sufficiently connect the presence of Christ with the elements. “Not

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. Hist. vol. iv. pp. 366, 367.

<sup>2</sup> Page 132.

<sup>3</sup> Page 131.

<sup>4</sup> Page 132.

Zwingli alone, but Calvin," you say, "have in their way so explained the mode of Christ's presence, as virtually to explain it away. With the fear of a weak faith, that would fain guard in a way of their own against man's giving God's glory to the outward elements, they transferred the presence of Christ *simply* to the believer's soul; and thus on their side destroyed the nature of a sacrament, depriving it of its inward fulness, as the Romanists, by the doctrine of transubstantiation, had removed the outward sign." To guard against this imputed deficiency, and at the same time to avoid the Romish error of transubstantiation, you assume, though by a manifest contradiction in terms, a spiritual presence of that which is, notwithstanding, corporeal. "All which Scripture says of this case, *not discerning the Lord's body, guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, implies," you say,<sup>5</sup> "an immediate, unseen presence of that body, which the wicked discern not, cannot partake of, but offend against, and so *eat and drink judgment to themselves*, in that they eat and drink the sacrament of so great a thing." From these words, however, I do not see that any other meaning can be fairly collected than this, that such persons, in treating with disrespect *the outward and visible sign* of the sacrament, incur the guilt of disregarding that *inward and spiritual grace*, which

<sup>5</sup> Page 129.

is vouchsafed to them in the sacrament, if faithfully received.

Here seems to be, in truth, another instance of that too literal acceptance of terms, which has before appeared in your doctrine of justification, and which had led the Romanists into their doctrine of transubstantiation. And it is remarkable, that, in both instances, it has led you away from the church of England to the first efforts of the reformation in Germany, to the doctrine of Luther in this instance, as in the other to that of his contemporary, Osiander. You have, indeed, introduced the epithet *spiritual*, as if to distinguish your conception of the presence of the body of Jesus Christ in the eucharist from that of the German reformer; and the apostle Paul has certainly spoken of a spiritual, as distinguished from a natural, body. But the spiritual body, mentioned by the apostle, can be only that glorified body which, at the resurrection of the blessed, shall be fitted for the enjoyment of eternal happiness, incorruptible and immortal, and must still possess the inseparable qualities of natural bodies, by which they are limited in regard to place and time, and become objects of sense, or the doctrine of a resurrection after death would be reduced to unmeaning sounds.

But if, as you say, "we are baptized in the church of England, and must belong to it," how are you at liberty to recur to the reformation of Germany for an alteration of her doctrines? You

would, I suppose, plead that you have found these doctrines in the primitive church, not in the reformation of Germany. How are you, a member of the church of England, authorised to seek in antiquity the doctrines which you should hold? The church of England has published its own exposition of its doctrines, which has also been specially bound upon the clergy, as the accompanying condition of the holy orders to which they are admitted. To that exposition you, an individual clergyman, or in association with any number of clergymen, cannot make an addition; and the only allowable method of maintaining the correctness of your opinion, as you are a member of that church, is to prove that it presents a true and fair interpretation of our twenty-eighth article.

In that article it is stated, that “to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.” It is not said that the church acknowledges a spiritual unseen presence of the body of Christ in connexion with the sacramental bread; but simply that the bread is “to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same,” a partaking of the body of Christ; “and likewise the cup is a partaking of the blood of Christ.” It is afterwards stated, that “the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner;



and," it is added, "the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is faith." It thus appears that the presence of Christ is by the terms of the article applied "simply to the believer's soul;" the very doctrine for which you have condemned Calvin, as destroying the nature of a sacrament, and to shun which, equally as the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation, you have judged it necessary to ascribe "an inward fulness" to the mere elements, which is in truth a revival of the consubstantiation of Luther. If the words of the article require any elucidation, to prove the strict spirituality of their signification, they have already received it in the concluding words of the declaration subjoined to the service of the holy communion: "the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one."

It is, indeed, the distinguishing characteristic of the articles of the church of England, that their framers with great wisdom and moderation took a middle position between the extreme doctrines of the two grand sects of the reformation. Though generally respecting the confession of Augsburg, which contains the articles of the German reformation, they corrected it in regard to the eucharist, by substituting the spiritual communion of Calvin for Luther's imperfect and unintelligible doctrine of consubstantiation; and while

they have done this, they have, however, refused to pronounce with Calvin on the decrees of God, in regard to human salvation, directing, in the conclusion of the seventeenth article, that we should “receive God’s promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy scripture.” They borrowed from the Genevan reformer what appeared necessary for completing and correcting the earlier work of the reformer of Germany; but they refused to follow him into curious and unauthorised speculations on the divine counsels.

Concerning your next topic, the twenty-third article, *Of ministering in the congregation*, agreeing with you, as I do, in maintaining the doctrine of the apostolical succession of our episcopacy, I would not think it necessary to offer any remark, if you had not incidentally introduced two observations, in neither of which can I concur with you.

“We wish,” you say,<sup>6</sup> “to set forth no new doctrines; we would only revive what circumstances connected with the sin of 1688 have thrown into a partial oblivion.” Now what is this *sin of 1688*, even of the revolution of England, to which we have been accustomed to look back with reverence and gratitude, as the auspicious epoch of both our civil and our religious liberty? Are we here directed to regard that great crisis of our history as stained with guilt against God, because the alle-

<sup>6</sup> Page 182.

giance of our fathers was transferred from a sovereign, who had fled from his throne amidst the general indignation of his people, to another prince, who, by the acquiescence of that people, possessed the powers of government, and was able to afford protection to those who obeyed him? But I have learned that it is the duty of a Christian to yield a willing obedience to the existing authorities, *the powers that be*; and this, not for fear of punishment, but for conscience sake. Or is it rather that the nation refused to avail itself of the opportunity then afforded for healing the schism of the reformation, by effecting a reunion with the church of Rome? As I cannot admit our reformers to have been guilty of schism, in separating themselves from that accumulated corruption, which had grievously tainted the ministrations of Rome, so neither can I acknowledge that their successors committed sin in declining to be any longer the subjects of a prince, who laboured to reduce them to that enslavement, from which they had been by the former happily delivered.

I respect the conscientious integrity of the non-juring bishops; and I can even consider their conduct with gratification, as having practically favoured the cause of the revolution, by proving the perfect disinterestedness of the prelates, who gave by their firmness the immediate impulse to the change of the government. But their scruple I cannot regard as founded in a just

notion of their duty of allegiance. Their oaths could not impose any obligation at variance with that which bound them, as Christians, to practise a dutiful submission to the existing government. This other obligation it might strengthen, but it could not discharge. The nation had chosen to change its government, and it was their paramount duty, as they were christian ministers, to acquiesce. I think, indeed, that I clearly enough perceive, why you should be very kindly affected towards them, when<sup>7</sup> I read that their distinguishing tenets were the doctrine of the real presence in the eucharist, and that of the propriety of praying for the dead.

Again, in treating of the objects of the *Tracts for the Times*, you have specified,<sup>8</sup> “the holy catholic church (our belief of which we daily confess), and the ordinances of her Lord, committed to her keeping, whether his sacraments, or rites, practices, and observances (such as fasting, ember-days), which she has ever observed, and which are essential to her well-being ——” Here you speak of rites, practices, and observances, such as fasting and ember-days, as ordinances of the Lord, committed to the keeping of the church, and essential to her well-being. Now, I have learned from our thirty-fourth article, *Of the traditions of the church*, that “it is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one

<sup>7</sup> Cardwell's *Hist. of Conferences*, &c. p. 390.

<sup>8</sup> Page 183.

and utterly like ; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word." This article, in ranking traditions of ceremonies among those things which may, according to diversity of circumstances, be different in different places, and be changed from time to time in the same place, is wholly repugnant to your representation of them, as ordinances of the Lord, committed to the keeping of the church, and essential to her welfare.

Of the two remaining topics of your vindication, "prayers for God's departed saints, and celibacy," you say,<sup>9</sup> indeed, they "have been in no case insisted upon, or inculcated by us, but, at most, simply introduced in the course of treating upon other subjects." But it may fairly be asked why, if they find no authority in our creeds or articles, should they be introduced at all? You have told us,<sup>1</sup> that "the great object which runs through the whole (of the *Tracts for the Times*), was to bring up men's practice to the standard of their church, *as it is* ; to remove ill-founded objections to it ; to develope to them points, which they had not apparently considered ; to realise more the system, in which we actually live, to live up to what we have." Why then should prayers for the dead, which you

<sup>9</sup> Page 185.

<sup>1</sup> Page 183.

admit to have “been excluded from the English ritual,”<sup>2</sup> be even incidentally mentioned in connexion with that object? This, surely, was not any part of a plan “to bring up men’s practice to the standard of their church, as it is ;” nor “to realise more the system, in which we actually live.” On the contrary, it was to combine with that object a practice, which had been formally excluded from the ritual of the system.

If you have not expressly advocated such a combination, the mention of these things must at least be understood to indicate the habitual tendency of your thoughts, and thus to give confirmation to the opinion of those who consider you as, if not inclined towards an actual reunion with the Romanists, yet disposed at least to assimilate the observances of our church to those of Rome. “A formal restoration (of prayers for the dead) would,” you admit,<sup>3</sup> “in the corrupt state of modern manners, probably lower still further the standard of holiness ; men would probably abuse these prayers as a ground of carnal security, and, by a worse corruption than that of Rome, look to them as available for those *not* departed hence in the faith and fear of God. In order to have with impunity all primitive ordinances, we must have also primitive purity and discipline. To restore privileges before we restore strictness of life, were to begin at the

<sup>2</sup> Page 186.

<sup>3</sup> Page 191.

wrong end." In this passage, you appear to me to have pronounced a sufficiently strong condemnation of your own suggestion. For how can it be safe to admit even the private practice of that which, if publicly adopted, would probably be followed by a consequence so deplorable? We may, indeed, conclude, that in this very manner the worst abuses of the church of Rome have actually had their origin, since we may fairly presume that a practice, for which no authority could be found in the written word, was begun in the affectionate remembrances of individuals, before it was adopted in the public services of the church.

You<sup>4</sup> argue, indeed, that "our church, as has recently been in a very elaborate sentence decided, condemns not such prayers; and why," you ask, "should we take upon ourselves to pronounce, where she has thought it most becoming to be silent, or restrain the liberty which she has left unfettered?" Of that judgment I must speak with respect, for I know well the eminent character of the judge, and have no doubt that he conscientiously and carefully inquired into the matter, on which he pronounced his decision. But, nevertheless, I can discover in the judgment only the inconvenience of referring to the cognisance of a lay-judge, however eminent, the determination of a question relating to ordinances, with which he cannot be supposed to be habitually acquainted.

<sup>4</sup> Page 192.

The judge in that case does not appear to have known that, in the prayer for the church militant, as it was originally framed, the concluding petition was thus expressed, “beseeching thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that *they with us*, and we with them, may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom;” and that the words *they with us* were omitted in the revision of the liturgy, lest they should even afford countenance to the practice of praying for the dead, though, by the words immediately preceding, they are limited to those who had departed this life in the faith and fear of God, and from the words of the petition itself, asking for grace to “follow their good examples,” they appear to have reference only to our own future condition. If he had known this, it may be presumed that he would not have considered a direct invitation to the practice, as admissible within the precincts of a place of protestant worship.

You<sup>5</sup> tell us that the invocation of saints was, in the *Tracts*, expressly condemned; but you, nevertheless,<sup>6</sup> contend for the lawfulness of addressing prayers to them, together with those of a congregation. “For,” you say, “the *exclusive* address of unseen beings has an obvious tendency at once to fall into a sort of worship; it is too like the mode in which we address Almighty God, to be any way safe; the *exclusive* request of their

<sup>5</sup> Page 192.

<sup>6</sup> Page 198.



intercessions is likely, at once, to constitute them intercessors, in a way different from God's servants on earth, and (which is the great practical evil of these prayers in the Roman church) to interfere with the office of the great intercessor." You have endeavoured to shield yourself against the imputation of self-contradiction, by<sup>7</sup> pleading that, though all such practices have been condemned in the *Tracts*, a distinction has been made between the older and the more recent. But, if all are to be condemned, why should we make any such distinction in reference to more recent practices? Let all go together : let us renounce, not only the great superstition which corrupted the very essence of our religion, but also those other unauthorised practices, which conducted the church to that great depravation. You, I suppose, are anxious to palliate, while you condemn, that which you find to have been practised in the primitive church, the authority of which you desire to maintain. If, however, you are constrained to condemn any practice of that church, your palliation can avail little to the maintenance of its authority.

You<sup>8</sup> have cited from bishop Hall a passage, in which it is said that "the blessed virgin is the prince of all saints ; neither could it be other than injurious that any other of that heavenly society should have the precedence of her." Now, it

<sup>7</sup> Page 197.

<sup>8</sup> Page 200.

appears that our Saviour, in his personal intercourse with her, from the very commencement to the close of his ministry, manifested an anxious desire of precluding, specially in regard to her, the belief that any intercession with him might be expected. At the marriage-feast which immediately preceded his ministry, he checked her interference, even with some severity, when she intimated her expectation that he would work a public miracle for the accommodation of the company, though he immediately afterwards performed the same privately for the conviction, as it appears, of his disciples. In the progress of his ministry he publicly disclaimed her right of concerning herself with his conduct, even for his personal welfare; demanding “who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” who are the persons, urging under these titles claims on my attention, while I am engaged in proclaiming the doctrine of salvation? And in the concluding scene of suffering, we may well believe that when he again addressed his mother with the cold appellation *woman*, and directed his beloved disciple to behold in her his *mother*, his intention was to abdicate for ever the human relationship of his earthly parent, as terminated with his earthly existence, that she might not, by superstitious worship, be exalted, as she has been, to the throne of heaven.

Of your remaining topic, *celibacy*, I have still to remark, that though you speak of it merely as

voluntary, and propose thus to draw a strong line of demarcation between yourselves and the Romanists, your doctrine appears to be still exposed to objection, inasmuch as it tends, very directly, to introduce the worst abuses which have prevailed in their church. You<sup>9</sup> speak of it expressly as “a way more excellent in itself, as one of the triumphs of faith.”—What is this but to ascribe to it in itself, and for its own sake, pre-eminent merit? Saint Paul, as you intimate, recommends it “on account of the present distress;” but in these words he does not recommend it “as a way more excellent in itself,” or, “as one of the triumphs of faith.” This is the very language of Romanists, not of the apostle. This is not to renounce the lawful enjoyments of the world, when found to be in some special circumstances incompatible with a due prosecution of spiritual concerns; but to perform a voluntary sacrifice of them, not required by any particular occasion, and with a view to a triumphant confidence in the meritorious nature of the act. It is in truth pure asceticism; and before it can be received as a christian practice, you should satisfy us that the religion of Christ inculcates the duty of inflicting on ourselves bodily mortifications and penances, as the means of recommending us to more than ordinary acceptance with God. Saint Paul, from whom you appear to have borrowed the expression, “a more excellent way,”<sup>1</sup> applied it

<sup>9</sup> Page 209.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 31.

certainly to a very different meaning. He has most strongly recommended the observance of the great duty of christian charity, as “a more excellent way” than to be solicitous for the attainment of spiritual gifts even of the highest order. I believe, indeed, that it is the duty of a Christian to be prepared to relinquish the dearest connexions of life, should they be found to interfere with a sincere profession of religion; but I have nowhere found that he is directed to embrace such conduct, merely as constituting in itself a life of superior excellence, or as affording an opportunity of enjoying “one of the triumphs of faith.”

On this subject I have still to learn that the title, *ever-virgin*, which you,<sup>2</sup> without any hesitation, have attributed to the mother of our Lord, in your seemingly reluctant commendation of marriage, is indeed warranted by the facts of her brief history, and not even contradicted by the very language of the scripture. One thing, indeed, is manifest in regard to the mother of our Lord, that the evangelic narratives have, as it may seem purposely, left her history in deep obscurity, except where it was connected with his mission and office.

You<sup>3</sup> tell us, indeed, that “the preference of celibacy, as the higher state, is scriptural, and, as being such, is primitive;” and that “the corruption of Rome was not its *preference*, but its tyrannical, and ensnaring, and avaricious *enforcement*.”

<sup>2</sup> Page 210.

<sup>3</sup> Page 212.

I answer that we find, even<sup>4</sup> in the narrative of the first christian council, which surely must be admitted to represent to us that primitive church, so much the object of your veneration, that one measure of enforcement had been already adopted in it, for it had even then been an ancient usage, that if a married priest became a widower, he should not be permitted to enter into a second engagement; and, so natural is the progress in asceticism, it was proposed in the council, that the married priests should be required to separate themselves from the wives, with whom they were already united. This extreme resolution was, indeed, opposed and defeated by the remonstrance of Paphnutius, himself a celibatist and renowned for chastity. A middle course was accordingly taken, the married clergy being left at liberty to separate themselves, if they should so choose, from their wives, and thus to attain a higher excellence of life. At this step, however, the church stopped not. The admonition of Paphnutius was subsequently disregarded; the clergy were, after many struggles, torn from their wives, and “the more excellent way” of celibacy was rendered imperative throughout the western church. This was, indeed, the natural progress in departing from the simplicity of the Gospel. That which is at first voluntary becomes a usage, claiming the character of a

<sup>4</sup> Socratis Hist. Eccles. lib. i. c. 11.

tradition; and the usage so sanctioned is transformed into a law.

You<sup>5</sup> tell us also that, “while the peaceful duties of the country-pastor can often be even better discharged perhaps by a married priest, *ruling well his own house and having his children in subjection in all gravity*, a pattern of domestic charities, yet,” you add,<sup>6</sup> “if the degraded population of many of our great towns are to be recovered from the state of heathenism in which they are sunk, it must be by such preaching of the cross, wherein it shall be forced upon man’s dull senses, that they who preach it have forsaken all, to take it up, and bear it after their Lord.” To this I reply that the apostles, when they undertook to preach the religion of the cross amidst the heathenism of the ancient world, do not appear from their own practice to have been sensible that they must give this proof, that they had indeed forsaken all; nor have the Methodists of modern times, who are sufficiently wise in their generation, found this sacrifice of domestic relations to be a necessary part of their system; nor yet have the Moravians deemed it expedient to send forth unmarried missionaries, in their adventurous efforts to propagate among pagan nations the truths of the gospel. If, indeed, your appeal is to be made to “man’s dull senses,” if you are seeking to aid the

<sup>5</sup> Page 214.

<sup>6</sup> Page 215.

simple impressions of religion by picturesque effect, the principle will carry you far; for it is the very principle of the whole ritual of the church of Rome, in which the appeal is so constantly made to "man's dull senses," that the vital sentiment of religion is overlaid and stifled. Genuine christianity is not a religion of the senses, but of the heart; and in seeking to gain the former, we must more or less lose our hold of the latter.

Nor are you disposed to refer this question, of the expediency of celibacy in the cause of religion, wholly to the separate consideration of individuals, choosing each for himself his peculiar plan of action, for you<sup>7</sup> have recommended monastic institutions for either sex, voluntary indeed, and to be relinquished at their own choice, but still in their spirit and character monastic. And can you imagine that such institutions could be permitted, without biassing and controlling the free choice of individuals? Is there nothing in the ostensible form of associations professedly devoted to the especial service of God, which would act upon the ardent imaginations of young persons, particularly females, beholding too your *sœurs de la charité* walking in pairs on their missions of mercy, their eyes fixed upon the earth, as abstracted from all the concerns of society? And when the decided step of joining one of these associations had been

<sup>7</sup> Page 208, note; and page 216.

taken, and the individual had been once presented to his fellow-men as one who had voluntarily withdrawn from the world, that he might prosecute his salvation “by a more excellent way,” where is the freedom to separate from it, and mix again with ordinary mortals, though no irrevocable engagement had bound him to persevere? Is there no difficulty in returning after an interval to that world, which had been quitted, and seeking a renewal of its connexions after a formal disruption of them all? Is *the world's dread laugh* no restraint upon his choice; and would he not find himself compelled by the fear of it to adhere to that which he has once made, even though he should have discovered how vain had been the sacrifice of the social relations of life?

So long as the choice is really left with individuals, as it is left by the scriptures and by our church,<sup>8</sup> to marry or to live in celibacy, “as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness,” so long it may be expected that the clergy will be best qualified to serve the cause of religion, neither seduced into an indulgence of spiritual pride by a tempting profession of superior sanctity, nor restrained by the apprehension of public ridicule from endeavouring to resume their former connexions and habits. Nor do I perceive how the character of our unmarried females would be more

<sup>8</sup> Article 32.



improved by *staging* them to the eyes of the multitude under some peculiar designation of monastic devotedness, than if, intrusted to their own virtuous prudence, they should silently and unostentatiously perform, as at present, their visits of mercy.

Contending for the liberty of pursuing this “more excellent way” of celibacy, you take occasion to remark,<sup>9</sup> that “a more generous course, which would have interposed, when necessary, the guidance of authority, and led, but not inhibited, might have made Wesley and Whitfield useful members of the church, instead of leaving them to plunge thousands into schism, and to train off into a delusive doctrine many of the best members of our church.” And can you really believe that it was practicable, by any accommodation, to retain in connexion with the established church these two distinguished leaders, who could not be induced by their common zeal in the cause of religion to co-operate one with the other? Or could either of them have been held in that connexion, without compromising the moderation of our seventeenth article, and maintaining explicitly, as the doctrine of our church, either that of Arminius or that of Calvin, instead of looking to the oracles of divine truth, and shunning the peremptory decisions of human interpretation?

I have now gone through the several articles of

<sup>9</sup> Page 214.

your vindication, I hope with candour, I am sure with a sincere desire of affording to your principles a fair consideration. Of any disposition to adopt formally the abuses of the church of Rome, I most willingly acquit you, for I have entire confidence in your godly sincerity; but I cannot, and do not, consider you as free from the very same influences which, in that church, have actually generated those abuses. I am not your accuser, for I respect your zeal and your piety; but I am anxious to warn yourself against errors, in which they have already involved you, and others against those, into which they may too easily be led by the admiration of that, which is really estimable in your association.

With these views I have endeavoured to shew that, in shunning the extreme of dissent and separation, you have so much magnified the authority of the church as to destroy the reasonable liberty of a Christian; that, in guarding your notion of justification against abuse, you have substituted an unintelligible and mischievous mysticism for the simple doctrine of the gospel, that we are justified by our faith and for the merits of a redeemer; that, in your anxiety to maintain a godly sorrow for sin, you have so confounded the actual forgiveness, granted upon sincere repentance, with our own assurance of forgiveness, as to take away from sinners the encouragement presented by the gospel in its gracious promises of mercy; that, in treating of sacraments, you have manifested a desire of

extending a sacramental character to other ordinances, besides those instituted by the authority of our Lord, and thus countenanced much of the superstition of Rome; that, in your doctrine of the eucharist, you have recurred to that doctrine of consubstantiation, which is scarcely distinguishable from the Romish transubstantiation, rejecting the notion of a simply spiritual presence of our Lord, and a spiritual influence of his ordinance; that you have claimed for the traditions and rites of the church an authority which can justly be ascribed only to ordinances authorised by the sacred scripture; that you have advocated, though under a limitation, the practice of praying for the dead, which, in the church of Rome, has been the source of much and gross superstition, and must ever tend to generate in the minds of men a fatal dependence on the intercession of their fellow-sinners; that you have unscripturally recommended celibacy and monastic associations as presenting “a more excellent way” of salvation, to be, indeed, adopted and maintained only by the choice of each individual, but constraining that choice by the very pretension of superior excellence; and that in all these instances you have departed from the moderation and simplicity of the articles of our church, to which you acknowledge yourself bound to conform, and<sup>1</sup> upon an agreement with which, so far

<sup>1</sup> Page 10.

as they were applicable, you have proposed to rest your vindication.

In addition to this detail of particulars, I have to remark,<sup>2</sup> that your own description of the manner in which your teaching has acted, “even where it has been embraced without any consciousness of sacrifices involved,” appears to present a very different aspect of the religion of Christ from that which is offered to us in the gospel. “It wound itself around them” (your new adherents), “encircled them with its solemn rounds of duties and devotions and abstinences, thwarting the natural will, and subduing self, calming the passions, and elevating the affections; not acting turbidly, but rather unloosing limb by limb from their enthrallments, and gently moulding and fashioning them to perform the fuller measures of the duties of the gospel.” In this description I discover no vestiges of the christian *law of liberty*; but, on the contrary, a system of ordinances; “which things have, indeed, a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body,” but are not recognised by the apostle as belonging to genuine religion. Nor can I perceive in it any thing of that “faith which worketh by love,” but a severe asceticism, powerful, indeed, to subdue the natural affections of humanity, and so leave in us a void which the heart would seek to supply; but unfitted

<sup>2</sup> Page 235.

to generate in it that kindly disposition which has been represented to us as of the very essence of christianity.

Perhaps there is not any thing in your entire system from which my mind, at least, more decidedly recoils, than the cold and forbidding aspect with which you regard the two most important events in the history of our church, its renunciation of the abuses of Rome at the reformation, and its full and final establishment, in strict conjunction with that of constitutional freedom, at the revolution. Of the former you have spoken even as of a sort of fatality not now to be remedied, but of which it might be desired that it had never occurred. "Individuals among us," you say,<sup>3</sup> "are bound to remain in the church, through whose ministry they have been made members of Christ." And is this all? Have you no commendation to bestow on those illustrious martyrs, who perished in the flame of persecution, that they might light up in England the flame of genuine religion, one of them at the time expressing his pious confidence that it should never be extinguished? Of the revolution you have spoken expressly as a *sin*; as you have, it is generally reported, dedicated an anniversary to be religiously celebrated in honour of bishop Ken, who refused

<sup>3</sup> Page 218.

to concur in it, when he had, with the rest of the seven bishops, given the decisive impulse to the memorable change.

And what was that reformation, of which you have spoken so slightly and so coldly? It was the successful effort of the western Christians to disenfranchise themselves from the abuses, which in a long period of barbarism and ignorance had overlaid the church of Christ, though without the rude and ill-suited protection of those very abuses religion itself might, in such a period, have perished from among them. The first endeavours of religious emancipation were necessarily incomplete, for the mental eye could not at once receive the full light of gospel truth; but after these came the reformation of England to perfect the great work, by looking with an improved and steady view to the genuine doctrine of the written word. When, therefore, I look for the illustrious men of our church, my mind is carried back with gratitude and veneration to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, who laid down their lives within your own university, that we might enjoy the pure light of the Gospel. I may not swear by these men, as the Grecian orator swore by those who had fallen at Marathon; nor, much as I reverence their memories, do I wish that they should be exalted into saints of our church by any species of canonization; but the grateful recollection of their deaths animates my breast with a sense of the

value of the struggle in which they suffered, and with a strong persuasion that it cannot now be wrong to oppose strenuously every tendency towards an assimilation to that church, for refusing to conform to which they were contented to sacrifice their lives.

What, too, was the religious character of that revolution, which you have chosen to stigmatise as a sin? By it the church of England, which had previously undergone the two great trials probably necessary to its final stability, having been first overthrown by the sectaries, and then almost overwhelmed by the returning influence of the Romanists, was so bound up with the constitutional liberty of the people, as to become an essential and inseparable part of the government. I do not understand how this can have been a sin, unless the reformation itself was a sin, and that our fathers were bound by a religious duty to remain in immediate connexion with Rome, acquiescing in all its abuses, and assisting to transmit them unaltered to their descendants.

In one of your concluding observations, I am, indeed, happy to concur with you. “The simultaneous tendency towards a more church feeling among ourselves,” you say,<sup>4</sup> “among bodies separated from us, or again in Germany and Denmark feeling after it (although in the absence of a church-

<sup>4</sup> Page 232.

system, which has been preserved to us, not knowing where to find it), the increased energy of romanism itself (at least in France and America, where it exists in its least corrupted form), all point to some further coming of the Redeemer's kingdom . . . ." I do agree with you in believing that this simultaneous tendency is discoverable in the religious circumstances of the western church ; but I look to the church of England, as purified from the abuses of Rome, and so preserved among us, to be the immediate instrument of the coming change. Possessing within itself an apostolical succession of its ministers, derived to it through the catholic church, although corrupted ; founding its confession of faith, not, as you represent, on the authority of the earlier church, but on the unerring testimony of the sacred writings ; holding, thus, its middle station between the presumptuous excesses of dissent on the one part, and the overweening pretensions of church-authority on the other, the united church of England and Ireland will, I trust, present to the religious world that object of union, in which the dissenters of these countries, and the members of other churches not episcopal, may be brought to seek rest for their unsettled spirits, the Romanists to find all that is true and really authorised in their own church without its abuses, and irreligious and worldly men to reverence the representation of apostolic truth and worship, offered to



their acceptance by the gracious providence of God.

Nor would I exclude from the circumstances indicating this simultaneous tendency, that you and your friends have, as you say,<sup>5</sup> struck a note, "which has vibrated through every part of the frame of our church," though I cannot acknowledge this effect as an attestation, that it "had been attuned to it by a higher unseen hand." I know that in the providential government of God, one extreme prevailing among his creatures is usually corrected by the permission of its contrary; and I can, therefore, consider the effect on which you rely, as indicating only that the church of England was prepared to receive with attention an invitation to more than the usual seriousness of devotion.

Here let me conclude this solemn, but friendly, remonstrance. It was commenced some time ago in the cheerful and thankful enjoyment of many domestic blessings. I have since continued it in deep affliction for the loss of two of the dearest objects of my affections, anxious to make my protest against these misconceptions, as they appear to me, of the doctrine and character of the church of which I am a member, especially as they are recommended by the example and teaching of a pious and good man, whose personal qualities

<sup>5</sup> Page 231.

attract to them the young and ardent among the students of a great university, while the acting ministry of the church are influenced by the authority of his name and situation.

With true respect for yourself, Sir, individually,

I have the honour to be,

Your faithful Servant,

GEORGE MILLER.

*Armagh, 1st October, 1840.*

THE END.

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